Unmasking Claude Cahun: Self-portraiture and the Androgynous Image

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I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

Signed: _________________________________

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Under this mask, another mask. I will never finish lifting up all these faces.

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Abstract

This research is the result of my numerous journeys following the discovery of the French photographer, Claude Cahun, and the many similarities found between her work and that of my own. Included are many other women who were integral to my journey, though I focus on only a few of these women. They are Djuna Barnes, Romaine Brooks and the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven. Searching through public archives, located in Washington D.C, USA, Maryland, USA and in Jersey, Channel Islands, I am looking for any evidence to suggest if they knew of Claude Cahun or if their individual works influenced one another in any way. They all moved in different circles though had many of the same acquaintances and all lived in relatively close proximity to one another whilst in Paris in the 1910s and 1920s.

The androgynous person dominates my self-portraits. It is the use of the androgynous being in their respective works which led to my research, from the monochrome androgynous portraits of Romaine Brooks, the ribaldry written imagery of androgynous characters in Barnes’ writing, the eccentricity gender crossing of the Baroness to the gender confusing self-portraits of Claude Cahun. A brief history of androgyny is given as it has had many transformations through the ages in religion and mythology which has manifested itself in the art and literature of those respective periods. I focus briefly on the use of androgyny in the art and literature in the period before Cahuns self-portraits and when Brooks, Barnes and the Baroness produced their works.

This leads to my own photographic self-portraits and to the work of contemporary photographers, including the photographer, Cindy Sherman and lesser known artists such as Tina Bara. The androgynous image, whether major or minor, is an aspect in all these photographers works, especially my own. I discuss these works and their relevance to Cahun, and of Cahuns influence on them. The use of text and the book as an art form is discussed and the methods used to produce these. Working with a camera and a typewriter from the period of which I write is an integral aspect of my art making process and is also discussed.
A ‘return home’ was also ascertained whilst undertaking this research. This manifested itself into the black and white photographs which are presented in bookform and contain a nostalgic aspect. Nostalgia for a place or time is discussed in relevance to my photographs and chosen art medium.

All of these elements meet together in an exhibition where the handmade book sits alongside twenty-four photographs, which are made up of twelve self-portraits and twelve photographs of significant places visited. They are shown along with material from Cahun and Barnes relevant archives which is both personal and pertinent to my journey. The result is another journey, this one involving not only myself, but also the viewer.
Unmasking Claude Cahun: self-portraiture and the androgynous image

Introduction

Under this mask, another mask. I will never finish lifting up all these faces.

This exegesis documents and reflects upon travels throughout Europe and personal encounters with the historical remnants and traces of the French photographer, Claude Cahun. Self-portraits and journal entries record the nostalgic dialogue of a physically and psychologically displaced self with places where the Geist is at home. The Paris of Claude Cahun and the expatriate women writers and artists of the Left Bank, including the American writer and journalist Djuna Barnes, the American painter Romaine Brooks, and the German extraordinaire (eccentric) Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, exists in remnants, perceivable by those aware of its history. It is a history of freedom, creativity and experimentation, establishing the space for contemporary artists, such as Cindy Sherman, and lesser known artists, such as Tina Bara.

The use of the androgynous image in their respective works, from the defiant, gender-confusing self-portraits of Claude Cahun, the monochromatic portraits of Romaine Brooks, to the boy-like lover in Barnes’s Nightwood, and finally to the eccentric and extraordinary sexlessness of the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, is explored. A brief history of androgyny is given, including its many transformations through the ages in religion and mythology as manifested in art and literature.

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2 Travels date from 1998 to 2004.
3 Pseudonym of Lucy Schwob (1894-1954).
5 Djuna Barnes (1892-1982).
7 Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven (1874-1927).
My own photographic self-portraits, with accompanying text, are presented in the sensual and intimate form of the book and in an installation context. The 1939 Rolleiflex twin lens reflex camera and the 1920s Royal typewriter, both from the period of which I write, are integral aspects of my art making process. Using non-digital methods of photography, the manipulation of the image is avoided to create works of honesty, evoking a nostalgia of form and medium.

Cahun, in all probability, will never be completely unmasked, though through this research I hope to unmask various faces of this diverse woman. This will be done through glimpses into her archival remnants and an analysis of her self-portraits in relation to my own. Generally left out of history from this period, until recently, or remembered by historians as a male, this exegesis also explores possible relationships with her fellow creative female contemporaries. Authors Catherine Goddard and Elisabeth Lebovici have written that Cahun’s biographers do not seem to want to investigate the lesbian circles Cahun moved in, leaving this area relatively unexplored.

Cahun, in the late 1910s and throughout the 1920s, repositioned herself in a society which still held rigid rules on how women should behave and dress. Even today, the androgynous being we see in her photographs undoubtedly leaves some viewers disturbed. Her intensity is unequalled, her gaze stares out at us in such a way as to challenge the viewer to see how long they can hold it. Her acceptance into the male domain of the Surrealists as an artist and as a writer, when other women were artists though primarily muses, is a testimony to her determined spirit. André Breton, the author of *Manifeste du Surréalisme* (1924) wrote highly of Cahun, though as a male comrade. Unlike these other female surrealist artists in their muse-like qualities, Cahun exhorts a distinctive determination which is evident in her self-portraits.

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9 In the sense that they are the truth, they are what was originally photographed.
My research investigates Cahun’s possible familiarity with the dada artist, Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven. Both were artists who crossed gender and sexual boundaries and due to their unconventional dress, made them memorable. In Cahun’s self-portraits we see her in male attire, or asexual clothing whether for the theatre or just for the portraits. Romaine Brooks painted many who attended Natalie Barney’s celebrated Friday salons¹² as female androgynous dandies¹³ in male attire. Cahun may have been familiar with these women through these paintings or perhaps through the work of Djuna Barnes whose book, *Ladies Almanack* parodied the same women.¹⁴ Barnes also lived in close proximity to Cahun, a short walk from one another.

The ‘itinerary’ for the reader comprises five, loosely defined, chapters. Starting with my introduction to these women and their Paris, I then go on to describe my initial discovery of Cahun’s self-portraits and her other photographic work, enlightening me to the numerous photographs Cahun took of herself. From there I follow on to androgyny and the use of the androgynous image in various literary texts and in Brooks’ paintings and, of course, Cahun’s self-portraits. A description of my own self-portraits follows which then leads to

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¹² Natalie Clifford Barney (1877-1972), American salon hostess and author.

¹³ Dandy. sb. 1. 1.a. One who studies above everything to dress elegantly and fashionably; a beau, fop, ’exquisite’: as defined in *The Oxford English Dictionary: Second Edition: Volume IV*. Baudelaire wrote of the dandy:

…Contrary to what a lot of thoughtless people seem to believe, dandyism is not even an excessive delight in clothes and material elegance. For the perfect dandy, these things are no more than the symbol of the aristocratic superiority of his mind. Thus in his eyes, enamoured as he is above all of distinction, perfection in dress consists in absolute simplicity, which is, indeed, the best way of being distinguished. What then can this passion be, which has crystallized into a doctrine, and has formed a number of outstanding devotees, this unwritten code that has moulded so proud a brotherhood? It is, above all, the burning desire to create a personal form of originality, within the external limits of social conventions. It is a kind of cult of the ego which can still survive the pursuit of that form of happiness to be found in others, in woman for example; which can even survive what are called illusions. *It is the pleasure of causing surprise in others, and the proud satisfaction of never showing any oneself.* A dandy may be blasé, he may even suffer pain, but in the latter case he will keep smiling, like the Spartan under the bite of the fox. [Italics mine]


¹⁴ Djuna Barnes, *Ladies Almanack* (Elmwood Park, Illinois: Dalkey Archive: 1992). *Ladies Almanack* was first published in 1928 and included fictional representations of women who frequented the salon of Natalie Barney: Patience Scalpel, the only heterosexual woman in *Ladies Almanack*, is based upon Mina Loy, British poet and artist; Dame Musset is based upon Natalie Barney; Doll Furious is Dolly Wilde, the niece of Oscar Wilde; the partners Lady Buck-and-Balk and Lady Tilly-Tweed-in-Blood were portrayals of the real-life partners Lady Una Troubridge and Radclyffe Hall, the author of *The Well of Loneliness*; Cynic Sal, who “dressed like a coachman”, was Romaine Brooks; and the Page figures were Janet Flanner, the American journalist best known for her Paris columns in *The New Yorker*, and her partner Solita Solano, the American author.
the nostalgic aspect of my photographic works which is present in my self-portraits. A brief discussion of nostalgia precedes this to give one the meaning and use of nostalgia within a historical background.
Discovery.

