

# Trans & Genderqueer Studies Terminology, Language, and Usage Guide

## INTRODUCTION

Language matters, both in terms of what we say and how we say it. Our words can do real violence to those about whom we speak. This violence reflects the broader socio-cultural oppressions which marginalized communities face as a daily reality. Simultaneously, hateful language supports such oppressions, as a vehicle by which bigoted ideologies re-circulate and gain ever more traction in the public imagination. A considerable amount of violence has been done, and is being done, to the trans, genderqueer and intersex communities by disrespectful, othering, and offensive language. This violence is routinely perpetuated at a group level (comments about the community in general) and at an individual level (comments about specific individuals).

Some wield discriminatory language knowingly, using their words as dog whistles for transphobia and queerphobia. Others, however, use disrespectful language unknowingly – due to ignorance of the offensive nature of certain terminology. Nevertheless, language is always political, and linguistic choices serve to re-inscribe, consciously or not, certain paradigms. The gender binary is a cultural construct, which is supported by normalized language which serves simultaneously to obscure alternative possibilities whilst reinforcing existing hegemonies. We provide this language guide as a resource, offering succinct suggestions as to the usage of respectful, inclusive, and non-violent terminology when talking about the trans, genderqueer and intersex communities, be that on a personal or group level.

This document is absolutely not intended to operate as lexical doctrine. Our guidance can be only that: *guidance*. What constitutes respectful language shifts and evolves over time, dependant on myriad intersectional factors. Slurs are reclaimed, for instance, and new – better, or at least more expressive - coinage gains traction, reframing previously affirmative terminology in problematic lights. Language is both political *and* personal, and context is key. This guide has been produced by members of the medievalist trans and genderqueer community, and their allies. It thus reflects the consensus of a group of engaged scholars. However, we, quite obviously, do not speak for all trans, genderqueer and intersex individuals. Preferences will vary for the usage, or avoidance, of certain terms – words which may even appear in this guide as acceptable vocabulary. Above all else, listen to individuals, learn their preferences, and defer to them.

Allies can never speak for, or speak as, the community itself. Trans, genderqueer and intersex scholars, those with lived experience of the material which we study, may formulate different kinds of analyses than allies, drawing different conclusions. The job of allyship is to amplify the voices of those whose contributions may otherwise be suppressed from the record, to trust in our colleagues who may know more – and know differently – from us.

When compiling this guide, we have been particularly concerned to make evident the granularity of language and identities. By ‘granularity’, we mean in particular the ways in which identity categories can be endlessly subdivided, into more and more personal(ized) descriptors: zooming in on any given label reveals the multiplicity of nuance within all group-level categories. For example, ‘trans’ can be subdivided into binary and non-binary identities; non-binary

identities may include 'agender', and some agender identities may be more minutely described by a term such as 'gendervoid'. Gender identity is intensely personal. Thus, the same terminology can be understood and applied differently by different people, and the unfolding of categories can only end when a description precisely encompasses a single individual's identity. Language is slippery here, answering imperfectly to the desire to name and communicate lived experiences which operate outside certain assumptions which govern cis-heterosexual culture. Crucially, gender and its systems are inextricable from racialization. Awareness of this is essential for substantive engagement with the field/s of trans/gender studies. White supremacy imposes white Euro-centric gender norms, and refuses to acknowledge non-white identities on their own terms. Non-white bodies are policed more strictly, including in terms of gender (non)conformity. Within the broader community, for example, trans women of colour face the highest levels of, often deadly, systemic violence. The two principal architects of this guide are white and British, thus the guide is fundamentally structured by a white, Western (and, indeed, Eurocentric) viewpoint. We recognise this as a significant limitation, and encourage our readers to strive to decolonize their thinking, as we strive to ourselves.

It is important not to elide complex identifications on the supposed grounds that they are too complicated to be understood, expressed or respected. Some trans and genderqueer people may use language in ways other than those suggested here - this is their prerogative. For example, certain adjectives which we would not recommend using as nouns may be used in this way by those who have direct lived experience(s) of trans and genderqueer identities. In this context, individuals assigned female at birth may describe themselves as 'AFABs', although this usage would be disrespectful if deployed by other individuals. If you do not have such lived experience(s), it is best to avoid potentially offensive usages and terminology with especially fraught histories. Furthermore, appropriate usage may differ when referring to real historical figures versus literary characters. We believe that literary representations of lives, particularly those marked by supernatural occurrences such as divine physical transformation, often function as means for thinking about and through the complexities of gender and its significations. As such, it may be productive to analyse these metonymic portrayals in ways which would not be appropriate or respectful when referring to lived experiences, even if those lives now seem distant or inaccessible. It is vital to attend to textual evidence concerning the character or figure's relationship to their own gendered existence.

A note on shifting terminology is necessary. The vocabulary used to describe trans, genderqueer and gender non-conforming identities changes relatively quickly. This terminological impermanence can result in an unwillingness to employ a transgender optic in criticism. This may be due to concerns about stability and comprehensibility as regards the terms themselves, or to the suspicion that unsettled vocabulary implies a shifting frame of reference un conducive to the stable production of meaning. In establishing this guide, we therefore acknowledge that to write about a community whose terminology is in flux implies risks: future reception of the analysis may be affected by rejection of the vocabulary in which it is couched. Nevertheless, we do not believe that this is a valid reason to abandon fruitful inquiry which has the potential to increase comprehension of marginalized groups, in addition to introducing a source of productive comparative material for the analysis of literary texts.

Excessive emphasis on recent shifts in vocabulary also gives the inaccurate impression that non-normative gender is a new phenomenon which is yet to establish a consistent phraseology and thereby gain legitimacy. It also suggests that critics have only to wait until this is established, at which point non-normative gender will suddenly become a more easily accessible concept. This perspective dismisses the consistent presence of non-normative gender, which is attested throughout history and literature. Moreover, this compounds the problem that non-normatively gendered identities have always been rendered harder to see and to discuss as a result of inadequate or reductive descriptive terminology. Only engagement with these identities will allow the development of more apt vocabulary, and the disentangling of non-normative gender from the normative sex/gender system. If we wait for the opportune moment to do so, we may well wait forever. In this spirit, then, we anticipate - and welcome the fact - that this language guide will become outdated as affirmative cultural understanding of non-normative gender develops. This guide is an artefact of work and thought undertaken between 2017 and 2019, necessarily influenced by our personal perspectives, subject positions, experiences and scholarly backgrounds. Medievalist scholars have been at the forefront of developing queer critical frameworks for at least a quarter of a century. This guide, then, is grounded in the seminal work by scholars such as John Boswell, Bill Burgwinkle, Joan Cadden, Carolyn Dinshaw, Karma Lochrie, Robert Mills, to name only a few - that is, we write with a particularly medievalist approach to nuancing and critiquing modernist theories of gender and sex. Nevertheless, this guide does not address specifically medieval terminology and usage. Instead, it provides an overview of modern terminology and usage, which may be particularly useful to medievalist scholars - and our colleagues working on pre-modern materials more broadly - engaging in cross-temporal analysis. Finally, this guide is Anglocentric and thus inherently limited in its cross-cultural and cross-linguistic reach. As we write this, Chloé Maillet and colleagues are preparing a French-language counterpart to this guide. We look forward to seeing similar work emerge across languages, with guides produced by native-language trans scholars and their allies.

The guide is grounded in theories of sex and gender, especially the work of Judith Butler who remains a touchstone for entry into the critical field for many scholars, including the editors of this volume. Our approach is nuanced by the work of numerous trans scholars, including Susan Stryker, Julia Serano, and C. Riley Snorton, alongside the lived experiences and observations of the trans and genderqueer medievalist community. In order to grasp more fully the points set out in the guide, we strongly recommend consulting core texts in this area, as listed in the 'Further Reading' section below. What comes to the fore in reading such literature is the immense complexity, and contingent cultural determination, of the terms 'sex' and 'gender'. Broadly speaking, our usage of 'sex' refers to assigned sex, based on biological essentialism, whereas we use 'gender' to refer to an individual's innate sense of their own identity. We also recommend Alex Kapitan's 'The Radical Copyeditor's Style Guide for Writing About Transgender People' which offers a thorough overview of best practice in writing about trans and genderqueer individuals, including suggestions for re-wording. Another especially helpful resource is the online glossary created by Gabrielle M.W. Bychowski.

There will always be exceptions to the indications we set out below - prescriptivism can only go so far. However, if you are not trans or genderqueer yourself, be wary of potentially

offensive usages; our aim in the guide below is to offer an accessible grounding in relevant terminology. The most important point we can make about these usages is that, above all, it is necessary to think carefully and critically about your word choices, and how your choices may integrally affect textual interpretations - and do real harm to readers. Aim for precision and transparency: tell your readers what choices you are making, and why.

This guide was immeasurably improved thanks to the unpaid labour of members of the trans and genderqueer medievalist community. We owe an enormous debt of thanks to folx for sharing their knowledge with us and spending their time and energy on this document. Any errors or omissions are absolutely and entirely our own.

- Blake Gutt (Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA), Alicia Spencer-Hall (London, UK), June 2019.

## **LANGUAGE GUIDE**

### **AFAB (adjective)**

Assigned Female At Birth. Reference to birth assignment is a way to acknowledge the particular constellation of experiences which individuals may share due to gendered socio-cultural practices, without making assumptions about individuals' experiences of gender or gender identity. 'AFAB' is an adjective, not a noun.

See also: **AMAB; Assigned Sex; Assigned Gender, CAFAB, CAMAB, Identified Gender.**

### **Agender (adjective)**

An agender individual has no gender. Some agender people consider their identity to fall under the genderqueer and/or the non-binary umbrellas. Others consider their identity to be distinct from genderqueer and/or non-binary identities, since genderqueer and non-binary people may experience a gender(ed) identity, although this identity is not recognised by the gender binary. By contrast, agender individuals experience a *lack* of gender (and thus, a lack of gender(ed) identity). Agender people may use any pronouns, and may present in feminine, masculine or androgynous ways. Specific terms for agender identities may include: genderfree, genderless, gendervoid, **Neutrois**, and non-gendered.

See also: **Androgynous; Androgyny, Genderqueer, Neutrois, Non-Binary, Pronouns.**

### **Androgynous; Androgyny (adjective; noun)**

The term 'androgynous' describes a person who appears neither female nor male. Its origins lie in a myth recounted by Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium*, in which he posited three types of human beings: male, female, and androgynous. Originally a slur for a man perceived as feminine or a woman perceived as masculine, the word has taken on neutral or positive connotations since the mid-twentieth century. It is important to note, however, that androgyny (the state of being or appearing androgynous) is highly culturally contingent: what is read as androgynous is defined in relation to cultural norms of masculinity and femininity. Furthermore, androgynous appearance is a facet of gender expression, which, although it is an aspect of gender identity, does not predict or denote whether a person is transgender or cisgender.

See also: **Gender Expression, Gender Identity** .

### **AMAB (adjective)**

Assigned Male At Birth. Reference to birth assignment is a way to acknowledge the particular constellation of experiences which individuals may share due to gendered socio-cultural practices, without making assumptions about individuals' experiences of gender or gender identity. 'AMAB' is an adjective, not a noun.

