

*Intertitle <BY THE ACCIDENT OF YOUR BIRTH>
<England, 1930>*

*(Shot of Knole House, a huge stately home, viewed from above the rooftops)
Deep woman's voice narrates*

A boy and a girl, cousins the two are up on the roof.
It is house where she was born, this the house of her father.
The house he will inherit, the boy cousin his frail legs fail, he slips and falls.
Caught by the girl's strong arms she smiles and says;
If I only had a key, I wouldn't feel so locked out.
The boy cousin silent she repeats, looking down at the ground below, her village of a house.
If I had a key, I wouldn't feel so locked out.
He hangs in the night.
You're quite safe she says, I'm strong as many a man and your bones are light as air.
The boy knows it to be true.
But still, she says;
If you reach down into your pocket and find a key, then by the accident of your birth you've been given a great many advantages over me. If like me, you reach down and find it empty, an inverse space where a key could yet be, well then you've been denied. By a technical fault over which you have no control.
I never wanted a key, says the boy.
So now we are equal, says the girl
I'm not envious of your key, you see, but that is the word they tell me fits these feelings I have.
I wish there were no keys. No divide between one and another.
But still, father locks the door, so I need a key.
And if I had a key, I would have a pocket, and with my key in my pocket I would be happy and write
I would write the story of my lives as she's and my lives as he's, from now I can write as a third person we. You see, looking down on this boy, this girl, up here where we we belong, we can see everything that's been going on. From a distance, a height, the lines begin to form into shapes, shapes make clear the plans, for planned this has been. A construction of nature over time becomes as natural as anything. And if you say the same words over and over again, people will start to believe they hold meaning.

What is it to be a man? What is it to be a woman?
What is it to be blue or pink or any colour in between?
What of these tones, what could these colours mean?

(Shot of Sissinghurst, stately home, flowerbeds in different colours on two screens)

All gender trouble aside, let's start at the beginning.
What is it to be born?

male, or female?

What is it?

(shot of drawings of faces, starting with first lines, similar but distinct androgynous faces of cousins on two screens)

Is it a technical fault over which we have no control, or is it in fact, not a fault of we but another's choice not yet chosen by a me. Herded either side of an hazy line, there's power over doubt in numbers and a decision MUST be made. For is it not true, by committee or two, the reaching hand of the medical man at birth is the long arm of the law?

(shot of hand uncovering carrots in Sissinghurst gardens)

What is it to be male?

What is it to be female?

What is it? What is it?

(back to shot of faces unfolding drawing in real time emerging from white page)

What was it then?

For our cousins, at birth

*Intertitle <The reaching hand of the medical man is at birth the long arm of the law>
<England, late 19th Century>*

The many hands of medical men

They said

The key is in the undergarment, there's truth to be found there. A decision must be made and power over doubt can be found in numbers. Destiny by committee is the only way to maintain a natural division of bodies.

Please doctor! said the powers that be, Restore order in the laboratory, marital beds, the streets. Let legal lines be clear biology. Uncertain sex leads to unnatural alliances, monstrosities. We've heard tales of where mistaken identity can lead; two men, two women lain in unity!

What is it you want from one another? A god asked of two lovers. Do you desire to be wholly one?

*Intertitle <The sexes were not two, but originally three>
Greece, 370 BC*

A philosopher stood in a circle of other men to tell a tale; how men and women came to be. Once he said, the types of people were three. Men, women and a being which was a mixture of the two, of which now, only the name remains. These humans were two sided, with four hands, four feet, two faces and two members a piece, the man and women identical each side and the androgyne possessing both one side of both male and female a piece. One day the humans did upset the gods and as a punishment were each split into two, casting them out forever as un-whole beings, sewn up by the belly button. These halves spent their lives roaming the earth looking for their original other, the men seeking their male other halves, the women seeking women, and the original androgyne halves seeking a half from the opposite sex.

What is it you want from one another? Do you desire to be wholly one? Said the god.

The girl often felt she was two different people, a being of dual nature. Half wild and forceful, half gentle and submissive, which she ascribed to her being part Southern European, part Northern. Trying to be both the thistle and the thistle-down. She said. It's so neat, this division in me, you'll never know.

(same face on both screens, drawing unfolding)

*Intertitle <Power over doubt; can be found in numbers>
Europe, mid nineteenth century*

Just as the cousins were being born, all hermaphrodites ceased to be. Not bodily, but linguistically legally. It had to be. Male or female, said the law. Certificates please! Said the lawyers to the doctors. Let's reinstate the natural order. The medical men duly agreed. Bodies born in between are just problems yet solved. For true sex lies, where the gonads are found. Testes make men, ovaries - women. Once truth has been established, a believable sex can be constructed, the disagreeing body adjusted to fit.