*All that can be found anywhere, can be found in Paris.*

Victor Hugo, *Les Miserables*

Paris has changed little since these women once lived there. Walking along the banks of the Seine it is easy to remove your self from the present, the late twentieth and early twenty first century, and travel back to the 1920s and the 1930s. The traffic becomes a hindrance as you walk the streets once so familiar to these women and you step back to take a better look. It was on such a walk in the streets surrounding St Sulpice, during my first visit to Paris in 1998, that I found a bookshop specialising in photography, ‘La Chambre Claire’ [*The Light Room: also Camera Lucida*]. This was my *trouvaille,* my ‘lucky find’ as defined by the Surrealists. I had previously seen three works by Claude Cahun, which I carried in my journal whilst travelling, and that was all until I came across Cahun’s *Photographe.* The man behind the counter was friendly and smiled at my pronunciation of her name and proceeded to pronounce it correctly, without the ‘h’. The photographs in the book were a revelation, my curiosity had led me to this book. I bought it and took it back to where I was staying. A friend from university was there and after looking at the

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18 These first attracted me as at the time I was doing photomontages. Cahun’s photomontage at the *Surrealism – Revolution by Night* exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia in 1996, was instrumental in my development as a photographer.

book passed comment on how uncanny the similarities were with my own work and that of Claude Cahun. It was in these self-portraits of Cahun’s where I saw myself. I had photographed myself with no prior knowledge that similar photographs had been taken seventy years earlier.
Once more I will walk my mind through her work.20

Upon first seeing her photographs in book form, in the book found on my first visit to Paris in 1998, I felt like I had wandered into my life in another era. Using a 1939 Rolleiflex twin lens reflex camera and a cable release, I had photographed my solitary self in the absence of others, without changing my clothing, I took these photographs of myself as an androgynous person with no prior knowledge of Cahun’s self-portraits. Cahun’s androgynous self-portraits are intense, her gaze is inescapable and makes the viewer question themselves. This was really the point where my searching and questions started. How had I not heard more about this woman? Why had I not seen her photographic works previously? Cahun made me question not only her work but my own. Why had I consistently photographed myself with only myself present? Cahun’s self-portraits were extremely important in identifying and validating my own self-portraits. An image can change your life, one image. Leading to a journey where one finding leads to another, la trouvaille, another person to another person, a growth of images in black and white.

I had come to Paris, in 1998, after reading about the expatriate women writers and artists who lived there in the 1920s and 1930s: Djuna Barnes, Natalie Barney, Romaine Brooks, to name but a few. The modern flâneur,21 in such a city as Paris, encounters nostalgia22

20 Quotes from my journals and handmade books will start on the right hand side of the page.

The crowd is his domain, just as the air is the birds, and water that of the fish. His passion and his profession is to merge with the crowd. For the perfect idler, for the passionate observer it becomes an immense source of enjoyment to establish his dwelling in the throng, in the ebb and flow, the bustle, the fleeting and the infinite. To be away from home and yet feel at home anywhere; to see the world, to be at the very centre of the world, and yet to be unseen of the world, such are some of the minor pleasures of those independent, intense and impartial spirits, who do not lend themselves easily to linguistic definitions. [Italics mine]


22 Nostalgia: regret or sorrowful longing for the conditions of a past age, regretful or wistful memory or recall of an earlier time, as defined in The Oxford English Dictionary: Second Edition: Volume X.
around every corner traversed and “[t]he street leads the strolling person into a vanished time.” When Walter Benjamin described his vision of flânerie, he too saw “a promenade into the past.”

It was as a flâneur that I found, la trouvaille, the book of Cahun’s photographs in 1998. The first image encountered of Cahun’s was a photomontage included in the exhibition Surrealism – Revolution by Night at the National Gallery of Australia in 1996. Two years later another image, this one of Cahun with pig tails and in a dress. No-one could answer my growing questions on this artist and what I did find out proved to be false. In Paris, I started my search for answers when I found Photographs. The answers posed more questions.

Cahun, with her partner, Marcel Moore, represented a formidable pair. Living in Paris in the 1920s, how were they seen by their contemporaries, other women artists and writers living in close proximity to them and frequenting the same places? Sylvia Beach and Adrienne Monnier’s bookshops being but one example, especially the many expatriate women in Paris at that time.

Cahun poses questions which today still provoke hostility in people. Her writing, photographs and theatre work are a tribute to her many talents. Fluent in English, it is probable she knew many of those women artists and writers. Sylvia Beach is in her

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24 Ibid. p. 201.
26 Rosalind Krauss and Jane Livingstone, *L’Amour Fou: Photography and Surrealism*, (Washington, D.C., Corcoran Gallery; New York, Abbeville Press, 1985) p. 205. Krauss and Livingstone state that there is little known about Cahun and have her date and place of birth as unknown as well as her death. They have written that she died in a concentration camp.
28 Cahun photographed Beach in her bookshop and Beach wrote in her memoirs, *Shakespeare and Company*, (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1991) p. 207, about ‘first two helpers were volunteers,
address book\textsuperscript{29} with Natalie Barney directly beneath her. Gertrude Stein, \textit{The Little Review} editors, Jane Heap and Margaret Anderson\textsuperscript{30} and many of the major male Surrealists appear as well. So what happened to this woman who knew so many and whom Andre Breton wrote to in September 1938 saying:

- \textit{I also find – and I can’t help repeating it – that you should write and publish. You know very well that I think you are one of the most curious spirits of this age (of the four or five of them) but you insist on keeping quiet.} \textsuperscript{31}

In a small office in the Jersey Museum in 2003, I examine the letters, the address book and photographs of two peoples’ lives. One in particular is the reason why I am here and looking at photographs of her, previously unpublished, I sense disturbing similarities. Who is this woman whom my own self-portraits uncannily resemble, and now, photographs of her youth and mine?\textsuperscript{32} Over seventy years have elapsed and yet it appears I have many similarities with Claude Cahun’s oeuvre. Reactions from my own self-portraits made me start to question peoples’ responses, mainly negative, to the androgynous image. Cahun’s images, her photo-collages and self-portraits differ from the photographic work of Man Ray, Hans Bellmer and other Surrealist photographers. Women appear as muse or victim, even mutilated victim in Bellmer’s \textit{Poupee} series, but Cahun represents a determined and forceful woman, who has stepped outside of the boundaries of what defines femininity. Cahun is in control. However, in between the period of Cahun’s self-portraits and now, how much has society’s attitude changed towards these images?

\textsuperscript{29} JHT/1995/00045/60.