See also: **AFAB, Assigned Sex; Assigned Gender, CAFAB, CAMAB, Eunuch, Identified Gender.**

### **Assigned Sex; Assigned Gender (nouns)**

'Assigned sex' is the binary sex to which an individual is declared to belong at birth, typically with the declaration by a medical professional: 'It's a girl!' or 'it's a boy!'. 'Assigned gender' is the

binary gender classification assumed to 'match' the assigned sex: those assigned boys are assumed to be male, and those assigned girls are assumed to be female. Everyone has both an assigned sex and gender, and an identified gender. Cisgender individuals' identified gender matches their assigned sex/gender, whereas transgender individuals' identified gender is different from their assigned sex/gender.

'Identified sex' is not a useful term, since awareness of the socially constructed nature of assigned sex/gender reveals the fact that sex itself is a gendered category. By this, we mean: a category produced through and by means of gender, rather than, as the cultural narrative often presents it, the ground and *cause* of gender. Gender, whether assigned or identified, is always the key signifier, and 'identified sex' is therefore meaningless. (For more on this see Butler, *Gender Trouble*.)

Intersex individuals are almost always assigned a binary sex at birth, although a few countries now allow an 'X' gender marker instead of the binary 'M' or 'F' categorizations. Note, however, that the 'X' gender marker may also designate an individual's gender as non-binary; practices vary between countries. Intersex individuals often undergo medically unnecessary surgery to make their genitals and/or internal reproductive organs more closely resemble binary categories of sex.

Be aware that 'assigned' language always implies the presence of an assigning entity, be that a cultural authority or an individual. Therefore, be circumspect in describing literary characters, for example, as having been assigned female or male if it is you, the critic, who is in fact doing the assigning. Such usage effectively reduces assignment to concrete identity rather than social imposition.

See also: **AFAB**, **AMAB**, **CAFAB**; **CAMAB**, **Intersex**, **Identified Gender**.

### **Asterisk (\*)**

See: **Trans(gender)**

### **Binary (adjective; noun)**

There are several cultural binaries relating to sex, gender and sexuality.

The notion of binary sex claims that people are either men or women, depending on narrow definitions of their genitals and/or reproductive organs. When cursory visual categorisation fails, reference to hormone profile and chromosome configuration is presumed to stabilise the categories of 'man' and 'woman'. This binary erases intersex bodies, understanding them only as aberrant, and results in cultural inability to conceptualize transgender identities. The notion of binary *gender* claims that there are only two genders, male and female. Binary gender is usually already heterosexualized (conceived of in order to fit in with the norm of heterosexuality, or to make heterosexuality appear inevitable). Thus, the notion of binary gender is typically subordinate to the notion of binary sex, and claims that men are/should be masculine, and women are/should be feminine. This binary erases non-binary and agender gender identities.

The notion of binary *sexualities* dictates that there are two forms of sexuality, heterosexuality and homosexuality. This binary results in erasure of bisexual, asexual and

pansexual sexualities, which are construed as non-existent, or as a transitional phase between the heterosexual norm and coming out as homosexual.

See also: **Assigned Sex; Assigned Gender, Cis(gender), Gender Expression, Gender Identity**

### **Bind; Binding; Binder (verb; present participle; noun)**

Some transmasculine, non-binary or agender people flatten their chests by binding, in order to appear more normatively masculine and reduce dysphoria. Binding can be done with tape or bandages, but these methods are dangerous as they may restrict breathing or cause damage to the ribs. Commercially-made binders are typically vest-like garments, made of nylon and spandex. People who bind may do so intermittently, or on certain occasions and not on others.

Note: 'bind', as used by the transgender community, is an intransitive verb. Do not use the older expression 'X binds her breasts': people who are dysphoric about their chests are likely also to be dysphoric about the use of gendered terms such as 'breasts'. Instead, use 'chest' as a gender-neutral alternative if you need to reference body parts. Similarly, a person who binds may use pronouns other than 'she/her' - make sure you know what pronouns a person uses. If referring to a literary character or historical figure who cannot be asked, the key is to be sensitive to the individual's intention, and the identity they are displaying. If in doubt, use singular '**They/Them**' pronouns.

See also: **Gender Dysphoria; Gender Dysphoric; Pack; Packing; Packer, Pad; Padding, Pass; Passing, Tuck; Tucking**

### **Butch (noun; adjective)**

Butch is a gender non-conforming presentation and/or gender identity, most frequently associated with masculine **AFAB** individuals, and often with lesbian identity. Precise definitions of butchness are temporally and culturally contingent, but butch identity is typically contrasted to **Femme** identity. For **AMAB** individuals, butchness is a particular type of masculinity, often associated with gay men. Prevailing stereotypes within dominant cis-heterosexual culture associate butch women with masculine behaviour, activities, appearance, etc, and assume the pairing of a butch lesbian with a femme partner.

On this, see: Bergman, *Butch is a Noun*; Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*. For a case study of butch and femme identities in the queer ballroom scene in Detroit (MI, USA), see: Marlon M. Bailey, pp. 29-76.

See also: **AFAB, AMAB, Femme, Gender Non-Conformity; Gender Non-Conforming**

### **CAFAB (adjective)**

Coercively Assigned Female At Birth. The term CAFAB is used as an alternative to AFAB, to emphasize the individual's lack of agency in their own sexing/gendering, which was externally imposed by society. CAFAB is particularly used by intersex individuals, to reflect the violence of surgical interventions and/or enforced hormone treatments which are often used to "normalize" intersex bodies by attempting to fit them into a binary sex category.

See also: **AFAB, AMAB, Assigned Sex; Assigned Gender, CAMAB, Intersex.**

### **CAMAB (adjective)**

Coercively Assigned Male At Birth. The term CAMAB is used as an alternative to AMAB, to emphasize the individual's lack of agency in their own sexing/gendering, which was externally imposed by society. CAFAB is particularly used by intersex individuals, to reflect the violence of surgical interventions and/or enforced hormone treatments which are often used to "normalize" intersex bodies by attempting to fit them into a binary sex category.

See also: **AFAB**, **AMAB**, **Assigned Sex**; **Assigned Gender**, **CAFAB**, **Intersex**.

### **Cis(gender) (adjective)**

A cisgender (or simply cis [note: not CIS - it is not an acronym]) individual is someone whose identified gender matches their assigned gender. It is a description of a state, rather than a process. For this reason, avoid the term 'cisgendered'. 'Cisgender', or 'cis', is the neutral antonym of 'transgender' or 'trans'. The Latin prefixes 'trans' and 'cis' mean, respectively: 'across, over' (i.e. crossing from one gender (the gender assigned at birth) to another (the identified gender)); and 'on this side of' (i.e. not crossing over, but remaining in the gender assigned at birth).

Terms such as 'biological', 'natal', 'natural-born' or 'real' are offensive, suggesting that trans people are deceitful, disguised, constructed, and/or 'really' the gender/sex they were assigned at birth. On this, see: **Trap**. Use 'cis' or 'cisgender' instead of these problematic descriptors.

'**Cissexism**' (adjective: 'cissexist') is a form of essentialist bigotry which assumes all individuals are defined by their assigned sex/gender. '**Cisgenderism**' (adjective: 'cisgenderist') is sometimes used as a synonym for 'cissexism', though can also carry a nuanced meaning, relating to gender as opposed to sex.

See also: **Cis-het(erosexual)**, **Trans(gender)**.

### **Cisgenderism; Cisgenderist (noun; adjective)**

See: **Cis(gender)**

### **Cis-het(erosexual) (adjective)**

'Cis-het' refers to individuals who are both cisgender and heterosexual. Cis-het individuals do not face oppression on either of the axes which, combined, constitute the category of 'queer'. In this way, cis-het individuals occupy a place of cultural normativity. Obviously a cisgender, heterosexual individual may nevertheless face oppression on any other axes: sexism, racism, ableism, classism, etc.

See also: **Cis(gender)**, **Trans(gender)**.

### **Cisnormativity; Cisnormative (noun; adjective)**

Cisnormativity is the cultural discourse which presents and promotes the "congruence" of sex and gender as the primary and normative state of existence. In this context, cis is the default, and any non-cis identity is aberrant and unnatural. The discourse of cisnormativity is supported and maintained by transphobia and cissexism. Cisnormativity is reinforced by the use of binaristic and cisnormative language which assumes that trans, genderqueer and intersex



individuals do not exist. This is the case, for example, in supposedly neutral assertions such as “women have periods” or “men should attend prostate cancer screenings”, which reinforce biological essentialism and ignore the diversity of human experience. Some trans women have a prostate, whereas some cis men do not. Similarly, some cis women do not have periods, whereas some trans men do. Thus, in order to preserve the cultural regime of cisnormativity, cisnormative assumptions work to disguise the fact that neither prostates nor periods, nor the lack thereof, are indicative of gender.

See also: **Binary**; **Cis(gender)**, **Cissexism**; **Cissexist (noun; adjective)**

**Closet, (In The); Closeted (noun; adjective and past participle)**

As with non-straight sexualities, a non-cis individual who has not revealed this fact, and who presents as their assigned gender, is referred to as being ‘closeted’ or ‘in the closet’. A non-cis individual who presents as their identified gender, but who does not disclose their trans-ness, may describe themselves, and be described within their community, as being ‘**Stealth**’.

See also: **Out**, **Pass**; **Passing**, **Transition**, **Trap**

**Come Out; Coming Out (infinitive; present participle)**

See: **Out**, **Outing**

**Cross-Dress; Cross-Dressing; Cross-Dresser (verb; present participle; noun)**

The term ‘cross-dressing’ carries a complex history. Whilst it has long been used derogatorily and inaccurately to refer to trans individuals, it also has a precise, useful meaning when deployed in other contexts.

Using the term ‘cross-dressing’ (or ‘cross-dresser’, etc.) in relation to trans individuals demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of trans identity. This misunderstanding is founded upon the perception that trans individuals wear clothing associated with the ‘opposite’ assigned sex/gender, when they are in fact wearing clothing associated with their identified gender. Describing a transgender individual as a cross-dresser reduces their identity to an ‘incorrect’ application of cultural norms regarding clothing, and implies that they are ‘really’ their assigned sex/gender, but masquerading as the ‘opposite’ sex/gender.

However, individuals who identify as cisgender may engage in cross-dressing (wearing clothes of another gender) for a variety of reasons ranging from personal preference, performance, sexual role-play, or community events. Cross-dressing may be seen to uphold the binary, or to fracture it. This partly depends upon context, as well as the intention of the cross-dresser. A cis man who wears a dress for a Halloween fancy-dress party may intend to parody femininity, whereas a cis man who wears a dress to express his gender identity is more readily visible as challenging binary gender norms.

Drag is a particular iteration of cross-dressing, though the two terms are not interchangeable.

See also: **Cis(gender)**, **Drag**, **Trans(gender)**.

**Dead Name; Dead-Naming; Dead Name (verb; present participle; noun)**

See: **Names**.

**DFAB (adjective)**

Designated Female at Birth. See: **AFAB**.

**DMAB (adjective)**

Designated Male at Birth. See: **AMAB**.

