

Transgender Fiction and the Right-to-Life Issues:  
A Study of Recent Transgender Fiction on Abortion and Euthanasia  
Using Right-to-Life Literary Theory<sup>1</sup>

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Abstract: After reviewing some contemporary scholarship which attempts to connect transgenderism and the right-to-life issues, this study applies the five questions of right-to-life literary theory to recent fictional work concerned with transgenderism and abortion and euthanasia.

When Ryan T. Anderson wrote his *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment* in 2018, transgender activism may indeed have been perceived as a moment, a blip, in the otherwise distorted perspectives of LGBTQ and transgender activists against heterosexual normativity. These distortions have since been forced by the academy on students, by the leftist media on the entire nation, and by the Democratic Party on its candidates running for office.

Certainly, claims by transgender activists that the transgender population of the United States merits more government and social acceptance and support can be questioned by statistics from valid gay and lesbian sources regarding whether there is an urgent need to do so. In terms of raw political power, the numbers of persons affected by gender dysphoria suggest that transgender activism does not merit increased government promotion. *The Nation*, for example, reports that, while 11,000,000 persons in the United States purport to be LGBTQ, the “Portion of US adults who are transgender or nonbinary” is estimated to be 1.6%, or 5.3 million (“By the Numbers”).<sup>2</sup> Now, as the end of 2022 approaches, the past four years of transgender political activity seem only a prelude to an entrenched philosophy which must never be questioned in academia, the media, or in government.

Moreover, the oppression of those who uphold traditional sexual values regarding gender dysphoria is abetted by academics who should support them in the interests of freedom of thought and speech but do not because academia has fallen victim to the aggressive transgender ideology, a belief system

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was first presented on Saturday, 29 October 2022, at the annual conference of the Society of Catholic Social Scientists held at St. Vincent’s College, Latrobe, Pennsylvania.

<sup>2</sup> While his assertions that “millennials appear to be slightly more pro-life than their parents, not less” is not only encouraging but also statistically accurate, citing Michael New’s research, the idea embedded in the dependent clause preceding this claim (“While traditional ethical views on gay marriage, transgenderism, and other anthropological innovations are being rejected by young people”) seems incorrect, given both conservative and liberal reaction to the numbers of students who claim to be transgender. especially in public schools. More research needs to be conducted to determine if the high number of students who claim to be transgender can be attributed to genuine gender dysphoria or to the efforts by their transgender activist teachers to push the LGBTQ agenda on them.

characterized by two inherent logical fallacies in gender identity discourse that most scholars fail to recognize.<sup>3</sup>

First is a phrase used often in transgender political discourse which functions as a rallying cry for extremist transgender activists. While Anderson correctly points out that gender is not “assigned” but “recognized” at birth (77) and, as fetologists know, perceived well before birth, many scholars persist in using the erroneous language of sex assigned at birth, probably because doing so comports with the political view that gender is a social construct instead of a natural factor of human identity. For example, Heidi Moseson and her fellow researchers preface their definitions of the various categories of sexual identities with frequent use of the “assigned” phraseology:

**[slide 2]** Gender identity can be consistent with or different from the sex that someone was assigned at birth. Sex assigned at birth is typically based on external genitalia, and is recorded as female, intersex, or male. “Transgender” is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned to them at birth, while “cisgender” is a term for people whose gender identity aligns with their sex assigned at birth. (2)

Second is a recent phenomenon (within the last year or so), the biologically fallacious yet politically correct idea, according to leftist theorists, that pregnancy can occur in men as well as women. One thinks of how the phrase “pregnant people” instead of “pregnant woman” or “mother” has been excoriated in social media by those who affirm that only women can become pregnant, often ridiculing leftist theorists for sacrificing biological facts of gender identity among humans for the cause of advancing an LGBTQ or transgender agenda. The illogicality of this newest trend has not disturbed

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<sup>3</sup> The opinions of scholars are emphasized in this study if only because those who meet the criteria of being called such (persons who, first, have terminal degrees, second, have been published in their respective fields of study, and, finally, who are working in those fields) should be able to discuss controversial issues such as transgenderism in an objective manner. Claims made by unknown entities on internet sites which suggest that transgenderism and abortion are intimately connected can be discarded as scholarly opinions but appreciated as an indicator of the “mood” of activists on the issues, such as this posting by “Kelly”:

**[slide 2]** Abortion isn’t a women’s rights issue. It’s a human rights issue, and we need to address it as such. Nonbinary, transgender, and agender folks, as well as those who identify outside those labels who can get pregnant deserve to be heard in this discussion, too. Their already-marginalized bodies and experiences are only further harmed with the language we use to discuss abortion. It’s not a decision between a woman and her doctor. It’s a decision between a pregnant person and their doctor or other healthcare worker who can do the procedure.

That the author of this posting lacks the courage of her (the Stacked website uses the pronoun “she” in her biographical entry) convictions to supply her surname should be significant enough for any reader of her work. However, one can appreciate this passage as an example of a transgender activist willing to sacrifice logic and grammar to advance her political purposes. Unfortunately, what this nondescript web author posted mirrors many “scholarly” opinions mentioned in this essay. Faculty, students, and the general public may therefore be justified in disregarding whatever academia has to say about such controversial issues and trust the values taught in their families or in their places of worship instead.

some researchers, however, such as Sydney Calkin and Cordelia Freeman, who answer a question about the connection between gender identity and abortion in their field of feminist geography thus:

**[slide 3]** How are social and cultural geographers leading work to understand the diversity of bodies in relation to reproductivity to better account for the diversity of gender experiences among pregnant people? Research on abortion often uneasily navigates the tensions of gender diversity and fluidity. Restrictions on abortion access are widely understood as gender-based discrimination against women, but not all pregnant people self-identify as women. Moreover, trans and non-binary pregnant people often face the greatest vulnerability in accessing reproductive care. Geographers should do more to account for the intersection of gender with other axes of inequality including sexuality, class, ability, and race in abortion access. (1329-30)

It would seem as though any claim for “rights” of persons experiencing gender dysphoria have only the vaguest connection with any of the three right-to-life issues (abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia), the sexual factor of abortion being the only possible nexus where a transgender person could argue that his or her “rights” are somehow being ignored, frustrated, or trampled. Beyond this vague possibility, however, what does any argument for transgender sexual rights have to do with three practices which kill human beings?

The scholarship surrounding transgenderism has not yet questioned the union of any claim to transgender “rights” and an anti-life mentality. Instead, scholars have decidedly placed themselves fully in support of abortion and other anti-life practices often without delving deeper into the rationale behind the conjoining of the two radically different political issues. For example, Barbara Sutton and Elizabeth Borland argue that

Abortion has also figured prominently in feminist politics, activism and theorizing. Yet as gender binaries are deconstructed in dialogue with queer theory and movements, the meaning of “woman” and “man” cannot be taken for granted, and contemporary abortion politics reflects these contestations. There have been increasing calls in activist spaces to “queer” abortion rights advocacy, to incorporate non-normative understandings of gender identity and sexuality into abortion struggles and services. ([1378])

Furthermore, the naiveté by which these scholars have accepted abortion as being a transgender concern can be reduced to the notion that supporting sexual “freedom” means supporting abortion. One can concede how this political position could have been obtained by leftist activists, for it does seem ineluctable to argue that, if a woman not only wishes but also has a right to engage in unrestrained sexual activity, she then must have the right to kill the unborn child who was not desired yet created by that sexual activity. If there is a “right” to sexual activity, then the domain of that purported right extends

only to sexual activity and not to the domain of another person's body, the person in question being an unborn human being. Moreover, as transgender activists assert, a human body is not necessarily recognized as one of only two genders, but whatever gender a person believes he or she is, disregarding the evidence of his or her genitalia and chromosomal endowment from his or her parents. The scholars who ally themselves with transgender activists, therefore, have unfortunately failed to see the logical fallacy of such a conclusion.<sup>4</sup>

Of course, pro-life academics are able to contend with the assault on heterosexual normativity by LGBTQ and transgender activists by emphasizing the scientific data in their respective fields. Psychologists can assist persons with same-sex attraction to negotiate their unnatural affections, sociologists can direct persons with same-sex attraction to appropriate social services providing support, and medical staff can aid LGBTQ and transgender persons in understanding their bodies as male or female entities with discrete advantages for the promotion of human life.