(drawings of cell division, chromosomes, lines being drawn across the screen from one screen to another, the same image in on both, with a slight difference, a time lag)

The age of gonads came and went, disproved by the age of hormones, the age of chromosomes. There were now so many different measures of determining true sex, could there be any truth in them at all? If two truths say one thing and the third the opposite, are the first two still true? And yet it remains, here and now, at each birth, the choice is still one of two. A decision must be made and power over doubt can be found in numbers.

When you get to the border, you will find there is nothing there, no line in the sand after all. You see the same arrangements, paused in different stages of development. The ground remains exactly the same, its meaning shifting through societies. This is no physical opposition but a semantic scything of infinite bodies into two defining camps.

What is it to be a man? What is to be a woman?
What is it? What is it?

*Intertitle <Check Clause 16b>
<United Kingdom, 2004>*

Fifty years after the cousins' death, they passed a law allowing a person to change their gender. To one of their own choosing, out of a choice of two. First consult the medics, go before the committee. A decision must be made and power over doubt can be found in numbers. It's done, it's done! Legally, you're free.

Could the reborn girl, via the medics, the lawyers, have got her key? But check Clause 16b. Her love for the house was not to be. The legal change may be ignored. By religions, sports teams, and the hereditary peerages of aristocracy.

(shot of house from the side, woman runs through grounds)

Some sports are not for your sort.
Let's look at this from another angle.
Can a person really fall in love with a house?
Does a house have a sex?
A boat does, doesn't she.
Here comes a woman, how do we know?
Some sports are not for your sort.

*Intertitle <Classification and Name-giving will be the foundation of our science>
<Europe, Mid 18th Century>*

To sort is to separate things into different groups based on a set of differences. Or one difference. A naturalist is a person who attempts to bring order to nature, sorting into genera, types, classes. One of these men once said of his field; There are no natural systems of plants, so artificial ones will have to be created.

(shots of faces unfolding on opposing screens, names appear)

The cousins tried on names like they tried on outfits. The girl was Julian, the dark man, occasionally Mrs Harold Nicholson. The boy was a musician, a writer, a Lord Sackville. She was a wounded French soldier in a uniform of breeches and pearls. He wore a long velvet cape and a delicately arched brow. The girl took a husband but not his name, the boy didn't either, but then he didn't take a husband at all. Nobody ever asked.
Is he musical? The other boys asked of him. Does she stand on the night train? The girls asked of her.

The girl said, nothing is an adventure until it becomes an adventure in the mind. The imaginary is the key to the real.

Intertitle <The imaginary is the key to the real>

One of the naturalists said; there exists in nature only individuals. The types, orders and classes exist only in our imagination. Wanting to judge the whole, on the basis of a single part is an error. This way of knowing is not a science, but an arbitrary language out of which no real knowledge can come.

But the other men still said

<Classification and Name giving will be the foundation of our science.>

(shots of Sissinghurst gardens, emphasis on beds and borders)

The girl became a woman, a gardener. She brought order to nature, cut borders between one type and another, constantly struggling to keep wilderness at bay.

A hedge of sweet briar will keep out intruders, she said, and happily married colours may mix in the beds.

A knowledgeable gardener can name all the plants in their garden. Those plants which cannot be named are not plants at all but weeds, and must be removed. She ordered bulbs from the nurseryman, watched them grow into young plants.

The girl's husband was constantly reminding her, she must label the bare earth where bulbs had planted. What use would be a beautiful bed with unidentified contents?

A rose by any other name would smell as sweet, said the girl.

(shot of rose label 'allen chandler')

If you call a rose Allen, does it grow up to be a man? Climbing ever higher toward the sun.

The girl said the first time she tried on breeches she realised she could run and climb, just like a boy. With breeches, for the first time came pockets, which she thrust her hands into at every opportunity. Still no key was found there, but the outward appearance finally fit her inner nature.

(shot of organ at Knole, musical notation being drawn onto the page)

The boy had always struggled to find a way of understanding the world, of knowing other people. As a child he translated everybody he met into musical passages in order to make sense of them. The only person who escaped this act of transmutation was his mother, who existed for him beyond any sense of language.

On a piano, each note is separate from the next, individual keys named from A to G.

Each key must be tuned by a trained ear. He knows what each note should sound like, what pitch has been agreed to correspond with each letter.

On a guitar there are no separate keys but a string which is pressed at various points along a fretboard. There are lines to guide your fingers to where each correct note should be. On a double bass there are no lines at all, but still you must find the notes which have been taught to you, which your ear has been trained to understand as the right type of sound.