**Drag**

Drag is a culturally-specific form of cross-dressing for purposes of entertainment. Individuals whose drag persona is female are referred to as drag queens, whereas individuals whose drag persona is male are referred to as drag kings. Drag performers may use a different name and pronouns when in character. Drag performers may be cis or trans.

For more on this, see in particular: Rupp, Taylor, and Shapiro; Taylor and Rupp.

See also: **Cross-Dress; Cross-Dressing; Cross-Dresser**.

**Dysphoria; Dysphoric (noun; adjective)**

See: **Gender Dysphoria; Gender Dysphoric**

**Essentialism; Essentialising; Essentialist (noun; present participle; adjective)**

Essentialism is the socio-cultural, often pseudo-scientific, framework which claims that certain 'essential', typically biological, characteristics - such as genital configuration at birth; hormone profile; chromosomal configuration - reflect a definitive and unalterable truth. In this essentialist context, 'biological' **Sex** 'is' **Gender**, full stop. Essentialist beliefs lead people to dismiss or reject trans and genderqueer people's lived experience, as well as their accounts of their own identity, as impossible, deluded or the result of mental illness. **Intersex** individuals are relegated to the status of 'rare' instances of aberrance, of deviance from the binaristic, essentialist 'norm'. In this worldview, intersex individuals are 'really' and 'essentially' men or women. Thus, for essentialist thinkers, the sex/gender binary (i.e., gender's origin in sex, and the deterministic relation between the two) remains primordial and all-encompassing.

Other types of essentialism include those relating to hierarchical gender roles (men and women are innately different, and naturally suited to different work, activities, levels of responsibility, etc) and to race (racialization is not a socio-cultural phenomenon, but reflects real and unalterable biological characteristics; racial groups have specific and unalterable natures, resulting in differing levels of aggression, intelligence, libido, etc).

See also: **Binary, Cisnormativity; Cisnormative, Gender, Intersex, Sex**.

**Eunuch (noun)**

A historical term for an **AMAB** individual who has undergone surgical and social transitions (often against their will) from one form of masculinity to another. The surgery involved took on many forms but traditionally involved the removal of the testes, although not necessarily the penis. These surgeries and transitions were often enacted on slaves and/or criminals but were not always levied against lower-class individuals or as a form of punishment. Cases of

self-castration and becoming-eunuch are reported. Eunuchs tended to have distinct social/religious roles and legal status in societies, marking them as a non-binary gender in addition to men and women but existing within the spectrum of masculinity.

For relevant analyses, see: Szabo; Tougher.

See also: **AMAB**, **Transition**; **Transitioning**.

### **Ey/Em (pronouns)**

An example of gender neutral or non-binary pronouns, to replace 'he/him' and 'she/her'. This pronoun set, formed by removing the 'th' from 'they', 'them', etc, seems to have been invented several times, with slight variations, by a number of different individuals. This pronoun set is often referred to as Spivak pronouns, after mathematician Michael Spivak, who used these pronouns in an AMS-TeX manual, *The Joy of TeX*, in 1983. The subject pronoun 'ey' is sometimes seen as 'e', and all Spivak pronouns may be capitalized.

See: **Pronouns**.

### **Femme (adjective; noun)**

Femme is often seen as a counterpart to, or the opposite of, **Butch**. Femme **AFAB** individuals are generally considered to be gender-conforming, which erases the fact that being femme is as much a specific presentation and/or gender identity as being butch is. Femme identity is significantly associated with lesbian and bisexual identity. For **AMAB** individuals, being femme is a gender non-conforming presentation and/or gender identity, and is often associated with being gay. Precise definitions of femme-ness are temporally and culturally contingent. The prevailing stereotype of the femme woman within dominant cis-heterosexual culture is the 'lipstick lesbian'.

On this, see: Burke; Harris and Crocker. For a case study of butch and femme identities in the queer ballroom scene in Detroit (MI, USA), see: Marlon M. Bailey, pp. 29-76.

See also: **AFAB**, **AMAB**, **Butch**, **Gender Non-Conformity**; **Gender Non-Conforming**

### **FTM (adjective and noun)**

The acronym 'FTM' stands for 'Female to Male'. The term is used by many trans men to describe themselves affirmatively. Other trans men find 'FTM' problematic for a number of reasons, chiefly because the term foregrounds transition over identity, which many feel is inaccurate both practically and conceptually.

The practical issue is the following: a trans man may transition, then live for decades in his identified gender. Fifty years after the process of transitioning is over, the term 'FTM' may seem to define him by a stage in his life which is long past and of little relative importance. For many trans men, **Transition** is a finite process, a ring-fenced, relatively brief period compared to the rest of an individual's life, marking a 'before' and an 'after'. In contrast, many other individuals (both trans and cis) feel that their identity is more accurately represented by a process of constant becoming. As a rule, transition is a personal process which is both irrelevant to and inaccessible by external parties. Thus, identifications made on the basis of an individual's transition status are based on invasive assumptions and should be avoided.

The conceptual issue is that the term 'FTM' presents both female and male gender identities as valid and important parts of the trans man's identity. Yet many trans people experience recognising and coming to understand their identified gender as a process of realising that they have always been this gender, although they may not have been able to understand their gender in this way previously due to social conditioning and the effects of **Essentialist** assumptions in the cultural climate. Thus, **Transition** is experienced a process of revealing their innate gender. By transitioning, they are moving to live and present in ways which are (socially coded as) congruent with that identity, rather than (as the term 'FTM' may be considered to suggest) undertaking a process which *produces* or *enacts* a new gender.

The foregrounding of 'F' in 'FTM', for some, suggests that trans men are 'really' or 'naturally' women, and that their male identity is either an 'unnatural' replacement for their innate femaleness or an accretion layered on top of it. This plays into dangerous stereotypes of trans identities as 'disguises' intended to **Trap** and deceive others. This perspective is not shared by all, however. Some consider the positioning of 'F' in 'FTM' to signify the way in which an individual has left the 'F' behind, and thus the full recognition of their gender identity, while others consider that they were never 'F' in the first place, but were incorrectly assigned this identity due to essentialist socio-cultural assumptions. These individuals may prefer the acronym 'MTM' ('Male to Male'), which acknowledges their trans identity and their transition, whilst affirming the fact that they were always men.

Whilst plenty of trans men still use the term 'FTM', it is a complicated and contested designation. For this reason, do not use it if you are not a trans man referring to yourself. **See also: Essentialism; Essentialising; Essentialist, FTN/FTX, MTF, MTN/MT\*, TERF, Transition; Transitioning. Transphobia; Transphobic, Trap**

### **FTN/FT\* (adjectives; nouns)**

The acronyms 'FTN' and 'FT\*' stand for 'Female to **Neutrois**' and 'Female to [other gender]'. 'FTX' is another variant of these acronyms, for 'Female to X-gender', with 'X-gender' referring, broadly speaking, to agender or non-binary identities. The terms follow the same logic as **FTM**, whilst acknowledging that not every **AFAB** person who transitions is a binary trans man.

**See also: AFAB, Essentialism; Essentialising; Essentialist, FTM, MTF, MTN/MT\*, Neutrois, TERF, Transition; Transitioning. Transphobia; Transphobic, Trap**

### **Gender (noun and adjective)**

Gender is deeply important to many people's sense of their own identity, yet incredibly difficult to define. The most fundamental aspect of gender is identification: who one feels and understands oneself to be. This identification may be affected or influenced by cultural gender norms. The dominant paradigm of gender connects binary genders to the binary sexes from which they supposedly derive. This amounts to a cultural system in which male or female gender is ascribed to an individual on the basis of the appearance of their body at birth. The assumption is that everyone has a fixed gender, which can be discerned through observation of their body. However, this assumption is faulty, or at best ineluctably culturally and temporally contingent. Throughout history, individuals have experienced and demonstrated non-normative

gender, including trans (and thus non-binary), genderqueer and gender non-conforming identities.

Although assigned gender is a cultural imposition, individuals have choices (circumscribed to a greater or lesser degree depending upon cultural and temporal context) as to how they inhabit their gender, including presentation and expression, and the social roles undertaken.

'Gender' is often used as an umbrella term covering a lot of ground, incorporating meanings such as 'gender identity' and 'socialised gender roles', amongst other things. This rhetorical manoeuvre suggests that all these gendered experiences can be assumed to be monolithic, i.e. there is no room for variety or divergence within an individual's lived gender (which is already itself assumed to correlate to assigned gender).

As the multitude of lived experiences demonstrates, gender is a vast and variable array of possible identifications, which is not necessarily static. The phrase 'opposite gender' should be avoided, since it implies that gender is binary and oppositional: that is, the genders are two poles, defined by their separateness from each other. Thus, one is male *because one is not female*, and vice versa.

For more in-depth exploration of gender, see in particular: Bornstein; Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination'.

See also: **Assigned Sex; Assigned Gender, Identified Gender, Sex.**

### **Gender-Affirming Surgery; Gender Confirmation Surgery (noun)**

See: **Transition; Transitioning.**

### **Gender-Creative (adjective)**

'Gender-creative' is a term popularized by Diane Ehrensaft to describe children who 'live outside gender boxes'. While some adult genderqueer and gender non-conforming individuals find the description affirming, others consider the term condescending. Use with caution.

On this, see: Ehrensaft.

See also: **Gender-Expansive, Gender Non-Conformity; Gender Non-Conforming, Genderfluid; Gender Fluidity, Genderqueer.**

### **Gender-Critical (adjective)**

'Gender-critical' is a term adopted by **TERFs** to indicate their distaste for current levels of acceptance of trans, genderqueer and gender non-conforming identities. TERFs' criticism of gender is essentially that it does not exist as such; their argument is that sex is a real, biological attribute, with genuine real-world consequences, while gender is merely a social effect. Thus, what they consider excessive emphasis on gender undermines efforts to fight for equality for the sexes. Gender-critical thought is therefore biologically **Essentialist**.

According to a gender-critical viewpoint, trans men are 'copping out' of their lived experience of women's inequality, whereas trans women are asserting their male privilege to grotesquely usurp even the very state of oppression into which the patriarchy forces women. In this scenario, trans men are deluded by society's misogyny, which they have internalised, with the result that they turn this hatred of women against themselves and attempt to erase their

'intrinsic' female identity. At the same time, trans women are cast as dangerous and predatory figures, invading women's safe spaces and appropriating support meant for 'real' women. This plays into the insidious narrative of trans-ness as a deceitful disguise or **Trap**, leading to real-world violence against the trans community, especially trans women, and even more so trans women of colour.

**See also: Essentialism; Essentialising; Essentialist, Transphobia; Transphobic, Transmisogyny, Transmisogynoir, Trap.**

### **Gender Dysphoria; Gender Dysphoric (noun; adjective)**

There are two broad categories of gender dysphoria: physical and social dysphoria. Not every trans person experiences dysphoria in the same way or to the same degree, or at all.

Physical dysphoria may be described as visceral feelings of discomfort arising from an individual's lack of identification with physical features which are not typically recognised as 'matching' their identified gender. For example: a trans man may feel dysphoric about the appearance and/or feeling of his chest, the way it looks, makes his clothes fit and the way it influences people's assumptions about him. In addition, the appearance and/or feeling of his chest may influence his own assessment of his own identity, in a form of **Internalized Transphobia**.