Given that most faculty and scholars in the humanities, however, have acquiesced to the premises of LGBTQ and transgender political activism (probably because of a misunderstood or distorted sense of what diversity, inclusion, and equity mean), how can any faculty member or scholar in the humanities, particularly in literature, contribute to the severe gap in scholarship which affirms heterosexual normativity and refutes the claim that transgenderism must align itself with practices which lead to the death of human beings, specifically, the unborn by means of abortion, the handicapped newborn through infanticide, and the elderly or medically vulnerable by euthanasia? The balance of this paper will venture to answer that question.

For several years now, I have applied five questions of what I name right-to-life literary theory to various works written on the life issues, a method of literary criticism which, unlike the various theories used in the academy, can assist students of literature to understand a work's perspective on human life more comprehensively than any of the current literary theories which are restrictive, such as feminist literary criticism, which emphasizes the tired concepts of patriarchy and oppression of women; deconstruction, which strives to prove the instability of language; or Marxist literary theory, which emphasizes the importance of economic power on human life.

**[slide 4]** The following are the five questions which constitute right-to-life literary theory. First, does the literary work support the perspective that human life is, in the philosophical sense, a good, some "thing" which is priceless? Second, does the literary work respect the individual as a being with

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<sup>4</sup> To compound the problem of scholars' inability to perceive anything but a pro-abortion connection with the LGBTQ or transgender movements, gender activists may further fail to understand that some LGBTQ persons strive for life-affirming choices in reproduction, as Ashley Lacombe-Duncan and other researchers have claimed, when they noted that "Many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (trans), queer, and other sexual and gender minority (LGBTQ+) people desire to conceive children" (1).

inherent rights, the paramount one being the right to life? Third, if the literary work covers the actions of a family, does it do so respecting heterosexual normativity and the integrity of the family? Fourth, does the literary work comport with the view that unborn, newborn, and mature human life has an inherent right to exist? Finally, when they are faced with their mortality, do the characters come to a realization that there is a divine presence in the world which justifies a life-affirming perspective? These five questions will be applied to two representative transgender novels: Vickie Weaver's *Billie Girl* (2010) and M-E Girard's *Girl Mans Up* (2016).<sup>5</sup>

**[slide 5]** The plots of the novels can be briefly summarized before the questions of right-to-life literary theory are applied. Weaver's novel is mostly a first-person account by Billie Girl, who was abandoned by her birth parents and raised by various people, including two transvestites who called themselves her mothers; she eventually learned that "Big Mom was a boy" and that "Mama Edith was a boy, too" (42). She ends her days in a nursing home where she euthanizes fellow residents. Girard's novel concerns Pen (Penelope), an eleventh grader who thinks that she must engage in same-sex activity because she is attracted to females and who thinks she is transgender because she likes to wear men's clothing and style her hair as males do. In the course of her ventures, Pen assists another high school student in obtaining an abortion and engages in both hetero- and homosexual episodes with her high school friends.

These synopses may suggest that the novels may not be worth examining. While Weaver's is the better novel in terms of deeper issues to explore, both novels suffer from a discursive, if not insipid, style.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, an adult reader (both novels are written for the young adult audience) may not appreciate the emotional trauma that the main characters experience and may thus consider the narratives verbose and immature. However, both novels provide a rich insight into the minds of transgender characters and, certainly, into the views of Girard, a transgender author. Moreover, when the five questions of right-to-life literary theory are applied, readers will discover the life-affirming ideas of both novels even though they seem to support abortion (as in Girard's work) or euthanasia (as in Weaver's novel).