\textsuperscript{32} Photographs of myself at a younger age are uncannily similar to those of Cahuns, though my gaze was rarely directed at the camera as Cahuns was, more often my gaze was shyly looking downwards.
Whilst in Jersey I met with Joe Mière. After seeing and holding so much of Cahun’s personal life, here was a man who knew her. Mière was in the prison cell next to Cahun and Moore whilst they were imprisoned by the Germans during Jersey’s occupation during the Second World War. This man spoke about both Cahun and Moore with deep respect. He spoke of Cahun’s good sense of humour, despite her house being looted by the Germans, how she would hold her hands in front of her and how she called everyone ‘Darling’. He spoke of how Moore was known as ‘Bertie’, because of her hair, and Cahun as boncoeur (goodsister) due to her nun-like qualities. Hearing Mière speak of his own personal ordeal during the occupation added a more personal and real side to what I had read. This man cut their hair; Cahun used to hold his face in her hands and he showed me how she held her hands. Mière knew them by their first names and did not know of their prior activities in Paris, their involvement with surrealism or of Cahun’s photographic self-portraits. This encounter was unexpected, another case of la trouvaille, and I felt privileged to have met Mr Mière, to hear someone speak of Cahun, having known her. I was provided with an invaluable and rare opportunity to remove one of Cahun’s masks, revealing a person, not just a self-portrait.

Barnes, Cahun, Brooks and the Baroness lives in Paris could not have been more in contrast with each other. Barnes’s sometimes strained relationship with Thelma Wood, Cahun’s political, literary and theatre work plus her stable relationship with Moore and their financial freedom, Brooks’ financial freedom and then the Baroness’s extreme poverty are in stark contrast to one another. Brooks is also remembered for her relationship with Barney and for her solitary nature. Barney said of Brooks that she ‘belongs to no time, to no country, to no milieu.’ Privileged in the fact that she could paint herself, and her selected sitters, in any fashion she desired, for example, suited and monocled, it did not matter as

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33 Meeting with Joe Mière took place in his apartment in Jersey, September 24th, 2003. I was there for 3 hours.
34 American, silverpoint artist.
Brooks had no need to sell them. They are a visual commentary on a selecte group of women who dressed in obviously non-feminine attire. Like Cahun’s self-portraits, these women assert themselves and their dress choice at a time when sexologists were writing about these ‘inverts’ and the problems associated with inversion.

In 1928 Barnes’s *Ladies Almanack* appeared on the streets of Paris, a satire on the lesbian circle surrounding Natalie Barney. In a new world where women could experiment openly about their sexuality and wear masculine attire, new boundaries were being explored and old ones broken, not only artistically but in everyday existence. Barnes’s partner, Thelma Wood, was an extremely handsome woman who often appeared quite androgynous. A silver point artist, she has been remembered as the model for Robin in Barnes’s *Nightwood*. Little is known of her, remembered in the memoirs of others as a figure in one of the many bars in Paris, and also for her handsome, androgynous good looks. In unpublished and published photographs of Wood there appears a woman at ease and comfortable in her androgynous being.

Close to Barnes and Wood was the dadaist extrodinaire, the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, who died in 1926 under suspicious circumstances in Paris. An exceptional output of poetry and letters gives one a rare insight into such a prolific mind. Published in her life time, though only minimally by *The Little Review*, the Baroness felt angered by a world which she thought had cast her aside. With such a personality as the Baroness possessed, many would have known her, or of her. Moving in different circles as these women did, there appear many of the same acquaintances between them. Living in such close proximity to one another, and all being artists, can one safely hypothesise that they


37 Series VII Part I Box 1, 1.68, 1.73, 1.76, 1.77, 1.78, 1.101, 1.126, 1.127, Photographs of Wood held in the Djuna Barnes Papers. Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries. McKeldin Library. USA.

38 The Baroness was found gassed in her flat along with her dog.

39 This is apparent when viewing the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Papers. Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries. McKeldin Library. USA.
were aware of one another? Although much more politically minded, Cahun had in her address book a Ms Wood living next door to where Barnes and Wood lived.\textsuperscript{40} Barnes bought this apartment in the hope it would add stability to her relationship with Wood by giving her a home.

Djuna Barnes did not have the same financial freedom as Brooks and Cahun. Journalist, illustrator and author, her life was a constant financial struggle. Hawking her \textit{Ladies Almanack} on the streets of Paris in 1928, in which she had hand coloured a limited few personally, she never found life easy.\textsuperscript{41} A confidante of the Baroness, and lover of the androgynous Wood, Barnes was one of the women who frequented Barney’s Friday salon.\textsuperscript{42} In her unpublished \textit{Farewell To Paris},\textsuperscript{43} Barnes writes of the Baroness:

\begin{quote}
\textit{The Baroness was German born, but had achieved a reputation in America in The Little Review, and was considered as an American; one of the most astonishing figures of early Greenwich village life. A head like a Roman Emperors’ short (sometimes razored) once shellacked, red hair, she batiqued her tailored suits, made ear-rings from grave flowers and Christmas three [sic] decorations, and had a voice and a constitution of iron. She kept a skeleton by her bed, and did portraits of her past in feathers, paint and glass beads. She did a ‘portrait’ of Marcel Duchamp – a champagne glass out of which arose tufts of flowing feathers. She was very difficult to know, she thought nothing of breaking your front window with a brick if you would not answer the door, but after you had answered it was worth it to hear her recite in beautiful periods, Hamlet and Goethe. She would have been the most sought after woman in Paris had she been wealthy. She knew it, for Paris is a city that makes lions of other nations ‘détraqué’,\textsuperscript{44} if they can do it in style; she could not. She was buried in a third grade (lowest) pine coffin in a hole in Mont Joli which will be common property in nineteen hundred and thirty seven.’}
\end{quote}

Romaine Brooks 1923 self-portrait, is a haunting image with her gaze being the focal point. Like Cahun’s self-portrait of 1920, Brooks appears mature and self-assured in a period

\textsuperscript{40} Address mentioned could not be found, searched for it on a trip to Paris. The number was missing which appeared in Cahuns address book.

\textsuperscript{41} Her ordeals are remembered in, Hank O’Neal, “Life is Painful, Nasty and Short...in my case it has only been painful and nasty.” \textit{Djuna Barnes. An Informal Memoir}, (New York, Paragon House, 1990).

\textsuperscript{42} A somewhat unusual friendship developed between Barnes and Barney, Barney giving Barnes money later on in their lives.

\textsuperscript{43} Djuna Barnes Papers. Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries. McKeldin Library. USA. Series 111 Box 5 Reel 18 0557-0590 folder 14 p. 10-11.

when women only started to find themselves and the other selves that they could be(come). Both are dandies in these self-portraits. With many similarities to Cahun, financially independent, Brooks had no need to paint her subjects in a sympathetic way, for example, *Una, Lady Troubridge*. Brooks hardly exhibited in the 1920s and 1930s so it is not known who viewed her work.\(^{45}\) Not a sociable person, she hardly attended Barney’s Friday salons despite being Barney’s long term partner.\(^{46}\) Unlike their male contemporaries, these two women were not after the art world’s appreciation of their work or any financial gain. Liberated from financial worry, they opened up a whole new world of female controlled ambiguity for nobody else’s pleasure except their own. In 1947, Léonor Fini painted *Chthonian Divinity Watching Over the Sleep of a Young Man*, which depicts an androgynous young male. With his genitalia covered and his erect nipples, Fini has hinted at the ambiguity of the sex in this painting. The torso and face could be of either sex. This was painted after Cahun and Brooks both produced androgynous works of art. Was Fini, along with the surrealists, searching for the perfect androgyne when she painted this? Of all the women painters associated with surrealism, Fini’s painting could sit alongside Brooks’ portraits of an androgynous Ida Rubenstein and not be out of place, especially the painting *Le trajet (The Crossing)* ca. 1911. Did Fini see either of Cahun’s or Brooks’ androgynous photographs or paintings?