Social dysphoria may be described as visceral feelings of discomfort arising not from the physical body, but from the way in which others perceive and react to that body, as well as from body-language and behaviours deemed to 'belong' to a particular gender. For example, a non-binary person may not experience dysphoria around their physical body, but find it extremely distressing to be referred to with gendered terms or pronouns.

'Gender euphoria' is a term which originates in trans communities as a play on 'gender dysphoria'. It is used to draw attention to the way in which discussion of trans identities and existences, as well as conversations surrounding transition, tend to focus on trans people's discomfort in their assigned gender, without ever mentioning the sometimes exhilarating feeling of discovering and embodying the gender identity and presentation which is fitting, truthful and right.

**See also: Bind; Binding; Binder, Internalized Transphobia, Pack; Packing; Packer, Pass; Passing, Pronouns**

### **Gender-Expansive (adjective)**

'Gender-expansive' is a term sometimes used of and by genderqueer and/or gender non-conforming people, particularly children. The term works to counteract rigid views of the gender binary, and to combat **Cisnormativity**. Some consider the term condescending and/or infantilising. The designation is sometimes used to skirt the issue of trans, genderqueer and gender non-conforming identity, by offering a euphemistic, non-specific, and therefore more 'palatable' alternative to direct discussion of trans, genderqueer and gender non-conforming experiences. Avoid this usage. Use with caution if referring to individuals.

**See also: Binary, Cisnormativity, Cisnormative, Gender-Creative, Gender Non-Conformity; Gender Non-Conforming, Genderfluid; Gender Fluidity, Genderqueer.**

### **Genderfluid (or Gender-Fluid); Gender Fluidity (adjective; noun)**

Some individuals experience their identified gender as a stable form, whereas for others their gender identity varies. Gender fluidity is not the same as becoming aware that one's identified gender is at odds with one's assigned gender, but rather refers to an identified gender which inherently fluctuates. Genderfluid individuals are included under the trans umbrella. Some genderfluid individuals describe themselves as non-binary, whereas others do not feel the need for another identifier other than genderfluid. Some individuals alter their gender expression or presentation, or use different pronouns, depending on their current experience of their gender. Genderfluid individuals may use any pronouns, and may present in feminine, masculine or androgynous ways. Genderfluid (no hyphen) and gender-fluid (hyphen) are used interchangeably.

**See also: Agender, Non-Binary, Transition; Transitioning, Transfeminine, Transmasculine.**

### **Gender Non-Conformity; Gender Non-Conforming (noun; adjective)**

Gender non-conforming individuals are individuals whose gender expression does not match what is culturally normative for their assigned (and/or identified) gender. Gender non-conforming individuals may not reject their assigned gender, but reject the conventional rules governing gendered behaviour, activities, appearance, etc. Other gender non-conforming individuals may identify as non-cis and/or trans. Gender non-conformity may reflect an individual's rejection of the system of assigned binary gender. Gender non-conforming individuals are often included alongside trans individuals in discussion and activism, in phrases such as 'trans and gender non-conforming'. This is due to the fact that, although gender non-conforming individuals may not be trans, they are likely to face similar oppressions since both groups are perceived as flouting gender norms. 'Gender non-conforming' may be abbreviated to 'GNC'.

**See also: Gender, Gender-Creative, Gender-Expansive, Genderfluid; Gender Fluidity, Genderqueer, Non-Binary.**

### **Genderqueer (adjective)**

Genderqueer individuals experience their assigned gender as inadequate to encompass their gender identity. Genderqueer individuals may identify as trans, though this is not always the case. Genderqueer individuals may additionally identify as **Non-Binary, Genderfluid, Gender Non-Conforming, Transfeminine** or **Transmasculine**. Genderqueer individuals may present in feminine, masculine or androgynous ways, and may use feminine, masculine or gender-neutral pronouns. As always, defer to individuals' preference.

For further reading, see in particular: Nestle, Howell, and Wilchins.

**See also: Assigned Sex; Assigned Gender, Genderfluid; Gender Fluidity, Gender Non-Conformity; Gender Non-Conforming, Non-Binary, Transfeminine, Transmasculine.**

### **He-She (noun; pronoun)**

Avoid, e.g. 'Ashley is a he-she'; 'he-she reads novels'. This is an offensive, derogatory term. It dismissively combines binary categories of gender whilst underscoring the rigidity of the binary

itself, disallowing potential subject positions beyond 'he' or 'she'. Do not use, unless an individual has explicitly told you that this is the pronoun they use.

See: **Pronouns**.

### **He/She (noun; pronoun)**

Avoid in noun form, as in **He-She**. This is an offensive, derogatory term. Use with caution, if at all, as pronoun. 'He/she' is commonly used to denote, superficially at least, a generalized or inclusive reference - for example, if an author does not wish to stipulate 'he' or 'she'. However, when 'he/she' is used to refer to an individual, it may function to erase non-binary identities by constructing them as a failure of the binary, nevertheless comprehensible only on the binary's terms. In addition, this usage may denote the author's dismissive unwillingness to consider a more accurate and respectful pronoun set beyond the binary, such as **'They/Them' (Singular)**.

See: **He-She; Pronouns; 'They/Them' (Singular)**.

### **Hermaphrodite (noun)**

This is an antiquated term for individuals who would now be referred to as intersex. It is offensive in modern usage; do not use unless an individual explicitly tells you that this is the correct way to refer to them. For the most part, the intersex community has rejected the term as both pathological (because of its relation to medical abuse and authority) and social stigma. However, some reclaim the term.

The word 'hermaphrodite' references the Greek myth of Hermaphroditus. In a pre-modern context, the term could signify individuals other than those who would now be considered intersex, including individuals we would now describe as queer, trans, non-binary, or otherwise gender or sexually non-conforming. In addition, 'hermaphrodite' was used to refer to mythical beings who were half men and half women. Given this context, the term 'hermaphrodite' could also convey mythological connotations. As such, trans and intersex bodies become 'unnatural', 'unreal', or merely metaphorical.

When discussing pre-modern 'hermaphrodites', it is important to distinguish between intersex individuals and mythological beings. Avoid 'hermaphrodite' when it has othering implications. It is important to be clear when using the term that it is not a modern usage: use 'intersex' when referring in general to individuals whose biological characteristics do not fit neatly within binary cultural definitions of 'male' and 'female'. When using the term 'hermaphrodite', indicate that this is the term which would have been current in the pre-modern era, and clarify its meaning in context.

See *also*: **Intersex**.

### **Hijra**

A South Asian gender identity.

See: Hinchy; Moorti; Reddy.

See: **White Supremacy**.

### **Identify (As); Identifying (As) (verb; present participle)**

See: **Identified Gender**.



### **Identified Gender (noun)**

Everyone has both an assigned gender and an identified gender. An individual's identified gender is who they understand themselves to be; it is their identity. Thus, both trans women and cis women *identify as* women because they *are* women.

Be precise in your usage of the verb forms '**Identify (As); Identifying (As)**' to avoid delegitimizing trans people's identities. Do not, for example, state: '[Name] identifies as a woman', when you wouldn't use that formulation to refer to a cis woman. Instead, say: '[Name] is a woman'. Or, if it is relevant in the context - which is the case less often than many people assume - state: '[Name] is a trans woman'. 'Identify as' is relevant when distinguishing between assigned and identified gender; otherwise just use 'is'. The construction '[Name] identifies *themselves as*' is unnecessary and incorrect; just use '[Name] identifies as'.

**See also: Assigned Sex; Assigned Gender, Pass; Passing, Read (Someone) As; Reading (Someone) As.**

### **Internalized Transphobia (noun)**

Internalized transphobia is transphobia absorbed by a trans person through exposure to cultural norms, and subsequently directed against themselves, as well as other trans people, either consciously or unconsciously.

**See also: Transphobia; Transphobic.**

### **Intersex (adjective)**

The correct modern word for a person whose biological characteristics do not fit neatly within cultural binary definitions of 'male' and 'female'. Intersex individuals are (almost) always assigned a binary gender at birth, and in most of the world are still subjected to non-consensual surgical or hormonal treatment. These medical interventions aim to align intersex bodies more closely with normative binary gender/sex definitions. This type of intervention is viewed by most intersex people as a violent and unnecessary medicalized imposition of cultural norms. Some intersex individuals identify as trans, some as cis, and some as neither.

**See also: AFAB, AMAB, Assigned Sex; Assigned Gender, CAFAB, CAMAB, Cis(gender), Hermaphrodite, Trans(gender).**

### **It (noun; pronoun)**

Some people use 'it' as their pronoun. Avoid unless an individual has specifically told you that it is correctly referred to as 'it'. The derogatory use of 'it' as a pronoun is very offensive. It can function as an exceptionally dismissive way of referring to trans and genderqueer people, focussing on and stigmatizing their non-conformity to cisgender/heterosexual constructs of gender.

**See also: Preferred Pronouns, Pronouns.**

### **Medical Transition**

**See: Transition; Transitioning.**

### **Misgender; Misgendering (verb; present participle)**

'Misgendering' is the act of using the wrong pronouns and/or gendered nouns to refer to an individual. Both trans and cis people may be misgendered, although the experience is likely to be more distressing to a transgender person. For a trans person, the gender incorrectly ascribed is likely to be the gender they were assigned at birth, and thus echoes the message which society as a whole has attempted to enforce, that the individual is 'really' the gender that they were assigned at birth, and that being trans is 'wrong', 'unnatural' or is not 'real'. As such, misgendering can be a form of micro-aggression.

Misgendering may be deliberate or accidental. Accidental misgendering may happen for a variety of reasons: it may be a mistake which occurs when an individual sees another individual and incorrectly identifies their gender based on socially-accepted cues. This can happen to both cis and trans people. It may be a simple slip of the tongue - again, this happens to both cis and trans people. Or it may be an unthinking, habitual use of gendered language which references a trans person's assigned gender. This can be particularly hurtful, since it can feel like a rejection of the trans individual's expressed and identified gender. Misgendering is often a trigger for dysphoria. Deliberate misgendering is an act of violence.

In the context of literature or history, pay particular attention to context, and what is visible of the character's intentions and identification. If the character's identity is unclear, it can be useful to refer to them using singular 'they/them' pronouns, which are typically viewed as a respectful default. Be clear and precise about the choices you are making, and articulate these to the reader.

**See also: Dead Name; Dead-Naming; Dead Name, Gender Dysphoria; Gender Dysphoric, Internalized Transphobia; Pronouns, Transphobia; Transphobic, 'They/Them' (singular).**

### **MTF (adjective and noun)**

The acronym 'MTF' stands for 'Male to Female'. The term is used by many trans women to describe themselves affirmatively. Other trans women find 'MTF' problematic for a number of reasons, chiefly because the term foregrounds transition over identity, which many feel is inaccurate both practically and conceptually.