#### A. The Pricelessness of Human Life

**[slide 6]** To answer this first question of right-to-life literary theory, both novels do not convey a sense that human life is either precious or priceless, a

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<sup>5</sup> In the interests of time, four other novels with transgender themes have been excised from this presentation but will be discussed in future research at another conference in 2023: Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* (Black Cat, 2019); Aimee Herman's *Everything Grows* (Three Rooms Press, 2019); Clarissa Goenawan's *The Perfect World of Miwako Sumida* (Soho Press, 2020); and Torrey Peters' *Detransition, Baby* (One World, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Consider, for example, the following insipid lines of needless dialogue:

"I'm smothering, honey," I said.  
 He set the fan on the dresser and aimed it at me.  
 "Is that better?"  
 "Just right." (Weaver 204)

standard principle typical of much modern fiction. Perhaps this can be attributed to the lack of religious sensibility that the major characters in the novels display. Perhaps the characters' lack of piety, a necessary foundation to appreciate the value of human life, is displayed to meet what the publishing world thinks is the dominant secularist view of the young adult demographic, if not of the entire American reading public. Both novels indicate that life is more a drudgery than an opportunity either to fulfill one's life according to set values (a purely secularist view) or to collaborate with the Supreme Being to accomplish good works in this life as a preparation for eternal life (the Judeo-Christian view).

The evidence that human life is more drudge than delight permeates the novels. Pen's motivation in life, which matches that of her friends, is that she is "a boyish, video-game-playing girl" (Girard 2). Billie Girl seems merely to advance from one episode to another, without any direction or goal beyond satisfying her immediate needs; the men in her life are as migratory as the jobs they pursue.

#### B. Respect for the Individual's Right to Life

On this second question of right-to-life literary theory, the selfishness which permeates contemporary fiction for young adults is evident in both novels. Thus, while characters would be hard pressed to assert the right to life of other people, the young adults in these novels seem much more concerned about their own lives. Adolescence is supposedly the time when young people define and refine themselves, their places in society, and even their relationships with other people and God; Girard's characters perform none of these adolescent tasks.

Similarly, Billie Girl's beginnings as an abandoned child should give her reasons to explore her purpose in life; she, like Girard's characters, also does not operate in her fictional space to consider these questions of life and her place in the world. Her philosophy is encapsulated in the commonplace that "We do what we have to do" (Weaver 132), an expression which is unclear regarding moral purpose, suggests dominance of one human being over another, and carries a fatalistic tone ("having to do" something cannot be as joyous as "wanting to do" something). That the characters in these novels are self-centered to an extreme precludes any other interpretation than that they care more for themselves than others. (The moral implications of such self-centeredness will become evident in response to other questions.)

#### C. Heterosexual Normativity and Integrity of the Family

One would presume that the global answer to this third question of right-to-life literary theory would be negative since both novels depict transgender characters who are not only comfortable with their gender dysphoria but also aggressive or militant in supporting the transgender distortion of heterosexual normativity. There is sufficient evidence for this generality and for the characters' distorted views of sexuality.

Unlike religious-based persons who recognize that sexual relations are the province of a husband and wife to accomplish the goals of sacramental marriage (being able to engage in sexual activity to satisfy the human need for pleasure and to be open to the possibility of children), the characters in both novels have a warped sense of sexuality as merely a pleasurable activity, almost on a par with video games to satisfy their entertainment needs. For example, Colby, one of Pen's friends, uses her to obtain other girls as his sexual targets so that the girls won't think he is "a jerk just trying to get laid" (Girard 8). Tellingly, it is this same character who later says that "Getting in their pants isn't worth it" and "I just wanna have fun and get laid" (Girard 29, 30). Another of Pen's friends, Garrett, has a distorted sense of male sexuality. His philosophy, uttered in the commonplace expression (noted above) which evokes more humor than rational thought, is that using condoms is what men do: "A man's gotta do what he's gotta do" (Girard 130).<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, Billie Girl's first exposure to sexuality is a distortion of the sexual act; she learns about male sexuality from a boy whom she masturbated and was masturbated by a man later in life ostensibly as a cure for heavy menstrual cramps. Although not explicitly stated in the novel, these sexual experiences may have affected Billie Girl's attitude toward her reproductive powers: "I had never wanted to be a mother", she claimed (Weaver 132).