Leaving an era when homosexuality was put on public trial during the case of Oscar Wilde, the freedom offered to these women was turned into creative and artistic ventures. Not choosing to be the female muse in male centred photography, Cahun set her own groundwork. As Lee Miller was posing for Man Ray, Cahun was capturing herself in her many ‘masks’. Cahun never produced work under the guidance of the male Surrealists as Meret Oppenheim did in works such as her fur-lined cup and saucer being but one example. In an interview titled *Androgyny*, Oppenheim’s response to a question about the treatment of the image of women in surrealist art was:


\(^{46}\) Brooks and Barney met in 1915, Brooks died alone in 1970 estranged from Barney after more than 50 years together.
Certainly woman has been mistreated,...Bellmer and Molliner for example, mistreated the bodies of their women. But they were are cases, psychological cases, perverts. Crazies you know. 47

This interview was conducted many years after Oppenheim had posed nude for Man Ray in his photographs. Of all the women artists of that period, Cahun and Frida Kahlo appear to be the only two who focused on their own person as their art work, with the majority of their work being self-portraits. Penelope Rosemont goes as far as to say that Cahun was the first photographer to do self-portraits.48

Marcel Duchamp deliberately crossdressed to be taken as a woman, adopting feminine attributes. The perfume bottle label his face adorns, alludes to such feminine traits. Having a photographer such as Man Ray, who knew Duchamp well and who also had photographed society women, take this photograph must have added to the element of fun. This image shows Duchamp attempting to seduce the viewer. Which viewer, the women who purchase perfume or the men who would buy it for them?

Cahun’s self-portraits in no way attempt to seduce the viewer. The other female photographers photographing in Paris at the same time as Cahun included Gisèle Freund and Berenice Abbott. Arriving in Paris in the 1930s, Freund subsequently photographed the literary figures and thinkers of this period. Abbott photographed literary illuminaries, including Barnes, though is remembered more for her photographs of New York in the 1930s and for bringing the photographer Eugène Atget out of obscurity. These two photographers did not produce anything in anyway similar as Cahun.

Since my degree, Eugène Atgets photographic works on old Paris have enabled me to locate, mentally, to this Paris of a bygone era, creating a personal nostalgia. They invite the viewer to the time when Atget was photographing, to the time before old Paris was gone,

and the Paris before these women lived there - a visual museum. As one walks the streets, the boulevards, one can envision the interiors behind the facades, behind the masks that face the street. From his photographic works, Atget allows a vivid imagination to conjure up numerous interiors, and also the people who might have resided there. Where did all those stairways lead? Atget’s Paris attracted me, and thus, I wanted to feel this Paris physically which can be done if one carries his photographic images in their mind whilst strolling the Parisian streets. It was these photographs and also the knowledge of these women that I carried with me on all my walks through Paris; they were my guide books. Other than my self-portraits, people do not feature in my photographs, a solitary traveller, a good deal of Atget’s photographs are devoid of human existence which creates a solitary, and a very personal, atmosphere. In the Parisian streets you can become lost in his images, spending time wandering through them. Atget’s photograph of Saint Sulpice church taken in April 1926 is devoid of any human existence. I purchased the book which had this photograph in it just prior to leaving Paris. Having stayed in the Hotel Recamier⁴⁹ (figure 1), which is to the right of the church when viewed from the front, and photographed the church at night, it was interesting to see it in the time of which I write about these women, especially Djuna Barnes. The black half-circles in the top corners of Atget’s photograph suggest that the image is about to be covered up, to be put away as his old Paris was put away.

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⁴⁹ Stayed in room 16 in 2003 for a period of 12 nights.
Fig. 1. Jacqueline Morgan, *Paris, France, (Hotel Recamier)*, 2003, 10 x 10cm.
Lifting another of Cahun’s masks we find Surrealism. Finding Cahun, in cases, remembered as a male in the history of Surrealism,\textsuperscript{50} it is her literary achievements which she is remembered for. Cahun’s \textit{Les Paris sont ouverts},\textsuperscript{51} which was published in 1934, established her reputation as a writer of repute in Surrealism. Cahun met Breton in 1932. This was the start of a friendship that lasted until Cahun’s death. Breton and his wife, Jacqueline Lamba, were guests at Cahun’s Jersey residence and Cahun photographed them both. Therefore it is hard to understand the reason why Cahun is remembered as a male when Breton had read, or in some cases, written the text regarding her\textsuperscript{52}, especially in \textit{What is Surrealism? Selected Writings}\textsuperscript{53}. The editor of this book, Franklin Rosemont’s wife had edited a book on women in Surrealism\textsuperscript{54} which included Cahun. How could Cahun have been a male when both Breton and, one would think, Rosemont, were aware that she was a woman? Katy Kline in her essay, \textit{In and out of the picture Claude Cahun and Cindy Sherman}, states that Breton would leave his favourite café upon Cahun’s arrival due to her dress, this being unconventional and confrontational.\textsuperscript{55}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[51] Jose Corti, 1934.
\item[52] Lecture given by Breton in Brussels on the 1 June 1934.
\item[54] (ed.) with Introductions by Penelope Rosemont, \textit{Surrealist Women – An International Anthology}.
\end{footnotes}
(ii)

Androgyny.

We may not know exactly what sex is; but we do know that it is mutable, with the possibility of one sex being changed into the other sex, that its frontiers are often uncertain, and that there are many stages between a complete male and a complete female. In some forms of animal life, indeed, it is not easy to distinguish which is male and which female.

Havelock Ellis, *Psychology of Sex – A Manual for Students*  

The history of the Androgyne, in religion and mythology, is as old as time itself. Since the beginning of time, and all ages since, the androgynous being has been closely related to religion and mythology. God created this androgynous being who is mentioned in all religions and represented in mythology alongside the Gods. The androgynous being came to be seen ‘as the noblest form of love’ in early Greek civilisation, and also, many centuries later in post-Revolutionary France, to be a symbol of social equality and more importantly to the women of this time, the emancipation of woman. A traditional mystical interpretation of the bible has Adam being androgynous as a consequence of the Fall. He was divided into both sexes and belief has it by some, that humankind will revert back to this androgynous being. This androgynous religious being is depicted in many early religious paintings and is depicted in Leonardo da Vinci’s *Saint John the Baptist* which Renee Vivien mentions in *A Woman Appeared To Me*. The androgyne is identified with the Virgin Mary due to the sexlessness of their appearance and this was a favoured characteristic of the androgyne in the age of decadence. In the twenty first century, the androgyne appears in popular culture in many varied forms. The *Baccarat Crystal Party* by Ellen Von Unwerth, an advertisement for the Baccarat Home Collection, is one example of how the androgyne is used in advertising.

In 2002, on the banks of the Seine, at one of the ageless bookstalls which line the streets alongside the river, I purchased a postcard featuring an androgynous being (figure 2). There is no date on this card though it appears pre-1930s, with the woman’s dress being but one

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indicator. This card epitomised a period when androgyny symbolised the ‘New Woman’, a more sympathetic view than the mannish lesbian, a time when the sexes were blurred. Like the ‘dandyfied’ women in Brooks’s paintings, the attire worn by the woman is traditionally masculine, however there is a question of doubt. It is the same as when viewing the paintings and drawings of the Pre-Raphaelites. Man or woman, androgyne, does it really matter? The androgyne is given attributes which other non-androgynous beings lack. Marion in _The Angel and the Perverts_, published in 1930 and set in the homosexual world of Paris in the 1920s, by Lucie Delarue-Madrus, is aloof though literate, easily adapting to either sex role, changing when he/she has had enough of one sex.  

![Postcard](image)

Fig. 2. Postcard. Anonymous, 13.5 x 8.8cm.