The practical issue is the following: a trans woman may transition, then live for decades in her identified gender. Fifty years after the process of transitioning is over, the term 'FTM' may seem to define her by a stage in her life which is long past and of little relative importance. For many trans women, '**Transition**' is a finite process, a ring-fenced, relatively brief period compared to the rest of an individual's life, marking a 'before' and an 'after'. In contrast, many other individuals (both trans and cis) feel that their identity is more accurately represented by a process of constant becoming. As a rule, transition is a personal process which is both irrelevant to and inaccessible by external parties. Thus, identifications made on the basis of an individual's transition status are based on invasive assumptions and should be avoided.

The conceptual issue is that the term 'MTF' presents both female and male gender identities as valid and important parts of the trans man's identity. Yet many trans people experience recognising and coming to understand their identified gender as a process of realising that they have always been this gender, although they may not have been able to understand their gender in this way previously due to social conditioning and the effects of

**Essentialist** assumptions in the cultural climate. Thus, **Transition** is experienced a process of revealing their innate gender. By transitioning, they are moving to live and present in ways which are (socially coded as) congruent with that identity, rather than (as the term ‘MTF’ may be considered to suggest) undertaking a process which *produces* or *enacts* a new gender.

The foregrounding of ‘M’ in ‘MTF’, for some, suggests that trans women are ‘really’ or ‘naturally’ men, and that their female identity is either an ‘unnatural’ replacement for their innate maleness or an accretion layered on top of it. This plays into pernicious stereotypes of trans (and particularly **Transfeminine**) identities as ‘disguises’ intended to **Trap** and deceive others. This is a dangerous and pervasive cultural assumption, which leads to real and often deadly violence against trans women, especially trans women of colour (see **Transmisogyny**, **Transmisogynoir**).

By contrast, some consider the positioning of ‘M’ in ‘MTF’ to signify the way in which an individual has left the ‘M’ behind, and thus the full recognition of their gender identity, while others consider that they were never ‘M’ in the first place, but were incorrectly assigned this identity due to essentialist socio-cultural assumptions. These individuals may prefer the acronym ‘FTF’ (‘Female to Female’), which acknowledges their trans identity and their transition, whilst affirming the fact that they were always women.

Whilst plenty of trans women still use the term ‘MTF’, it is a complicated and contested designation. For this reason, do not use it if you are not a trans woman referring to yourself.

*See also:* **Essentialism; Essentialising; Essentialist, FTM, FTN/FT\*, MTN/MT\*, TERF, Transfemininity; Transfeminine, Transition; Transitioning, Transmisogyny, Transmisogynoir, Transphobia; Transphobic, Trap**

### **MTN/MT\* (adjectives, nouns)**

The acronyms ‘MTN’ and ‘MT\*’ stand for ‘Male to **Neutrois**’ and ‘Male to [other gender]’. ‘MTX’ is another variant of these acronyms, for ‘Male to X-gender’, with ‘X-gender’ referring, broadly speaking, to agender or non-binary identities. The terms follow the same logic as ‘**MTF**’, whilst acknowledging that not every **AMAB** person who transitions is a binary trans woman.

*See also:* **AMAB, Essentialism; Essentialising; Essentialist, FTM, FTN/FT\*, MTF, Neutrois, TERF, Transition; Transitioning, Transphobia; Transphobic, Trap**

### **Names**

When an individual permanently transitions to presenting as their identified gender, always use their post-transition name to refer to them, adding clarifications if necessary. For example, a text may introduce a character by stating: ‘Marie entranced the court with her fine gown.’ Later in the text, the character transitions and assumes a different name, David. Correct usage would thus be: ‘David [i.e. post-transition name] is introduced to the reader before his [i.e. post-transition pronoun] transition, wearing a beautiful dress’. Avoid using gendered nouns which do not match an individual’s identified gender, even when referring to the pre-transition phase (unless this is the preference of the individual in question): ‘David was married to Peter’, not ‘David was Peter’s wife’.

When an individual's transition is not presented as definitive or permanent, or if the pre- and post-transition identities are presented as equally valid, use the name and pronouns which reflect the period under discussion. In order to make these determinations in a sensitive manner, pay close attention to context, and to what is visible of the character's intentions and identification. Be clear and precise about the choices you are making, and articulate these to the reader.

A name which a trans person no longer uses - usually the name they were given at birth - is often referred to as their '**Dead Name**'. 'Dead-naming', or calling someone by their dead name, is taboo in the transgender community. Deliberate dead-naming is a violent act of interpellation, similar to the deliberate use of the wrong pronouns. When citing an author who has transitioned, always refer to them by their new name, even when discussing works published before they transitioned. Where it is necessary to include the dead name to enable readers to find a previous publication (e.g. if John Smith previously published as Mary Smith), use formulations such as: 'John Smith's book *Medieval Mermen* (published as M. Smith)'. It is respectful to use initials in this way to avoid using forenames whose gender does not match the author's identified gender. There is no standard, or one-size-fits-all rule for bibliographies. Nevertheless, a respectful citation would be something like the following: 'Smith, John [publishing as Smith, M], *Medieval Mermen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).'

On practices for citing trans scholars, see: Coman; Thieme and Saunders.

See also: **Identified Gender**, **Misgender**; **Misgendering**, **Pronouns**.

### **Neutrois (adjective)**

'Neutrois' is a gender identity which may fall within the agender and/or non-binary spectrum. The word 'neutrois' refers to a neutral gender. Neutrois individuals may use any pronoun set, and may present in masculine, feminine or neutral/androgynous ways.

See also: **Agender**, **Non-Binary**.

### **Non-Binary (adjective)**

Non-binary is an umbrella term for a range of identities which are neither wholly female nor wholly male. Individuals may simply describe their identity as 'non-binary', or may use additional descriptors for their identity. Non-binary people may or may not identify as trans, since they reject their assigned sex/gender in favour of their identified gender.

Some non-binary people use singular 'they' pronouns; some use 'ze/hir' or other pronouns, or no pronouns; some use binary pronouns. This does not make people more or less non-binary. Some non-binary people present in a masculine way, some in a feminine way, and some in an androgynous way. Some non-binary people's presentation varies. This does not make people more or less non-binary.

'Non-binary' is sometimes abbreviated to 'NB' or 'enby'. Some non-binary people refer to themselves as enbies; don't use this term for someone without asking whether they are comfortable with it. Avoid writing, e.g., 'David is gender non-binary', since 'gender' is redundant in this phrasing, just as 'gender' is redundant in the phrase 'David is gender male'.

Other non-binary genders include, but are not limited to: **Neutrois**, multigender, polygender, intergender. Note that trans people are not non-binary merely by virtue of being trans. Many

non-binary individuals identify as trans, but there are also many *binary* trans people (trans women and trans men). Both binary and non-binary trans people are non-cis. Non-binary refers to a specific set of identities; it is not a synonym for non-cis.

*See also:* **Assigned Sex; Assigned Gender, Gender, Genderfluid; Gender Fluidity, Genderqueer, Pronouns.**

### **Non-Normative Gender (noun)**

'Non-normative gender' can serve as a useful, neutral umbrella term when describing identities in the past which were not necessarily understood by the individuals in question in the same ways in which trans, genderqueer and gender non-conforming identities are understood today. The term can also be used when linking identities in the past to identities in the present. This term also reflects the fact that what is considered 'non-normative' will vary according to temporal and cultural location.

'Non-normative gender' can also be used as an adjective in phrases such as 'non-normative gender identity' or 'non-normatively gendered behaviour'.

*See also:* **Gender.**

### **Out; Outing (verb and adjective; present participle)**

As with non-straight sexualities, a person who is 'out' as trans or genderqueer is someone who has disclosed this identity to (an)other individual(s). It is possible to be out to some people, or in some situations, but not to/in others. '**Coming out**' is often seen as a significant, dramatic, and potentially traumatic singular event; however, coming out is an ongoing process, since once an individual has come out (i.e., decided that particular information about their identity should be made public), they inevitably find themselves repeatedly disclosing this information to different people, in different settings and at different times. 'Outing' someone without their permission is a violent act, with potentially lethal ramifications for the outed individual.

*See also:* **Closet, (In The); Closeted, Pass; Passing, Trap.**

### **Pack; Packing; Packer (verb; present participle; noun)**

Packing refers to the practice of using a 'prosthetic' penis. Packers can be differentiated from dildos or strap-ons (worn dildos), which are 'erect' and carry stronger associations with sex acts, while packers are 'flaccid'. Their primary purpose is to give the look and feeling of a penis, usually under clothing. The term 'packer' encompasses anything (from a commercially manufactured packer, in the shape of a penis and testicles, to a piece of cloth or a balled-up pair of socks) which can be literally packed into underwear or other clothing covering the lower body in order to produce the desired effect. Like a dildo or a strap-on, however, packers may also be considered a part of the wider assemblage that makes up a person's gendered and sexual embodiment. For instance, the term 'packer' may be used to clarify the type or enactment of a trans man's penis; alternatively the term may be omitted, and the 'prosthetic' penis simply affirmed as a penis, i.e. some penises are made of flesh and others of cloth or silicone. People who may pack include **Trans Men** (although not all trans men pack); **Non-Binary** or **Agender** individuals; and cisgender female drag kings. People who pack may do so intermittently, or on certain occasions and not on others.

See also: **Bind; Binding; Binder, Gender Dysphoria; Gender Dysphoric, Pad; Padding, Pass; Passing, Tuck; Tucking.**

### **Pad; Padding (verb; present participle)**

Padding refers to the practice of using materials and undergarments to create a preferred body silhouette, typically by adding volume and shape to the chest, hips, and buttocks. Padding in this way is used to produce a more stereotypically feminine appearance, which may improve the fit of female clothes, alongside reducing an individual's **Gender Dysphoria**. Padding may also be considered a part of the wider assemblage that makes up a person's gendered and sexual embodiment. People who may pad include trans women (although not all trans women pad); non-binary or agender individuals; and cisgender male drag queens. People who pad may do so intermittently, or on certain occasions and not on others.

See also: **Bind; Binding; Binder, Gender Dysphoria; Gender Dysphoric, Pack; Packing, Pass; Passing, Tuck; Tucking.**

### **Pass; Passing (verb; present participle)**

The verb 'passing' refers to being 'read' socially (particularly by strangers) as one's identified gender. The verb may be transitive or intransitive; trans people talk about 'passing' or 'passing as cis'. The phrase 'passing as male/female' should be avoided since it plays into narratives of deception (see **Trap**). The notion of passing is problematic because it reinforces notions of trans people's identified genders a) being secondary to their assigned genders and b) amounting to a kind of disguise. However, the term is still used by transgender individuals because it is a convenient shorthand which also encapsulates the way in which, due to the pervasiveness of oppressive social gender norms, the individual feels pressure to *be readable* as their identified gender, and cannot expect others to make any effort to recognize them as who they are.

The term '**Stealth**' may be used within trans communities to refer to a trans individual who is consistently read as their identified gender, and chooses not to make their trans-ness public. Like 'passing', this term is commonly used among trans individuals as a shorthand to describe the navigation of cisnormative society. However, this is another term which problematically reinscribes narratives of secrecy and disguise, with an individual's trans-ness situated as something to be hidden. Being 'stealth' can be contrasted to being '**Closeted**'. Whereas 'stealth' refers to an individual who is not **Out** as trans but is known as their identified gender, a closeted individual is not out as trans, and is known as their assigned gender. Being stealth and being closeted may both reflect shame, and/or safety concerns if the individual's trans identity were to be disclosed. 'Stealth' refers to a specifically trans form of outness, since a trans woman may be known to all as ('out' as) her identified gender, while concealing her trans status. This distinction does not have an analogue for queer cis individuals.