#### D. The Inherent Right to Exist of the Unborn, Newborn, and Mature Adults

Both novels fail in answering this fourth criterion of right-to-life literary theory, and the failures are expressed in a surprising and ironic manner. For example, one would expect that Pen, who is steeped in the transgender ideology, would think that assisting a fellow student in obtaining an abortion is consistent with her philosophical beliefs about gay and lesbian activism, which anti-life feminism distorted to include the killing of an unborn child. One does not expect, therefore, that the abortion episode in the novel would be so cavalierly handled. Perhaps the author did not want to make her novel preachy. More likely, the brevity of the abortion incident suggests that, in a transgender character's (and author's) mind, abortion is not as important a matter as asserting one's "right" to unlimited and unrestricted sexual activity with persons of the same sex. After all, the six pages which mention Olivia's abortion (191, 241, 262-3, 286, and 353) constitute 1.6% of the entire novel of 373 pages. Granted, this is only one calculation in one novel, but this example counters the ideology asserted in scholarly literature that abortion is somehow vitally important to the rights of transgender people.

More disturbing is the idea that animal life may be more valuable than human life as when Pen declares that she is emotionally bothered by blowing up

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<sup>7</sup> It may be more than a coincidence that both novels contain this expression. Billie Girl states that "We do what we have to do" halfway through the novel after she admits that she was relieved when her child was stillborn because she "had never wanted to be a mother" (132), a negation of the maternal function. Likewise, Garrett's use of this commonplace reinforces a negation of his paternal function.

video game dogs: “It kind of bugs me that I have to blow up dogs” (Girard 32). Similarly, Pen later expresses in strong language her sadness about killing snails in her back yard: “I kind of feel like crap for destroying their home and murdering them” (Girard 51). Since this idea is not contained in a solitary incident, one must conclude that the author deliberately conveyed these bits of information to convey the anti-human mentality of such a character. Remember that it is Pen who assists her friend Olivia in obtaining an abortion, so an unborn child’s life obviously is not as valuable as a real snail’s life or even a video game dog’s.

**[slide 7]** Both novels express well the confusion over language at the center of the abortion and transgender issues. For example, Pen’s confusion over words like “dude” and “girl” is central to the transgender debate: “It’s like one second, I should be a better dude. I should stop being such a girly douche, and I should just man up. Then, it’s the opposite: I’m too much of a guy, and it’s not right. I should be a girl, because that’s what I’m supposed to be” (Girard 42). Furthermore, Pen’s inability to understand English words which have stood the test of hundreds of years is evident in the following passage wherein she examines LGBTQ vocabulary:

I don’t think of myself as being gay, because that word sounds like it belongs to some guy. *Lesbian* makes me think of some forty-year-old woman. And *queer* feels like it can mean anything, but like—am I queer because I like girls, or because I look the way I do? Maybe I don’t know enough words. (Girard 65; italics in original)

Perhaps this is why Pen is confused in identifying her relationship with Blake, her lesbian lover; she wants “to be a boyfriend who is a girl” to Blake (84).

**[slide 8]** Consistent with the characters’ faltering over ordinary language to denote their sexuality is their failure at using language to denote the acts of killing in both novels. Although she recognizes, albeit using incorrect anatomical language, that “there’s a baby inside Olivia’s stomach” (Girard 190), Pen falters when she asks Olivia when she will “start looking...you know?” (Girard 117; ellipsis in original).<sup>8</sup> Pen falters again when she begins to state, “You’re going to get an abor—” (Girard 118). That Pen is unable to recognize, let alone utter, the words “pregnancy” and “abortion” suggests the inherent philosophical problem that transgender persons represented by this fictional character have in overcoming the denotative power of these heterosexual terms.

If verbal recognition of the unborn child occurs in the novel, then there is also the urge to keep the abortion of that child secret. Pen urges Olivia not to talk with Colby, who fathered the child: “Say you wanted to decide stuff. I just don’t think letting him in your head would help. Things would get all twisted and confused” (Girard 161). Pen’s justification for Olivia to abort is purely subjective more than rational thought based on religious principles, such as the sacredness of human life: “I think maybe you shouldn’t think about doing what’s right, and maybe you should just do what feels *less wrong*”(Girard 193; italics in original).