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59 ‘The thin, pale bachelor girl who rejected motherhood for masculine attire and her own career had been a standard visual stereotype of the New Woman since the 1890s. Often allied with the dandy, the so-called New Woman was frequently cast as one of the major harbingers of change. After the war (when women secured the vote in England, where Brooks spent several months of each year), much of the New Woman’s look and many of her attitudes were absorbed and revitalised by flappers, fashionistas, feminists, and sectors of the lesbian haut monde.’ (ed.) by Whitney Chadwick and Tirza True Latimer, _The Modern Woman Revisited – Paris Between the Wars_, p. 46.

60 In 1937 Breton stated: “I wish I could change my sex the way I change my shirt.” Penelope Rosemont, (ed.), _Surrealist Women – An International Anthology_, p. xliiv. This is exactly what Cahun did in her self portraits.
In Renee Vivien’s *A Woman Appeared To Me*, the artistic androgyne appears simply as the Androgyne throughout the book, though she is San Giovanni. Vivien describes her as looking

...like Leonardo’s equivocal Saint John, that Androgyne whose Italian smile glows so strangely in the Louvre...San Giovanni was a poet, her verses as perverse as her smile.\(^{61}\)

Vivien drew strongly from mythology and history. Describing Vally\(^{62}\) in the same book:

> Sometimes she put on the costume of a Venetian page, a suit of moon-light-green velvet which harmonized delicately with her pallid hair. At other times she would dress as a Greek shepherd, and then the music of invisible pipes of Pan would seem to follow her footsteps, and her eyes would glitter as if at the lascivious nakedness of maenads. She was trying, as do all the nostalgic, for the magic of strange garments which transform the spirit at the same time as the body, and thus revive for an hour the grace of a vanished era. She was another Androgyne, vigorous as an ephebe\(^{63}\), graceful as a woman.\(^{64}\)

Vivien saw the Androgyne as a symbol of female independence.\(^{65}\) Both Barney and Vivien lived openly as lesbians which is evident in their respective writings.

When the Baroness was 21, she was introduced to the new avant-garde movement which was taking place in Munich at that time. Melchior Lechter introduced the Baroness to this movement which opened up a new chapter in her life. It was in this artistic circle where the Baroness’ androgynous body was revered and which was immortalised in Lechter’s painting *Orpheus*. This artistic movement was led by the mysterious and enigmatic Stefan George who became associated with his artistic preference for the ‘quintessential boy’, the ephebes.\(^{66}\) Androgyny was also celebrated.

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\(^{62}\) Based on Natalie Barney.

\(^{63}\) ephebes s m ephebe, youth, Leon Contanseau, (Revised by Ludovic Contanseau), *A Pocket Dictionary of the French and English Languages*, p. 93. ephebe – Among the Greeks, a young citizen from eighteen to twenty years of age, during which he was occupied chiefly with garrison duty. Also in L. form ephebus Prepared by J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, *The Oxford English Dictionary – Second Edition*.


\(^{65}\) Ibid p. ix.

Whereas Cahun photographed herself in various disguises where she appears quite androgynous, the Baroness wore clothing/objects which no gender wore, for example coal shuttles belonging to neither male nor female attire. In Margaret Anderson’s memoirs, *My Thirty Years War*, the Baroness features on more than one occasion. Anderson describes the Baroness in her varied state of dress, her unusual attire which was ‘living art’ before its time. The Baroness made all her statements in her dress, wearing what others threw out and objects which no-one else would have thought to use that way. There are no photographs of the Baroness dressed in the attire which Anderson writes about, only her written descriptions. The Baroness frequented the office of *The Little Review* in New York, parading her unique attire and reciting poetry. The Baroness was fiercely passionate towards certain people, writing scathing letters to those who rebuked her and smothering others. Margaret Anderson describes a visit by the Baroness to *The Little Review* office,

> At last when she could struggle no more she had to think of something else to do. So she shaved her head. Next she lacquered it a high vermillion. Then she stole the crepe from the door of a house of mourning and made a dress of it. She came to see us. First she exhibited the head at all angles, amazing against our black walls. Then she jerked off the crepe with one movement. It’s better when I’m nude, she said. It was very good. But we were just as glad that some of our more conservative friends didn’t choose that moment to drop in. Shaving one’s head is like having a new love experience, proclaimed the Baroness.

Anderson described in detail what the Baroness wore, especially when it was fantastic as it mostly was. The Baroness used her body as her canvas, she was performance art and sculpture all in one. She collected objects found off the street or stolen, like the $5 worth of 2c stamps she stole on her first visit to *The Little Review* office. *The Little Review* published the Baroness, though there was no payment with this. Her first poem published was *Mustir* and its dedication was to Marcel Duchamp. The Baroness wrote to Duchamp

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67 Irene Gammel has written of the Baroness, in the early 1890s, that her, ‘...gender fluidity was emerging as a trademark. With her slim waist, the virtual absence of breasts, and her short hair, she was the quintessential androgyne or arsénomorph, combining female and male elements. In Fanny Esler, her alter ego is called “lad” (Junge) because of her body’s boyishness. Her thinness further underscored her androgyne: she smoked cigarettes but ate only sporadically, often starving herself for lack of money for food.’ (‘Fanny Esler’ written in 1905 by Felix Paul Grove and based on the Baroness’ life.) ibid p. 68.


69 Ibid. p. 211.

70 Ibid. p. 179.
and Man Ray when they had left New York for Paris. She had the desire to be there and tried everything to do so. When the Baroness finally arrived in Paris in 1926, she stayed at the Hotel Danemark which was situated at 21 rue Vavin in Montparnesse which was literally minutes from where Cahun lived at 70 rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs. Living so close to one another and both being controversial individuals, how could one not have known about the other, especially both of them knowing Heap and Anderson? Could Cahun’s Jewish background have played a part in the Baroness not forming a ‘traceable’ friendship with Cahun? The Baroness held anti-semitic beliefs which stemmed from her Prussian background. Cahun had experienced anti-semitic behaviour from classmates as a twelve year old during the Dreyfus trial. Apart from Barnes’, the Baroness corresponded with The Little Review editors, Heap and Anderson who were both known to Cahun and Barnes. They are in Cahun’s address book though they never published any of Cahun’s writing or photographs.

…the androgynous individual appears to have a greater capacity for creation. This is a reasonable finding that agrees with the theoretical view that androgynous individuals live life more fully than those who are confined by sex-role stereotypes. In all areas of their lives they allow the ongoing process of their experience to determine the path that they will take rather than molding their lives to socially imposed forms and structures.

Only recently has androgyny been an acceptable fashion statement with no blurring of gender as these ‘male’ clothes are customized for women, in fact, ‘flattering the female form’. Specifically modelling women’s clothing on men’s, it appears to be crossdressing, in your own sexes attire whilst still being safe in the knowledge that the womanliness is still visibly present. This is a very different view from the sexologists view of the mannish

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71 Ezra Pound also lived there. Settled there in January 1922. Irene Gammel, Baroness Elsa – Gender, Dada, and Everyday Modernity. A Cultural Biography, p. 276. Pound was known to Beach and others who knew Barnes, the Baroness and Cahun. He was also the overseas editor of The Little Review. Cahun lived at the same address in 1922. Claude Cahun – Chronology – Taken from, Claude Cahun; Écrits, (ed.) by Leperlier, François, (Paris, Jean-Michel Place, 2002). English trans. by Marcus Williamson, <http://www.connectotel.com/cahun/cahunchr.html>, p. 2. 4/3/03.


74 ‘Closet tomboys rejoice. This season fashion sees a return to androgyny. But instead of raiding your boyfriends wardrobe for comfy outsized garb, these days you can take your pick from the latest masculine styles, scaled down to flatter the female form.’ Times Magazine 18 October 2003, pp. 16-17.
woman of the early half of the 20th century when Cahun and these other female artists and writers worked.