Along each string, between all these named notes, there are infinite intersteps, a spectrum of other pitches, notes and keys which have no place in music, at least not in this part of the world. These tones, pitch points continue to exist in the air, the ear, but never on paper. The landing of a hand upon one of these notes is an accident, regardless of the hand's intentions.

The human voice must also by natural inclination or learned behaviours, only land on certain notes, certain registers, in order to be recognised as correct.

(shot of two faces unfolding)

The girl's voice was an octave or so deeper than the boy's, her moustaches more impressive, but beyond this, there was barely a difference distinguishable between the two cousins. They shared one and the same face, worn only slightly differently according to their moods. For they had no thoughts, only moods. Yes they shared the same hooded eyes, their shared mark of inheritance, their brow born genetic trait.

Start with the eyebrows, always the eyebrows, how much hair is too much? How much hair is not enough? For him or for her? Then the eyes, the very same eyes. Chin too long, too wide, not square, not straight enough? How will we know?

What is it to be a man? What is it to be a woman? What is it? What is it?

To the casual observer, a certain boldness of gesture and mannerism, the habit of striding, the wearing of deliberately masculine hats.

But this is our girl, not our boy, so what is it to be male? What is it to be female?

What is it? What is it?

Start with the eyebrows always the eyebrows. A little more hair here, a little less hair over there, is that what marks the difference? Or is it the great pains taken to disguise or accentuate the hair which marks the difference? The boy was clean shaven almost his whole life, the girl was not.

Some ask Is the lesbian more likely to sprout a moustache? Is the moustache more likely to become lesbian? What then of beards?

They looked out from the same dark hooded eyes.

She thought how natural it felt to be someone's husband.

What is it to be a man? What is it to be a woman?

What is it? What is it?

Intertitle Greece 380 BC

<The only difference is one bears and the other begets>

But if to be male is to beget and to be female is to bear, what truth then for our contrary pair? The only things he did by begetting were illnesses and pains of the heart from falling for the most unsuitable suitors, sirs who would suit her better than him but he couldn't be helped in that department.

She did bear a couple of sons, but couldn't bear to be nothing but a mother, nothing but a wife. Although she never quite managed to beget another woman with child, she tried harder than him, for many years, with many women.

If the only difference is one bears and the other begets and the man does neither and woman tries both, is the male man not neither and the female man not both?

The girl thought, how natural it felt to be someone's husband. She went back into the stables and emerged once more as a woman.

Husbandry is the act of raising crops and breeding livestock.

(shot of sheep grazing under a tree)

Intertitle <Europe mid 18th century>

There was once a naturalist whose father was the first gynaecologist. He said. There is an extreme difficulty in fixing the boundary which separates the animal from the vegetable kingdom.

(shot of vegetables being examined at Sissinghurst)

His friend agreed. Between a protozoan and a mammal is only a succession of intersteps, nature can evolve an onion into a philosopher or a mollusc into a prime minister.

(images of gardens crossing from one screen to another, blurring)

A homosexual is a natural psychological intergrade, just as a hermaphrodite is a natural physical intergrade.

(lines unfolding spreading from left screen to right horizontally travelling with bumps appearing, like music or a heartbeat)

If the spectrum is a chain, who is drawing this line through the middle? Who is saying that each specimen must conform to one of two theories or else be thought imperfect, abnormal? Why not recognise the infinite biological intersteps of male and female?

The notes in between A and B, the weeds springing up in the cracks between the borders, the cousins slipping genders between men and women.

The organisation system likely arranges the world in a way to reinforce the system-makers idea of the world. The classifiers invent the classification and classification and name-giving will be the foundation of our science.

Intertitle <Europe mid 18th Century>

An early naturalist grouped animals which have mammarys to feed their young into a category he named mammals. It is said he chose this method of differentiating one organism from another because he was himself obsessed with breasts.

(shot of faces unfolding, Vita and Violet, followed by a succession of eyes)

The girl grew up and reluctantly became a woman, fell in love with another woman and then another, and another. And the man if that is what we must name him, fell in love with another man and another until there were so many of these eyes casting knowing looks across crowded rooms that they couldn't possibly be an anomaly, an abnormality, a deviation from nature's path. They were the intersteps, the backstairs element, the notes between, which existed in body, if not in language. They began to multiply in such numbers as to disprove the theories of their time, they proved instead the theories of another.

What is it you two lovers want of one another? Asked the god, do you desire to be wholly one?

(Shot of sheep grazing under a tree)

If you see a group of men gathered together in a certain part of town, are they necessarily homosexual?

Some say it is against nature, some say it is an expression of one's true nature, societally repressed. Some say, one man's nature is another man's abomination.

The love which dare not speaks its name.

The girl and her husband were as happy and loyal as a married couple could be. They were practising homosexuals, but not with each other. Practising for what? You may ask. Towards some sort of perfect symmetry.