Instead of 'passing', use: **Read (Someone) As**, as in: 'Before he cut his hair, he was often read as a woman'. The use of 'passing' as an adjective is problematic and offensive, since it unwarrantedly locates value in the 'ability' to be read as one's identified gender. 'Passable' (adjective) is an older iteration of 'passing' (adjective). It is now generally perceived as offensive.

See also: **Cisnormativity; Cisnormative, Cissexism; Cissexist, Closet (In The); Closeted; Out; Outing, Read (Someone) As, Transition; Transitioning, Trap.**

### **Preferred Pronouns (noun)**

Avoid. The term 'preferred pronouns' is well-meaning, yet problematic. Intended to introduce the idea that people may prefer to be referred to using pronouns other than the ones which socialization may lead others to unthinkingly use for them, the term ultimately entrenches difference between trans and cis people. This implies that cis people simply have 'pronouns', whereas trans people have 'preferred pronouns'. This also suggests that trans individuals have 'normal', 'natural' or 'original' pronouns, which they simply 'prefer' not to use; this implication returns to the trope of trans identity as disguise.

In addition, the phrase 'preferred pronouns' suggests that others have a choice in how they address a trans person. Merely 'preferring' particular pronouns is not a very strong argument for their use, and leaves cis people to make their own judgement as to whether the trans individual's 'preference' trumps the potential discomfort which may be experienced by the cis person. This discomfort stems from the requirement for the cis individual to challenge social gender norms by ignoring 'cues' such as physical morphology or vocal pitch which are socially encoded, and internalized, as gender markers. Discomfort may also be generated by the fact that the cis individual is required to correct reflexive, socialized speech conventions with which they have conformed for their entire life, possibly for the first time.

In short: do not use this phrase. Trans people, like cis people, simply have pronouns.

See: **Pronouns**.

### **Pronouns**

Pronouns are vastly overdetermined, freighted with an enormous weight of cultural signification: they are used to label, but also to interpellate, and to reprimand. Thus, for trans people, usage of the correct pronouns is immensely meaningful both in terms of social perception and of self-image.

The most common pronoun sets are: 'she/her', 'he/him', and singular 'they/them'. Avoid referring to 'male' or 'female', 'masculine' or 'feminine' pronouns, as this implies a link between gender identity and pronoun use which is not necessarily accurate. Other neutral or non-binary pronoun sets include '**Ze/Hir**'; '**Ze/Zir**'; '**Ey/Em**', among others. An individual's pronouns are often given in the form 'they [nominative]/them [dative]' as a compromise between brevity and giving the full inflected form which may be necessary for someone to understand how to use less familiar pronoun sets. Some individuals do not use pronouns; in this case, the individual's name is used instead, e.g. 'Ashley picked up Ashley's book'. Note also that some people use more than one pronoun set concurrently and flexibly, e.g. 'Ashley's pronouns are 'she/her' or 'they/them'".

When making pronoun determinations regarding a literary or historical character, pay particular attention to context, and what is visible of the character's intentions and identification. If the character's identity is unclear, it can be useful to refer to them using singular '**They/Them (Singular)**' pronouns. Note, however, that 'they/them' is only a superficially neutral choice, and

has some disadvantages. These are discussed in detail in the entry for 'They/Them (Singular)' below.

As a basic rule, avoid the following pronouns: '**It**', '**He-She**', '**She-He**', '**Shim**'. '**She/He**', '**He/She**' and '**S/He**' should be used with caution, if at all, as they can be problematic. These pronouns are offensive when used to refer to an intersex or non-binary person, or to someone of whose gender the speaker/writer is uncertain. This is because these pronouns deny the validity of these individuals' identities by reducing these identities to something meaningless, incomprehensible or not worth comprehending in the terms of the binary system. These identities are thus presented as 'wrong' according to the binary system, yet only imaginable in terms of the narrow confines of that system. However, these constructions may, at times, be used to represent identities which are both male/masculine and female/feminine.

For example, '**She/He**' might be used to refer to a literary character who is miraculously transformed from female to male, but is presented as first female, then male, in temporally distinct phases. Here, the use of '**She/He**' highlights that those identities form part of one overarching identity, and acknowledges the fact that the character never appears to be, or to understand her/himself as, non-binary. Once again, attention to context and the character's identification is key. Articulate the choices you are making to the reader and be explicit about your thinking. If in doubt, use '**They/Them**' (**Singular**), with full awareness of the drawbacks and nuances of this usage.

For declension tables of neutral/non-binary pronouns, see: the 'Gender Pronouns' fact-sheet produced by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Center. For more detail on gender-inclusive pronouns, including their history, see: Zimman. For an example of nuanced usage of '**She/He**', see: Gutt. For comparative analyses of gender-neutrality across languages (English, French, German, Swedish), see: Hord. On the history of non-binary pronouns, see: Baron.

See also: **Misgender; Misgendering, Non-Binary, 'They/Them' (Singular)**

### **Queer (noun and adjective)**

Formerly a slur, now reclaimed by many as an umbrella term for anyone who does not conform to social gender norms, including gender expression and identity, and gay/lesbian/bi/pan identity. Notably used in academia - queer theory; queer studies etc - but still offensive to some. May be referred to as 'the q-slur'.

### **Read (Someone) As; Reading (Someone) As (verb; present participle)**

To 'read' someone as a particular gender is to gain an impression of their identity based on their presentation. This impression may or may not be accurate. Use '**Read (Someone) As**' instead of '**Pass; Passing**'.

See also: **Pass; Passing**.

### **Sex (noun)**

Sex is supposedly a biological determination dependent on bodily morphology and reproductive capacity. Gender is supposedly derived from sex: that is, the 'bodily truth' of sex characteristics, primarily genitalia. However, the 'objective' determination of sex is already a



culturally-contingent, gendered process. 'Physical sex' is less a biological truth than a social construct. Where we in our culture have chosen to draw the line between what we see as a male sex and what we see as a female sex is more or less arbitrary. For example, for many years, intersex infants were coercively assigned a binary sex at birth (often through genital surgery and/or hormone treatment). Such classifications were dependent on normative calculations derived from genital measurement, and assumptions about whether the infant would grow up to be capable of being the penetrating partner in penis-in-vagina sex.

'Ambiguous' genitalia would be assigned male or female with the aid of a tape measure, with a 'short' phallus classified as female (a clitoris), and a 'long' phallus classified as male (a penis).

Thus it is, in fact, *gender*, and the cultural norms and assumptions which surround it, which necessitates the rigid and insistent categorization of sex. The malleability and fluidity of gender threatens to unsettle the fixity of sex, and to reveal the always-already gendered nature of its construction. Thus it becomes necessary, precisely because of the destabilizing effect of the interactions of sex and gender, to deny that these interactions take place, and to attempt to locate sex beyond gender's reach. Gender precedes and establishes sex, only to posit itself as an effect of sex.

For more on this, see in particular: Butler, *Bodies That Matter, Gender Trouble*; Kralick; Wade.

See also: **Essentialism, Essentialising, Essentialist, Gender, Intersex, Sex Change**.

### **Sex Change (noun)**

Avoid. The term 'sex change' implies a total, and temporally localizable (i.e. it happens at a specific time, has a 'before' and an 'after') switch from one binary sex category to the other. This term (and its cognates, e.g. 'change of sex') is offensive and should never be used. Use instead: 'transition' or 'transformation', depending on temporal context(s) and the circumstances of the events.

The notion of the 'sex change' grounds sex/gender in bodily classification and assigns it the status of biological 'truth'. Thus, it rests not only on a straightforward sex binarism, which is easily and unequivocally diagnosable, but also on a simplistic view of anchoring within these categories. Having erased intersex bodies in order to reduce sex to two clear and discrete categories, this logic then locates sex solely in the body (and mostly in the genitals). Sex is thereby posited as an unassailable truth, and located as such within a prediscursive domain, where it cannot be subject to interrogation or questioning. Yet sex itself is produced by and through gender, and processes of gendering.

'Sex changes' do not exist, because the construction of 'sex' on which this concept is predicated is no more than a sociocultural fantasy — and transgender subjects are those for whom this fantasy rings most false. Non-normatively gendered individuals are subjects whose lived experience has viscerally demonstrated to them that the sociocultural fantasy of the natural and automatic congruence of sex/gender/sexuality is in no way natural or inevitable.

For more analysis on this, see: Butler, *Gender Trouble*.

See also: **Gender, Intersex; Sex, Transition; Transitioning, Trans(gender)**.

### **Sexual-Reassignment Surgery (noun)**

From: *Trans and Genderqueer Subjects in Medieval Hagiography*, ed. by Alicia Spencer-Hall and Blake Gutt (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming 2020).

Avoid as antiquated; use 'gender-affirming surgery' instead.

See: **Transition; Transitioning.**

### **S/He (pronoun)**

This pronoun foregrounds the feminine in a reference to a generalized subject position. As such, it has been used as a powerful means of feminist action, destabilising the patriarchal hierarchy which positions men as the 'default' subject. Use with caution, if at all, when referring to an individual, for reasons discussed in the entries for **He/She** and **She/He**.

See also: **Pronouns.**

### **She-He (noun; pronoun)**

Avoid, e.g. 'Ashley is a she-he'; 'she-he reads novels'. This is an offensive, derogatory term. It dismissively combines binary categories of gender whilst underscoring the rigidity of the binary itself, disallowing potential subject positions beyond 'he' or 'she'. Do not use, unless an individual has explicitly told you that this is the pronoun they use.

See also: **Pronouns.**

### **She/He (noun; pronoun)**

Avoid in noun form, as in **She-He**. This is an offensive, derogatory term. Use with caution, if at all, as pronoun. 'She/he' or '**S/He**' is commonly used to denote, superficially at least, a generalized or inclusive reference - for example, if an author does not wish to stipulate 'she' or 'he'. However, when 'she/he' or 's/he' is used to refer to an individual, it may function to erase non-binary identities by constructing them as a failure of the binary, nevertheless comprehensible only on the binary's terms. In addition, this usage may denote the author's dismissive unwillingness to consider a more accurate and respectful pronoun set beyond the binary.

See also: **She-He; Pronouns.**

### **Shemale (noun)**

Avoid. This is a offensive, derogatory term.

### **Shim (noun; pronoun)**

Avoid. This is an offensive, derogatory term. Never use as a noun, and do not use as a pronoun, unless an individual has explicitly asked you to.

See: **Pronouns.**

### **Social Transition (noun)**

See: **Transition; Transitioning.**

### **Stealth (adjective)**

See: **Pass; Passing.**

### **TERF (noun)**

From: *Trans and Genderqueer Subjects in Medieval Hagiography*, ed. by Alicia Spencer-Hall and Blake Gutt (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming 2020).