Abigail Solomon-Godeau has written that Cahun needed the lesbian community of Paris in the 1920s to create her self-portraits.⁷⁵ I disagree. Cahun produced some of her most enigmatic and, I find, most challenging self-portraits before her move to Paris in 1920.⁷⁶ In the archives I accessed, there was no reference to either Barnes, Brooks or the Baroness of having seen Cahun’s photographs. These self-portraits of Cahun show a young woman, adolescent in some, who looks questioningly but defiantly out at the camera. Cahun sits with her arms holding her bent legs up so as to cover her front, facing sideways, looking at the camera with her head slightly turned. In this image, Cahun looks like an adolescent androgy. It is interesting to note that Cahun photographed herself as such in a time when women were only becoming ‘new women’.

The gaze is the most striking aspect of these early self-portraits, especially in one so young. With Cahun’s shaven head, these images possess a quality which is completely unique and seem before their time. In these images, Cahun could be a young dandy or an adolescent boy dressed nostalgically. Cahun wields a cane in a self-portrait from 1916. This cane could be a visual metaphor for the way in which Cahun ‘bent the end up’ on gender ambiguity with one hand, whilst holding it firmly with the other, completely in control. Her stance firm and well-balanced.

_I shall attempt to show that women who wish for masculinity may put on a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and the retribution feared from men._⁷⁷

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⁷⁵ ‘The manifest self-fashioning of Claude Cahun was likely abetted and sustained by the existence of the remarkable lesbian subculture in Paris of the 1920s.’ Taken from her essay entitled, _The Equivocal “I”: Claude Cahun as Lesbian Subject_, which appears in _Inverted Odysseys, Claude Cahun, Maya Deren, Cindy Sherman_, (ed.) by Shelley Rice, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1999) p. 115.

⁷⁶ Cahun had long stays in Paris before this, starting in 1918 with her entry into the Sorbonne. _Claude Cahun – Chronology – Taken from, Claude Cahun; Écrits_, edited by François Leperlier, (Paris, Jean-Michel Place, 2002). English trans. by Marcus Williamson, pp. 1-2.

Cahun’s mask was not of womanliness and there appears no anxiety in her self-portraits. It is as if Cahun faces the retribution head on, welcoming it in a way, and in her self-portrait circa 1920 this is more apparent than in any other self-portrait. It is with simple props that Cahun does this – a grey curtain, a wall, and her gaze. The grey cloth pinned to the wall behind Cahun could be seen, as with the cane, as the grey area between the sexes, the third sex. This at a time when there was debate about this third sex, when there was no black and white between the sexes. This grey cloth highlights an extremely determined and assertive Cahun, with shaven head and her right eye appearing to be monocled. This is Cahun’s most poignant self-portrait. A young woman completely stripped of all feminine aspects is asserting her right to be who she wants to be in a non-conventional and confrontational way. The clenched left hand symbolises her determination to do so. With shaven head and her assertive positioning of arms, this photograph epitomises the androgynous being in a world of rigid roles and standards of femininity. Cahun does not conform to society and has the intelligence and also the financial means to do so. For Cahun to ‘shave off’ one form of her femininity was a brave and courageous act to perform and in doing so, also added another ‘mask’ to this enigmatic woman. This act alone shows a young woman determined to display her unique individuality. This coupled with Cahun’s inescapable gaze makes her self-portraits truly stand alone.

Mistaken once for the opposite, a redness crept up on them. Apology in embarrassment, it has happened before.

As has already been stated, my self-portraits are taken in surroundings where the ‘Geist’ feels at home, where I have felt comfortable and wanted to be photographed.

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78 ‘The fashion among young women for short, bobbed hair could inspire enormous tensions within the French family. Throughout the decade (1920s), newspapers recorded lurid tales, including one husband in the provinces who sequestered his wife for bobbing her hair and a father who reportedly killed his daughter for the same reason.’ (ed.) by Whitney Chadwick and Tirza True Latimer, The Modern Woman Revisited – Paris Between the Wars, p. 65. Cahun shaved her head in 1916 and appears like this in her most enigmatic self portraits.

79 I shaved my head completely bald in my second year at university, 1994. Without realising, hair plays a major role in our lives, from determining one’s sex to using it as a form of punishment, example being shaving women’s hair off in WWII as punishment for sleeping with the enemy and also those accused of witchcraft. Finding also that we hide behind our hair, a feeling of complete nakedness without it as only your face is exposed with nothing to ‘frame it’.
Surroundings that I desire to look back onto. These self-portraits create nostalgia in the respect of where they were taken, the reason for their very existence. My physically displaced androgynous self on my return home. With what looks like one side of a single or a double four poster bed I sit, half-turned, and look directly at the camera (figure 3). The bedroom is dateless and lacks ornamentation, it could be either a female’s or a male’s bedroom. The bedroom is a room of intimacy and a space where one’s sex is eventually determined. This self-portrait is mocking the assurance one has in that there is no guarantee even in this domain that one can guess the sex of a person for certain unless all ‘masks’ are removed. Whereas in the self-portrait where the camera is seen, it can be used as dateable evidence. As if being caught in the photographic act, surprised even, the whole personal portrait taking procedure is revealed, uncovered (figure 4). The camera, tripod and cable release are all deliberately in the frame, letting the viewer in on the sitting. There is in all of these self-portraits an individual who is comfortable in their being, more so after the undertaking of these journeys. An assertiveness is displayed in some of these self-portraits as in, *Self-portrait, Ampney Crucis, England (2)* (figure 5). With arms folded it is uncertain to what physical attributes lie underneath. The room has a masculine air to it and such lends to this self-portrait a certain masculinity, adding to the gender ambiguity of the figure. Determined to display an ambiguity of gender, the viewer is lead back to the individual in this image, drawn back. The androgynous figure dominates this image. One of the few self-portraits taken in surroundings which specifically relate to these women, Cahun, is of myself at St Brelades Bay, Jersey. The image shows myself turning around, looking back, my contemplation interrupted. This self-portrait shows my body facing the horizon, facing the future through my nostalgia (figure 6).

These self-portraits have not been taken to shock viewers; they don’t possess that shock value; they are the documentation of an androgynous being on their journey returning home, nostalgia manifested into the now.

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80 This is where Cahun used to holiday and eventually moved there on the 9 May in 1938, Claude Cahun – Chronology – Taken from, *Claude Cahun; Écrits*, edited by Leperlier, François, (Paris, Jean-Michel Place, 2002). English trans. by Marcus Williamson, p. 4.
I still feel this emptiness, this longing, for what? No discomfort in myself I be, but where?

The emptiness, the longing was fulfilled on these travels. Personal fulfilment on the making of this journey and of what was discovered along the way evolved into a growth of my being which could have only been realised through the making of this journey.
Fig. 3. Jacqueline Morgan, *Self-portrait, Ampney Crucis, England, (I)*, 2003, 12.5 x 12.5cm.
Fig. 4. Jacqueline Morgan, *Self-portrait, Lutterworth, England*, 2003, 12.5 x 12.5cm.
Fig. 5. Jacqueline Morgan, *Self-portrait, Ampney Crucis, England, (2)*, 2003, 12.5 x 12.5cm.
Fig. 6. Jacqueline Morgan, *Self-portrait, Jersey, Channel Islands*, 2003, 12.5 x 12.5cm.
The past has left images of itself in literary texts, images comparable to those which are imprinted by light on a photosensitive plate...

Andre Monglond, *Le Preromantisme francais*\(^{81}\)

The term, nostalgia, was derived in the late 17\(^{th}\) century by the Swiss physician, Johannes Hofer.\(^{82}\) History and nostalgia are apparent in every aspect of my travels, the history of these women, the history and nostalgia evoked by the cities, other places visited and of my own personal history. This was an emotional journey, as I was literally returning home to places I had heard mentioned from my childhood which seemed so far away. Returning home, to my father’s birthplace in Paignton,\(^{83}\) Devonshire, England, my relatives, my history, nostalgia. Returning to where my mother’s family had traced their family history on both sides, Bisley, Gloucestershire on my grandfathers side and Bishopstone, Wiltshire\(^{84}\) on my grandmothers side. A record of these places is kept photographically and by written entries in journals. It is the black and white images which draw me in, which epitomise emotions felt whilst physically being there.