What do you mortals want of one another? The god asked of the two lovers. Do you desire to be wholly one?

If I had a key - I wouldn't feel so locked out! said the girl.

Intertitle <But the ultimate truth and so her fate lay in her body, not in her desires, not in her acts.>

England, late 19th Century

An woman claimed she was the rightful heir to a title. She said her true male sex was hidden by her outward womanly appearance. She was committed to an asylum, medically and legally detained. A committee decided her extra member must have grown from her delusions of malehood.

What if you woke up one day, not just any day, but say, the 10th of May and found that you were no longer a boy, but had become a grown woman?

What if you woke up one day and found that the country you used to live in, no longer recognised you as one of its citizens? The country itself had ceased to exist. You no longer recognised yourself, for the borders had been redrawn, new lines created, you as the self you understood, no longer existed.

A division between one class of people and another is just a line drawn by human hands. A border says these sorts go here, these sorts go there.

A decent sort of chap is not necessarily decent but more often than not a chap.

The girl's husband was a diplomat. After the war he stood over a map with three ignorant and irresponsible men, dividing another continent between themselves as if cutting a cake. They drew lines to define the reach of their powers, to maintain the control they had become accustomed to.

<The organisation system likely arranges the world in a way to reinforce the system-makers idea of the world>

Often the work of a diplomat is knowing to say the right things to the right people. Deciding who gets to sit where at the table. One has to be invited to the table, know how to behave, arrive and leave when asked. The host might be deeply charming, generous and polite, but this is partly to remind each guest that they are a guest, in the moment of being hosted. The table remains theirs.

(drawing of tables, charts, symbols,)

A table is a scientific chart which explains a deeply complex idea or set of ideas in a basic diagram of lines and shapes.

They drew symbols on the walls, witch marks and runes, signs of the zodiac and other figures whose meanings remain unknown. Witchmarks by the drainpipes and doors, windows and ways could not protect them from a thing which cannot be contained in lines, symbols and walls, will not come politely through the front door nor leave a calling card. Symbols and language,

marks of signification mean nothing to those whose spirits remain free, unconstrained by the normal rules.

(shot of Knole Park from above, lines of hedges, borders)

If we see a border, then like it or not, we usually end up walking alongside it, living by its rules. It takes a certain kind of personality to not walk along the same lines as everyone else, not to follow the same rules. A certain boldness of gesture and mannerism, the habit of striding, the wearing of deliberately masculine hats.

Most borders only ascend to a finite height, if you are high enough, you can see right over, above, through, that which from the ground seems impenetrable, impassable, impossible. If you don't know how to read the map, the key holds no power, the symbols are meaningless, and so you make your own way, develop your own understanding of the path you tread across the ground.

Is it possible to fall in love with a house?

The boy inherited the castle the girl longed for, and so she fell in love, bought herself a smaller castle, some twenty minutes motoring away. Born with the key in his pocket, the boy failed to be moved by his inheritance. He moved to Ireland, made a home there, a castle of course, despite the fact that during his lifetime that had become a different country altogether.

They say an englishman's home is his castle. What then for the Irishman, the Scotsman, the poor forgotten Welshman? What then for the women of any country?

(shot of Irish border)

When you get to the border, you find that there is nothing there, no line in the sand after all. A slight variation in tone. The ground remains the same, it is only the language used to describe it that changes. Miles here, kilometres there. It is a border defined by language, a semantic scything of infinite bodies, into two defining camps.

(shot of Irish road signs)

<Ireland, Mid twentieth Century>

(Kiltinan Castle)

The boy befriended an eccentric old Irish woman who lived in a castle of her own, not so far away. Hers was a reclusive life, her only friends pets, dressed in oversized corduroy trousers and a man's tweed cap. The boy did not know it but she had in her time; been a champion show jumper, causing scandal for riding like a man, with one leg either side of the horse. Travelling to London for permission from the Lords, hers was the last Irish marriage to be dissolved for 70 years.

In the castle there was only one doorhandle, which the woman kept in her hand at all times. Walking forward with the spike sticking out in front, she opened each door as she came to it, shutting it behind her. This was how the boy was led through the dark passages of her house. She kept the house unlight because she already knew her way. Living alone, outside of society, seemed not to bother her. She was happy, the boy realised, despite her crumbling castle falling down around her.

<England 2017>

(shot of Knole House)

Not that hard little plate at my door, the girl said many times towards the end of her life. No, not that hard little plate at my door!

But there of course would eventually be. Hard little plates at all the doors, of all the castles labels on all the plants, bedints and shillingses traipsing through, guidebooks in hand. All are welcome here, say our hosts, please stick to the route that has been marked by ropes.

Be our Guest.