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<sup>8</sup> One can argue that the confusion over “stomach” and “uterus” may not simply be bad writing but a deliberate attempt to show that Pen is not only sexually immature but also ignorant. Such a claim may not be tenable, however, since Pen is depicted as an intelligent student.



Pen is utterly unable to perceive the logical consequences of her decision to assist Olivia in obtaining an abortion; rather, she “was hoping the whole thing just went away” (Girard 242). After the abortion, Pen uses a string of “feeling”-based expressions in a conversation with Olivia to reinforce her standard of adhering to a pure subjectivism:

**[slide 9]** You don’t have to feel bad for having done it, but I think you might end up feeling bad about something, anything. Like feeling bad you could never tell your mom, or feeling bad you didn’t get the pill, or feeling bad for liking Colby, or...anything really. (Girard 269; ellipsis in original)

It may be the author’s intent to show that Pen is not a static, but a dynamic character. Pen is able to overcome a significant linguistic inability and seems to recognize that an anti-life philosophy is anti-human. For example, only much later in the narrative can Pen utter the word “abortion”, as when she debates whether she should text Olivia, using first the third-person neutral pronoun followed by an apposition: “I want to ask her if she regrets it, the abortion” (Girard 286). Also, Pen seems to understand the anti-human nature of abortion as when she accuses Colby of discarding his friends and his former lover, Olivia: “They’re people you threw away” (Girard 318). It is ironic, of course, that she chides Colby for doing what she and Olivia have collaborated in doing, discarding the unborn child by having him or her killed in an abortion.

One of Pen’s final lengthy reflections towards novel’s end functions as a summary of her adventures throughout the work, and it is interesting that this passage contains not only the explicit mention of Olivia’s abortion, but also her claim that she has no regrets about her involvement in the killing or, apparently, her lesbian activity:

**[slide 10]** I’m full of bad feelings.

Not because I feel guilty, or because I regret what I’ve done, though. It’s like I keep telling Olivia when she thinks about the abortion: it’s okay to feel bad about how things went down, but it’s not okay to drown in guilt and regret every day for having made decisions other people don’t agree with. At some point, we all have to man up and decide to do what we have to do, despite the people around us who try to get in the way. (Girard 353)

The astute reader would recognize the repetition of the commonplace “do what we have to do” and, hopefully, see that such a philosophy incarnates the logical fallacy of begging the question (what exactly is the “what” that anybody must do and is it moral?). Also, like Hemingway’s famous character in the short story “Hills Like White Elephants” who feels “fine” when she discusses abortion with the father of the child, the repetition of “regret” twice in this brief passage should trigger the reader to question whether Pen is indeed free of guilt.

Readers may fail to understand how Weaver’s novel also does not meet this fourth criterion of right-to-life literary theory without understanding its surprising and ironic dénouement. The reader has followed Billie Girl from babyhood, through her adolescence, to young adulthood, to mature adulthood,

to old age. One would expect that a life negotiating and overcoming major disappointments would convince Billie Girl to appreciate her inner strength and live the remainder of her days knowing that throughout her life she accomplished "what [she had] to do" (Weaver 132).

**[slide 11]** The contrast in character development, then, which occurs at novel's end is profound. Billie Girl calls the elderly in the nursing home where she resides "other old, useless, decomposing human beings—most of them not in their right minds" [Weaver 221]. With such an attitude, Billie Girl obviously favors mercy killing: "Though I had helped Grandma meet her Maker, it took me being life-wounded myself to understand the mercy of killing" [Weaver 221]. She decides to kill fellow nursing home residents with pills, and her further killings are expressed casually, as though the people she dispatched were taking some means of transportation for a long journey: "The next two residents I sent on their way" (Weaver 225). The hyperbatonic structure of this sentence should signal the reader that something is indeed wrong about the activity of killing people.

Unlike other pro-euthanasia fiction which dwells on the terminal status of some patients and their pain (which, for some reason, is never alleviated by proper palliative care, even in circumstances which are the most technologically advanced), Billie Girl decides whom to kill based on the most specious of reasons. For example, she kills her roommate because "She had pooped in the bed" (Weaver 228). Given such a positive view towards killing fellow human beings, it is not at all surprising that Billie Girl would commit suicide: "I covered up and shoved my hands into my sweater pockets to keep warm. Out of habit, my fingers groped around. I came across two pills in the right-hand pocket. Two pills" (Weaver 231).