Everything talks, communicates, and an affinity develops for what you cannot pinpoint but feel so strongly. In 120 format try to capture this, to have forever…

The past is recreated all around us, in movies, TV, advertisements and in fashion. Fred Davis argues that nostalgia has to be your “lived through” experiences, that one cannot

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\(^{83}\) I stayed in 1 Kings Road, where my father was born in 1947 as it is now a Bed and Breakfast. The owners were extremely friendly and very interested that my father was born in their Bed and Breakfast.  
\(^{84}\) In my second year working in England, 1999, I was fortunate enough to work approximately 15 mins from Bisley and 30 mins from Bishopstone which enabled me to visit both places frequently. I photographed myself in the churchyard at Bisley, All Saints, for my Honours in 2002. I met a woman whilst in this employment who had lived in Bisley for over 10 years and she told me lots of local folklore and history of Bisley and surrounding areas. There was a plaque in the church at Bisley commemorating the ship which my relatives came out to Australia in 1837, aboard the Layton. I named my 100 year old house Bishopsley after the villages where my maternal grandparents came from.
experience nostalgia for a period one has not lived through. Memories recalled by others, books read and photographs seen, cannot recreate the past, though they can evoke the past and nostalgia. Verbal recollections given by my great grandmother on Paignton and surrounding areas gave resonance to my nostalgia. Unexplained affinities felt in certain places resulted in the photographs which appear in *Peregrinations* (figure 7). This was a ‘returning home’ with unexpected results. Physical and psychological displacement produced in my work nostalgia, the ease of photographing myself, of places visited where the ‘*Geist*’ felt at home.

*I leave my own country to find myself, not to recreate, not to capture this era, but to sit, walk, live, where I feel I will. To grow in the past.*

For these reasons my self-portraits and photographs have a deliberate timelessness to them (figure 8). There can be no going back to the period of when Cahun produced her self-portraits, to when Barnes wrote *Nightwood*, or to when Brooks painted her portraits. That is not what is being replicated in these photographic works. They represent my past, my nostalgia. Nostalgia is an important factor in forming our identity. Like building blocks, our past adds another element to our identity and gradually, in my case, a solid form is constructed. Through looking at the past of another, Claude Cahun, I found myself, in this I mean many similarities, forming many building blocks.

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85 Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday – A sociology of Nostalgia*, pp. 8-9. Davis states also that there are those who disagree.
86 From 1998 to 2003 I visited my great grandmother.
88 More on this in Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday – A sociology of Nostalgia*, p. 31.
Fig. 7. Jacqueline Morgan, *Paris, France, (Luxembourg Gardens)*, 2003, 10 x 10cm.
Fig. 8. Jacqueline Morgan, Jersey, Channel Islands, 2003, 10 x 10cm.
This is not to say that I know Cahun due to these similarities or that I know why Cahun produced them. Through finding Cahun’s work, it gave mine a sense of validity. On first seeing Cahun’s self-portraits, a sensation of validity was felt, even though the self-portraits I produced were uncannily similar. The validity arises from the fact that Cahun had felt a need to produce her self-portraits in the 1920s just as I had felt a need to produce my self-portraits in the 1990s and onwards.

...For to converse with those of other centuries is almost the same as to travel. It is a good thing to know something of the customs and manners of various peoples in order to judge of our own more objectively and so not to think everything which is contrary to our ways is ridiculous and irrational, as those who have seen nothing are in the habit of doing.\textsuperscript{89}

René Descartes, \textit{Discourse on Method and the Meditations}

Reactions from people I did not know regarding my appearance was the source of inspiration for my self-portraits. I did not have to dress up or change my appearance in any way for these portraits. From a young age I have wanted to dress in ‘unfeminine’ clothing, not to be mistaken with wanting to wear strictly boys clothes. I preferred shorts to dresses, I did not want to look like or be a boy. This continued into my adult life. It was comments like, ‘you don’t look like a miss to me’, or being told, ‘this is the ladies you know’ which started my self-portraits. These self-portraits received comments such as this one, ‘...quite frankly Jack (even made my name male), I’m not sure what sex you are. Why don’t you prove it by showing us your genitals’. Did asking such a question put the male viewer back in control when faced with this not knowing? This question was asked whilst viewing my androgynous self-portraits in a critique session in my undergraduate studies at university. These were my first self-portraits. My reaction was one of embarrassment and also one of determination. These questions were not going to deter me. This was reinforced when I first saw Cahun’s self-portraits, they were, in a metaphorical way, the light at the end of the tunnel. Justification and validation of my pursuit in continuing to photograph my androgynous self was valid was felt in that moment of seeing Cahun’s self-portraits for the first time.

It was in places where I felt comfortable that I first photographed my solitary self, in my own home, and it was not until I started my peregrinations overseas that I began photographing myself in public places. These self-portraits are in no way prepared with certain clothing, or the background. They are taken of me in places I have visited, unlike Sherman’s which are deliberately staged. I have not taken them in front of Cahun’s residence in Paris or Jersey, as others have done, or where Barnes wrote the majority of *Nightwood*. My self-portraits are not about that.

A photographic flâneur, a title I could give myself as I walk through these imagined familiar streets. My inhibitions are gone as I set my Rolleiflex up, unravel my cable release and press the shutter button on myself. There is no self consciousness or awareness of others around me, which is what I experience in my own country. Even writing ‘my own country’ I feel a sense of displacement, physical-real displacement, psychological displacement, and displacement in time. The ease, the inspiration, the history, the photograph. It is the not knowing: not knowing the sex of the person, not knowing when the photograph was taken and not knowing where the photograph was taken unless informed. In a sense, a past, a book of my photographs, my writing. It is all done whilst away from my country.

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90 Whilst at the Jersey museum I was told of a female photographer who was doing this though when asked if I could contact her the artist denied contact.
91 Hayford Hall, Devonshire, England.
Fig. 9. Jacqueline Morgan, *Djuna Barnes, rue St Romain apartment, Paris, France*, 2003, 10 x 10cm.
It is impossible for me to consider a picture as anything but a window, in which my first interest is to know what it looks out on to.  

What is it my images look out on to? It is not so much what they look out on to but what they look back on to. Back on to Cahun’s self-portraits, Barnes’s Nightwood, Brook’s self-portrait and portraits of then, and back on to a period of when these women walked my familiar Parisian streets. In a period that consisted of creativity in the visual arts, literature, theatre and music, Claude Cahun played a vital part, though unrecognised until recently. Women were, for the first time, taking a conscious role in these activities. Some of them forming veritable institutions like Natalie Barney’s salon and, more closely related to Cahun, Sylvia Beach’s famous bookstore, Shakespeare and Company. In her autobiography of this time, Beach mentions her ‘helpers’ in the bookstore not long after its opening. It is easy to hypothesise the people whom Cahun and Moore would have come in contact with due to their close involvement with the bookstore in its early days. A hive of literary activities and visiting French and expatriate writers, such as James Joyce, were intimately connected with the bookstore and also with La Maison des Amis des Livres across the street. With her literary background, this environment would have seemed natural to Cahun. During these early years in Paris, and also before her move there, Cahun’s self-portraits were extremely androgynous, strong images that reveal an emancipation of gender roles at that time and of now. A defiant Cahun gazes at the intended viewer. Cahun was certainly no stranger to this world. She not only participated in Surrealism but belonged to the Association des Ecrivians et Artistes Revolutionaires whilst also having her writing published in various literary journals.