This is an acronym for 'Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist'. TERFs are a subset of (typically) second-wave feminists who explicitly reject trans women from their definition of 'woman' due to essentialist claims about genitals and reproductive capacity. They view the supposed 'trans agenda' as entrenching the gender binary, and thus harmful to women. Radical feminists with such views typically reject the label of 'TERF', considering it to be a slur. In recent years, TERF has become widely used, especially on social media, to refer to a transphobic individual, whether or not that individual is a radical feminist to boot. For archetypal frameworks underpinning TERF thinking, see: **Gender-Critical**.

See also: **Essentialism; Essentialising; Essentialist, Gender-Critical, Transmisogyny, Transphobia; Transphobic.**

### **'They/Them' (Singular) (pronoun)**

A non-binary or gender-neutral pronoun, also used as a 'generic' pronoun which aims to avoid offensive, irrelevant and/or inaccurate phraseology. It is often used by non-binary individuals, for whom binary 'he/him' or 'she/her' are inaccurate, and the supposedly generic (yet still binaristic) '**S/He**' (or similar) is equally problematic. Other neutral or non-binary pronoun sets include '**Ze/Hir**'; '**Ze/Zir**'; '**Ey/Em**', among others. 'They' uses an already well known pronoun for a purpose which it has already been in use for some time. In recent years, dictionaries have formally recognized 'they' in the singular as a legitimate pronoun. This follows the evolution of 'you' in English from a plural to a singular a few hundred years ago. 'They' singular has been in use in English for hundreds of years, and is routinely used in casual conversations today.

Note that 'they/them' pronouns tend to be used in two separate ways currently. Firstly, as the correct and specific pronoun set, or one of such sets, for people who have indicated that these are the correct pronouns for them. Secondly, as a 'courtesy' or 'proxy' pronoun set when a person's correct gender pronouns are unknown. Thus, using 'they/them' is not a wholly neutral choice, nor without ramifications. For instance, using 'they/them' as a default pronoun for the categories of 'unknown' and 'other' erases the existence of individuals for whom 'they/them' is the correct pronoun set, the one which accurately reflects their identity. Moreover, referring to an individual with 'they/them' pronouns can function to deny or wilfully reject their gender identity, if deployed to 'overwrite' in bad faith the identified gender of a literary or historical figure, or if an individual has communicated that 'they/them' is not the correct pronoun set. In such cases, the use of 'they/them' to refer to an individual other than oneself may signal a refusal to acknowledge that individual's identified gender. Thus, paradoxically, 'they/them' can underscore that an individual's gender presentation is flawed, or illegible. Nevertheless, using 'they/them' as a default pronoun has significant advantages. It is better than the old-fashioned practice of defaulting to 'he' (for an unknown/unspecified subject), and of default gendering based on external appearance and/or cultural bias. Above all, be clear and precise about the choices you are making and why - including when using 'they/them' - and articulate this to the reader.

For additional guidance on 'they/them' pronouns, see in particular: Bongiovanni and Jimerson. For an example of usage of 'they' (singular) in medieval scholarship, see: Spencer-Hall, *passim*, and the explanatory note on p. 59.

See also: **Misgender; Misgendering, Non-Binary, Pronouns.**

### **Tranny (adjective; noun)**

Avoid. 'Tranny' is generally considered to be a slur. It is most commonly used in reference to trans women. The term has been reclaimed by some trans, non-binary and queer persons as a term of identity or endearment. It may be represented graphically as 'tr\*nny', or referred to as 'the t-slur'.

For more information, see: Serano, 'Personal History'.

See also: **Transmisogyny**, **Transmisogynoir**.

### **Trans(gender) (adjective)**

A transgender (or simply trans) individual is someone whose identified gender does not match their assigned gender. It is a description of a state, rather than a process. For this reason, avoid the term 'transgendered'. However, it may take some time for a transgender individual to realize and/or understand their identified gender, since the normative cultural imperative to be cisgender is so strong.

The neutral antonym of 'transgender', or 'trans', is 'cisgender' or 'cis'. The Latin prefixes 'trans' and 'cis' mean, respectively: 'across, over' (i.e. crossing from one gender (the gender assigned at birth) to another (the identified gender); and 'on this side of' (i.e. not crossing over, but remaining in the gender assigned at birth).

The sole determinant for being trans is identification. Many trans people **Transition** (medically, socially, and/or otherwise), but others cannot, for a variety of reasons, or choose not to. This does not make the individuals any less trans. Similarly, being transgender is not determined by embodiment.

To refer to the state of being trans, use the noun '**Trans-ness**'. For example: 'An individual in the closet is someone that has not told anyone about their trans-ness.' Avoid **Transgenderism**, for reasons explained in the relevant entry.

'Trans' is sometimes also written as 'trans\*'. The **Asterisk (\*)** is a wildcard character, a placeholder indicating that these five letters may be followed by any combination of other letters, e.g. transfeminine, transgender, transmasculine, transsexual, transvestite, etc. This formulation is intended to broaden the possible meanings of 'trans', rendering the term more inclusive. However, many argue that 'trans' is already inclusive, and that the asterisk is therefore unnecessary. This is a polemical debate in trans studies. For a summary, see: Trans Student Educational Resources. Note, however, that while trans is now generally preferred to trans\* when referring to individuals, trans\* is frequently used in trans(\*) studies to refer to broader cultural aspects of trans(\*) experience, and 'trans(\*)' as a discursive construct, e.g. trans(\*) thought, trans(\*) affect, etc. On the trans asterisk and its uses, see: van Kessel, Minnaard and Steinbock; Stryker, Currah and Moore. For an example of the productive use of the trans asterisk, see: Bey.

For further reading, see: Stryker; Stryker and Aizura; Stryker and Whittle. On the intersection of race with trans-ness and genderqueer identities, see in particular: Aizura, Cotten, Balzer/LaGata, Ochoa, and Vidal-Ortiz; Marlon M. Bailey; Driskill; Ellison, Green, Richardson, and Snorton; Johnson; Snorton.

See also: **Assigned Sex; Assigned Gender, Cis(gender), Identified Gender, Transition; Transitioning, Trans(gender) Man, Trans(gender) Woman, Transgenderism; Transgenderist.**

### **Transgendered (past participle)**

Avoid. Transgender is an adjective. 'Transgendered' (like 'gendered') is a past-tense verb. Generally, most people are 'transgender' people and not 'transgendered' unless in the uncommon circumstances of being made trans by outside forces. This is the reason most pro-trans writers and speakers have mostly abandoned 'transgendered' for 'transgender'. Likewise, this is why anti-trans writers and speakers use 'transgendered': either because they are using out-of-date information, or because they view trans-ness as a lifestyle that is indoctrinated into otherwise cisgender men and women. For these reasons, be intentional whenever (trans)gender or (trans)gendered is used, for both grammatical and rhetorical reasons.

See also: **Trans(gender), Transgenderism; Transgenderist.**

### **Transgenderism; Transgenderist (noun; adjective)**

Avoid. 'Transgenderism' is a term used by trans-antagonistic people to imply that being trans is a 'lifestyle choice' and/or an aberration from 'natural' and universal cisgender identity. To describe the state of being trans, use instead the noun **Trans-ness**.

See also: **Trans(gender), Transgendered.**

### **Trans(gender) Man**

A person assigned female at birth who identifies as a man, regardless of whether they have medically or socially transitioned. Note: not a 'transman' or a 'trans-man', nouns implying that 'trans(-)men' and 'men' are different categories, but a 'trans man'. In the latter, the adjective 'trans' modifies the noun 'man', which is a category common to both trans men and cis men.

### **Trans(gender) Woman**

A person assigned male at birth who identifies as a woman, regardless of whether they have medically or socially transitioned. Note: not a 'transwoman' or a 'trans-women', a noun implying that 'trans(-)women' and 'women' are different categories, but a 'trans woman'. In the latter, the adjective 'trans' modifies the noun 'woman', which is a descriptor common to both trans women and cis women.

### **Transition, Transitioning (verb and noun; present participle and adjective)**

Transition refers to the process of assuming or openly declaring a different gendered identity or social role. This may be a temporary or permanent shift. The use of 'transition' moves away from calling such events 'changes' (e.g. '**Sex Change**') because most trans individuals see transition as a process of expressing what has always been their identified gender (even if they were unable to recognise this identification previously, due to cisnormative culture) rather than taking on a new or 'changed' gender. Yet transition is likely also to include changing, correcting,

and/or affirming gender on legal and medical documents, in familial and professional arenas, in clothing and pronoun usage, as well as by using various medical technologies.

Transitions will look different depending on the formulation of genders in the individual's cultural and temporal location, and on the technologies and procedures for transition which are available, as well as the personal inclinations of the individual transitioning. Transition can occur relatively quickly, seemingly all at once, or may occur in fits and starts over a lifetime. Transitions may involve explorations which are later set aside as the person's gender identity evolves.

Social transition refers to non-medical steps taken to alleviate dysphoria and establish one's identified gender, including, but not limited to, changing one's name and/or pronouns; wearing different clothes; wearing or not wearing make-up; wearing different hairstyles; taking on a different social role. Social transition likely to be determined by an individual's cultural and temporal location, as what is socially normative for a particular gender changes in different times and places.

Medical transition refers to hormonal or surgical steps taken to change characteristics or appearance typically in order to reduce physical and/or social **Gender Dysphoria**. Medical transition does not *make* a person trans; people who medically transition do so *because* they are trans. Therefore, it is incorrect to assume that trans people did not exist before medical transition was possible. The term '**Sexual-Reassignment Surgery**' (or 'SRS') denotes surgical steps undertaken as part of medical transition. It is used by some trans people to describe their own experiences, though it is somewhat dated. Avoid, unless you are referring to yourself or you know that this term is used by the person in question. Use '**Gender-Affirming Surgery**' or '**Gender-Confirmation Surgery**' instead. Note, 'surgery' is used here as non-countable, i.e. potentially plural, and does not denote a singular, definitive surgery that enacts trans-ness. There are, instead, many kinds of surgery which a trans individual may or may not undertake, as part of their transition. Transition is not a single pathway, but looks different for every individual.

Not transitioning does not make someone not trans. An individual might not be able to express their identity outwardly at a given moment for various reasons. They may wait until a better time to do so, or they may never be able to express their identity, depending on their social/cultural/historical position.

See also: **Assigned Sex; Assigned Gender, Pass; Passing.**

### **Transfemininity; Transfeminine (noun; adjective)**

'Transfeminine' is an umbrella term which encompasses the identities of individuals whose identified gender is more feminine than their assigned gender. Trans women are transfeminine, but so, too, are some feminine non-binary, genderqueer or genderfluid individuals. The term 'trans woman' generally suggests that femininity is a defining feature of an individual's identified gender. However, a transfeminine person may feel that, while femininity constitutes part of their gender identity, there are other aspects of their gender which are equally or more important. This may, for example, may be the case for feminine non-binary, genderqueer or genderfluid individuals.

See also: **Femme; Genderfluid; Gender Fluidity, Genderqueer, Non-Binary, Trans(gender), Transmasculine.**

### **Transman (noun)**

Avoid. This noun implies that ‘transmen’ and ‘men’ are different categories. Use instead ‘trans man’: here, the adjective ‘trans’ modifies the noun ‘man’, which is a descriptor common to both trans men and cis men.