#### E. Realizing the Divine Presence When Faced with Mortality

As is typical with most modern fiction, the word "God" is almost never used in both novels as the noun to refer to the Supreme Being, but as an interjection (usually lower case) or as the vulgar command to damn someone or something. The personal lives of the characters do not manifest any sense of piety. Pen recognizes that her Portuguese parents are devout Catholics, but she does not follow the faith; Billie Girl, similarly, never expresses a belief in God or in Scriptures. Answering this last question of right-to-life literary theory, therefore, is especially challenging unless one deconstructs several passages to locate characters' sense of their mortality and any relationship with a Supreme Being.

The closest one can come to perceive that Pen has a sense of the divine presence in the world occurs when she states her antipathy towards killing animals. (Recall that she was distressed when she had to "to blow up dogs" in video games and felt "like crap for destroying [a snail's] home and murdering them" (Girard 32, 51). Her code of ethics, then, must align with a sense of the divine, most probably derived from her parents', especially her mother's, Catholicism, for she uses highly connotative words to describe her actions. "Blow up", "destroying", and "murdering" indicate that she knows that these actions are morally wrong; not being able to see how these negative actions kill unborn

human beings is her moral blind spot. Furthermore, that she maligns her mother throughout the novel is beside the point; Pen had expressed her opinions about the Portuguese traditions of living the Catholic Faith often, so the concepts must have been internalized. Since Pen is only sixteen, one must conclude that her spiritual journey can only be fulfilled with decades more of soul-searching.

In contrast, Billie Girl's sense of the divine in human life comes almost exactly at the end of her life, when she asserts that, "Though I had helped Grandma meet her Maker, it took me being life-wounded myself to understand the mercy of killing" [Weaver 221]. The reader must conclude, therefore, that the use of the words "Maker" (note the capitalization, unlike other modern novels where the term is always lower case) and the phrase "the mercy of killing" presumes some religious sensibility obtained at this, the end of her life. Even though the terms indicate a generic and warped sense, respectively, their presence in the novel at the crucial step in the plot where the drama ineluctably ends with her death can be interpreted as, first, evidence that Billie Girl recognizes a Supreme Being (denoted by His function of Creator) and, second, that she is aware of the benefits that death provides to a weary life. Note that she did not use the more commonly understood phrase "mercy killing", but the lengthier prepositional phrase; although it is one involving "killing", the term "mercy" is thus highlighted as the major noun in the phrase since "killing" is subordinated by the preposition. One hopes, therefore, that what Billie Girl was striving for in killing others and herself was God's mercy more than anything else.

What summary comments can conclude this brief study of only two recent transgender fictional works on the life issues? I offer two comments and recommend a course of criticism to respond to such works of fiction.

First, recent transgender fiction reinforces the anti-life ideas of traditional pro-abortion fiction. The same plot devices occur in transgender fiction as in fiction written by or involving heterosexual characters; one thinks, for example, of Pen's collaboration with the mother to abort an unborn child, a template dating from pre-legalization times involving a willing accomplice to the abortion killing. Billie Girl's euthanasia activities mimic those fictional works which suggest that killing the elderly or the medically vulnerable equates with the alleviation of pain or emotional distress.

Second, transgender fiction on the two life issues discussed here includes an abortion and euthanasia episode for no apparent reason beyond being activities which comport with a distortion of the purposes of human life and, most importantly, human sexuality. Abortion and euthanasia have no bearing on sexual activity of transgender persons per se; their engaging in immoral sexual activities concerns sexual morality more than the first civil right to life.

Why transgender activists (especially those in academia) and writers support abortion, therefore, indicates an irrational philosophical position that must be disclosed and countered. When transgender fiction includes an episode involving the life issues and seems to accept the killing of the unborn, the newborn, or the elderly, I recommend that it is every faculty member's, student's,

and reader's duty to challenge the forced connection between transgenderism and an anti-life philosophy. Criticism of these two novels using right-to-life literary theory is a good beginning.

**[slide 12]** Works Cited

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