See also: **Trans(gender) Man.**

### **Transmasculinity; Transmasculine (noun; adjective)**

‘Transmasculine’ is an umbrella term which encompasses the identities of individuals whose identified gender is more masculine than their assigned gender. Trans men are transmasculine, but so, too, are some masculine non-binary, genderqueer or genderfluid individuals. The term ‘trans man’ generally suggests that masculinity is a defining feature of an individual’s identified gender. However, a transmasculine person may feel that, while masculinity constitutes part of their gender identity, there are other aspects of their gender which are equally or more important. This may, for example, be the case for masculine non-binary, genderqueer or genderfluid individuals.

See also: **Butch, Genderfluid; Gender Fluidity, Genderqueer, Non-Binary, Transfeminine, Trans(gender).**

### **Transmisogynoir**

Moya Bailey invented the term ‘misogynoir’ in the late 2000s to name the nuanced, intersectional experience Black women face when dealing with gender-based hatred. Though Bailey explicitly limits the term’s remit to Black women, it has become used more broadly to refer to the misogyny experienced by all women of colour. ‘Misogynoir’ came to be popularised online, especially by the work of the blogger Trudy. She developed Bailey’s concept further, coining the term ‘transmisogynoir’. Transmisogynoir is the intersection of transmisogyny and (anti-Black) racism. Trans women, and in particular trans women of colour, face high levels of abuse, violence and murder. As with misogynoir, transmisogynoir is often used to refer to an experience faced by all trans women of colour, not specifically Black trans women.

On this, see: Moya Bailey; Bailey and Trudy; Trudy (@thetrudz); Trudy, ‘Explanation’.

On violence against trans women, see: Smith, ‘Transgender Day of Remembrance’.

See also: **Internalized Transphobia, Transmisogyny, Transphobia; Transphobic.**

### **Transmisogyny**

Transmisogyny is the intersection of transphobia and misogyny. Trans women, and in particular trans women of colour, face high levels of abuse, violence and murder.

On this, see: Smith.

See also: **Internalized Transphobia, Transmisogynoir, Transphobia; Transphobic.**

### **Trans-ness; transness (noun)**

See: **Trans(gender)**

From: *Trans and Genderqueer Subjects in Medieval Hagiography*, ed. by Alicia Spencer-Hall and Blake Gutt (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming 2020).

### **Transphobia; Transphobic (noun; adjective)**

Transphobia is discrimination against trans people, or people perceived to be trans, on the basis of their gender identity. At the core of transphobia is the assumption that transgender bodies, identities, and experiences are unreal, deceptive, invalid or illegitimate in comparison to cisgender bodies, identities and experiences.

For more on this, see in particular: Serano, 'Detransition'; Smith.

See also: **Internalized Transphobia**, **Transmisogyny**, **Transmisogynoir**.

### **Transsexual (noun and adjective)**

The term 'transsexual' is an older term for identities which are now more commonly described as transgender. A line is sometimes drawn between the two terms, stating that a transsexual person is someone who has taken surgical and/or hormonal steps to change their physical embodiment/sexed body (the implicit, binaristic assumption being that the change is to the 'other' of the two sexes), while a transgender person is someone who (merely) identifies as a gender other than the gender they were assigned at birth. Thus, all transsexuals may be considered transgender, but not all transgender individuals may be considered transsexual.

The term 'transgender' moves beyond the term 'transsexual' in two key ways. First, it surpasses the binaristic framework which 'transsexual' always implies in its attachment, and adherence, to the contours of, 'sex'. 'Transgender' facilitates the conceptualizing of non-binary, agender, and genderqueer identities by opening up possibilities of existence and identification. Secondly, 'transgender' ceases to rely on bodily morphology (and bodily modification) as indicators of identity. In the 'transgender' model, identification is enough; no more evidence of identity is required. Thus, 'transgender' allows the separation of identity and embodied existence, revealing different ways in which bodies can be understood and refusing the limitations of binaristic thinking.

For these reasons, 'transsexual' is now often perceived as a reductive term. It may signal a lack of familiarity regarding current thought on trans identities, and also, in its cleaving to sex, an unwelcome medicalisation and pathologization of bodies and experiences.

'Transsexual' remains close to the '**Sex Change**' narrative, in which a wholesale shift from one binary sex to the other is enacted by medical means, localizable to a specific moment in time. 'Transgender', meanwhile, can encompass complex processes of **Transition** (or lack thereof), and relocates the emphasis of 'trans' from 'objectively' visible medical processes originating outside the self, to affirm the significance and the validity of internal, subjective experiences.

Many trans people, particularly trans elders who grew up with the term 'transsexual', use it to refer to themselves, and others are reclaiming it as an affirming designation. Avoid using this term unless you are referring to yourself, or you know that the individual to whom you are referring prefers this term. Instead, use '**Transgender**'.

See: **Sex Change**; **Transgender**, **Transition**.

### **Transvestite; Transvestism (adjective and noun; noun)**

In popular usage, 'transvestite' is often used synonymously with 'cross-dresser', i.e. to describe an individual who wears clothes typically worn by individuals of the 'opposite' gender.



Historically, however, 'transvestite' was used in psychiatric texts to describe cross-dressing behaviour as 'deviance' with particular links to the 'deviance' of homosexuality. Thus, it carried - and to a certain degree still carries - a connotation of fetish, deployed in a stigmatizing and derogatory way. As such, this terminology should be used with extreme caution. If the context is appropriate, replace with 'cross-dresser', etc., which is stigmatizing to a lesser degree.

Using the term 'transvestite' (or 'transvestism') in relation to trans individuals demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of trans identity. This misunderstanding is founded upon the perception that trans individuals wear clothing associated with the 'opposite' assigned sex/gender, when they are in fact wearing clothing associated with their identified gender. Describing a transgender individual as a 'transvestite' reduces their identity to an 'incorrect' application of cultural norms regarding clothing, and implies that they are 'really' their assigned sex/gender, but masquerading as the 'opposite' sex/gender. For example, a trans woman may be incorrectly perceived as a transvestite: a man wearing women's clothing. However, since she is in fact a woman wearing women's clothing, she is not a transvestite; to describe her as such erases and dismisses her female identity.

See also: **Cross-Dress; Cross-Dressing; Cross-Dresser, Drag, Tranny.**

### **Transwoman (noun)**

Avoid. This noun implies that 'transwomen' and 'women' are different categories. Use instead 'trans woman': here, the adjective 'trans' modifies the noun 'woman', which is a descriptor common to both trans women and cis women.

See also: **Trans(gender) Woman.**

### **Trap (verb; noun; adjectival noun)**

The notion of 'trap' and 'trapping' is a persistent, pervasive, derogatory trope which serves to normalise transphobia and justify transphobic violence. This trope casts trans-ness as insidiously deceptive, i.e. a trap that the trans individual is laying for an 'unsuspecting' cis-het victim. A particularly prevalent 'trap' narrative presents a trans woman 'deceiving' a male love interest, simply by presenting as her identified gender and thereby being an object of the suitor's lust. The eventual 'revelation' that his date is 'really' a man is portrayed as a betrayal of trust and an offense to his heterosexual masculinity which throws him into existential chaos. This 'legitimises' the suitor's violent retribution against the trans woman, even up to the point of murder. If the revelation occurs before (much) physical contact, the suitor is typically portrayed as deeply relieved, having only barely 'escaped' an 'atrocious'. Even if the suitor does not respond with physical violence, he may still do harm to the trans woman, by **Outing** her to others. This narrative places emphasis on the cis-het man's experience and worldview, denying both the validity of the trans woman's identified gender, and the horrifying reality that in a sexual encounter between a trans woman and a cis man, the woman is, statistically speaking, exposed to the risk of transmisogynistic murder, even more so if she is a woman of colour. Similar narratives circulate regarding trans men, but these tend to be less virulent, and are less likely to result in violence.

'Trap' as a noun can be a derogatory term for a trans person, in particular a trans woman. Do not use.

On this trope, see: Gossett, Stanley and Burton.

See also: **Out; Outing, Pass; Passing, Transmisogyny, Transmisogynoir.**

### **Tuck; Tucking (verb and noun; present participle)**

The practice of manipulating, i.e. 'tucking', the genitals to provide a flatter appearance between the legs. Tucking is most often associated with trans women and cisgender male drag queens, although it may be practiced by a wide variety of genders, including intersex and non-binary persons. The flatter appearance is generally supposed to make the body appear more 'feminine' and allow the body to 'pass' more readily as cis female, especially when skin-tight or revealing clothing, such as swimwear, evening wear, or lingerie, is worn. Yet a person may tuck for a wider variety of reasons, including to alleviate feelings of gender dysphoria, or due to an affinity/enjoyment of the flat forms produced. The noun 'tuck' is used on occasion to refer to the result of tucking. People who tuck may do so intermittently, or on certain occasions and not on others.

See also: **Bind; Binding; Binder, Gender Dysphoria; Gender Dysphoric, Pack; Packing; Packer, Pad; Padding, Pass; Passing.**

### **Two-Spirit**

An indigenous North American gender identity.

See: Driskill; Rifkin.

See: **White Supremacy.**

### **White Supremacy**

Gender is inextricably bound up with racialization. White supremacy imposes and centres (white) binary gender, relentlessly othering what it views as non-normative genders, especially when these are expressed by indigenous people and/or people of colour. For this reason, the assumption that indigenous and/or non-white identities such as bakla, hijra, kathoey, two-spirit, and many others, are equivalent to or part of the spectrum of trans identities is an overtly colonizing gesture which presumes the primacy and completeness of the white (trans)gender system. This does not mean, of course, that individuals with these identities cannot or do not include themselves under or see themselves as represented by the LGBTQIA+ umbrella; indeed, some versions of the acronym, such as LGBTQ2S (commonly used in Canada) explicitly reference indigenous two-spirit identities. The distinction to be drawn is between assumptions which flatten the gender of non-white subjects into reductive and marginalizing white paradigms, and the consensual participation of subjects in cultural expressions (such as Pride) which they feel represent, respect and celebrate their identities. Racialized gender descriptors or identities should not be appropriated by those of other heritages.

On this, see: Aizura, Cotten, Balzer/LaGata, Ochoa, and Vidal-Ortiz; binaohan; Camminga; Dutta and Roy; Paramo; Snorton. On gender in North American indigenous cultures, see: Driskill; Jacob, Thomas and Lang; Lang; Rifkin. On hijra identities, see: Hinchy; Moorti; Reddy. On Black trans identities, see: Bey; Ellison, Green, Richardson, and Snorton; Johnson; Snorton.

See also: **Transmisogynoir.**

From: *Trans and Genderqueer Subjects in Medieval Hagiography*, ed. by Alicia Spencer-Hall and Blake Gutt (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming 2020).

**Ze/Hir (pronouns)**

An example of gender neutral or non-binary pronouns, to replace 'he/him' and 'she/her'.

See: **Pronouns**.

**Ze/Zir (pronouns)**

An example of gender neutral or non-binary pronouns, to replace 'he/him' and 'she/her'.

See: **Pronouns**.

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