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92 André Breton, What Is Surrealism? Selected Writings, trans. & ed. Franklin Rosemont Introduction to Book 1, p. 54. Taken from the 1928 essay on “Surrealism and Painting.”
93 Cahun participated in plays by P. Albert Birot in 1929 in which she was photographed. These included the parts, “Elle” in Barbe bleue, “Monsieur de la première! Table” in Banlieue, and also the part on “Satan” in Le mystère! d’Adam which was not by Birot.
94 Cahun’s work discovered in late 1980s and since then interest has grown in her work.
95 Adrienne Monniers bookshop, partner to Sylvia Beach.
96 Her grandfather wrote with Jules Verne. Le Phare de la Loire, the journal which belonged to her father and which she wrote for, and her uncles involvement with the symbolist writers and also being Oscar Wilde’s guide on his visit to Paris. Oscar Wilde dedicated The Sphinx to Marcel Schwob whilst Schwob dedicated his story Le Pays bleue in 1892 to Wilde. More on Schwob’s friendship with Wilde can be found in Ellman, Richard, ‘Oscar Wilde’, (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1987) p. 326.
‘Never interested in making self-portraits, she adopted a variety of personas and disguises, which explore and expose well-defined images and stereotypes of women in western society across the ages.’

Cahun’s influence is undeniable. Tina Bara’s Anna Pertl, nach selbsportrait/after selfportrait 1928 Claude Cahun, from the series: Matura, Wien 20021 is but one example. In the work of Cindy Sherman, the mask, dress and gender confusion play a major role. Unlike Cahun, who appeared in theatrical productions and was subsequently photographed in these roles, Sherman ‘dresses up’ for her photographs.

In Sherman’s work, I would like to discuss two photographs which to me, are androgynous. Untitled #386 is an early photograph which belongs to a series of photographs, ‘murder mystery people’, dating from 1976. Sherman made seventeen photographs depicting a fictional murder mystery. This photograph shows the son, and the clothing for this character is simple, pyjamas, dressing gown and slippers. Sherman’s hair/wig is black and she is wearing make-up. This photograph is black and white and the clothing is minimal. There is no use of props in comparison to Sherman’s other works in the series. Sherman creates her characters, fictional people around whom the viewer builds up a fictional story. The sex of these fictional people is obvious in the majority of Sherman’s photographs and given the title, ‘the son’, Sherman meant for the photograph to be taken as a male, where as in the colour photograph, ‘untitled #112’, 1982, the sex is ambiguous. It is an androgynous photograph; there is no clue to the sex in the title, leaving the viewer to assume it’s a female due to the fact of it being a work by Sherman. Of all of her photographs, this is the one which I think is the closest to the work of Cahun.

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98 Camera Austria 81/2003 p.71.
The mask being a vital component to both women’s work, though used in different ways. Sherman, in her later work, causes us to look at history with her re-enactments of seventeenth and eighteenth century personas and clowns, who hide under masks of colour. In colour and printed quite large, they look down on the viewer as if you were walking through a portrait gallery. Cahuns on the other hand are rather small, some prints the size of a small page/wallet size, inviting the viewer to look in but only to be confronted with a gaze that defies the viewer to walk away with questioning what they have just seen. The androgyny of Sherman’s early black and white photograph and her later colour one and those of Cahuns self-portraits appear now in everyday life in popular culture. Androgyny is also an excepted form used in fashion and in many aspects of popular culture; Annie Lennox, Marilyn Manson are two examples from popular music. Drag kings, unlike Cahuns self-portraits, deliberately take on a male persona and the intended audience knows that it is a woman cross dressing. It is in everyday existence where the androgynous being is held open to ridicule by societies obsession/desire to know one’s sex, to categorise.

In Tina Bara’s Anna Pertl, after self portrait 1928 Claude Cahun it is easy to see Cahun’s influence in this photograph. The self-portrait is a re-interpretation of Cahun’s self-portrait circa 1928.

As Cahun was not discovered until the late 1980s, it is interesting to note the androgynous woman in modern culture, in particular, Annie Lennox of the Eurythmics. In their video clip *Sweet Dreams* Lennox appears in a suit with her hair dyed orange and cut short. Lennox portrays an androgynous state of being in an assertive performance. She appears again in male attire in the video clip *Who’s That Girl?*, though has applied a fake moustache and as such this is cross dressing rather than androgyny as in the video clip *Sweet Dreams*. Lennox could be taken for either sex and the interest in this band provoked by this showed an audience keen to explore this area. David Bowie, Boy George before her and to a certain extent, Madonna, after her, Lennox best epitomises the androgynous being.

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100 Size of ones purchased, as close to original size as known which I purchased whilst in Jersey.
in modern culture. Acceptability for a short while was made accessible by music artists like Lennox.

When Cahun wrote in 1930 about lifting all her masks and never uncovering her, she could not have known that her face/mask would be unleashed again and this time upon an eagerly awaiting audience. Cahun’s oeuvre from the 1910s and the 1920s is still relevant in a society where gender confusion and ambiguity is still becoming accepted. Androgyny, as in Cahun’s self-portraits, is difficult to find, since taking the dress codes of the opposite sex has been done to such an extent that it really is adopting another sex. The allure of Cahun’s self-portraits was in the not knowing, the gaze of Cahun defying the viewer to define her sex. To view her works now, alongside contemporary photographs which adorn gay/lesbian magazines is a testimony to Cahun. After viewing Cahun’s work, my own self-portraits did not undergo any radical changes, only locationally. I had undertaken them to define myself, to find a comfortable position in myself, where I felt myself to be confident. This was evident, more so, after viewing Cahun.

In Claude Cahun: An Analysis of her Photographic Technique, James Stevenson writes of the possibility that Cahun used the same camera for several decades and that Cahun “was not a professional photographer, but used the camera to create her art”. There are many aspects of Cahun’s photographic techniques which are extremely similar to my own. My studio lighting, when I photographed myself in the studio on limited occasions, has been with simple lighting whilst the majority of the time I rely on available light. Self-portrait is the only title I could give my work as it is only my solitary self present through the whole process. The shutter button is pressed by the aid of a cable release and unlike the cable in some of Sherman’s untitled movie stills, I hide the cable where possible and I print my own photographs in the darkroom. It is a solitary process which I enjoy. The public, when present, play no role in my images, except where they are unavoidable viewers of this process.

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101 As shown by my own university experiences.
103 Ibid p. 46.
I have photographed my solitary self for over ten years. I am comfortable and at ease whilst taking my self-portraits. Asked recently\textsuperscript{104} to have my portrait taken for an exhibition, I was nervous to be photographed by someone else. Because it was a very different experience looking into the lens of anothers camera, I questioned everything beforehand. What should I wear, how should I pose and would the portrait show the same qualities as my own? When the photographer arrived to take my portrait, it happened to be someone I studied with eighteen years ago. All the apprehension disappeared and I felt relieved. An interesting feeling in the difference felt at the thought of another photographing me.

\begin{quote}
\textit{I know few things in the range of science more surprising than the gradual appearance of the picture on the blank sheet, especially the first time the experiment is witnessed.}\textsuperscript{105}
\end{quote}

It is the whole process of image making; the taking of the photograph, the printing of the photograph and the showing of the photograph which encompasses me. The images are ‘straight’ photographs with no manipulation, taken only with natural and available light. There is no cropping, the whole negative is printed. This accounts for the blurring around the edges of some photographs. There is also no dodging or burning done whilst printing adding to the integrity of the photograph. I use a 1939 Rolleiflex twin lens reflex. The feel of this camera, either when held in my hand and looking down to take the photograph, or when I am looking at it when it is placed on the tripod is one of respect. The respect arises out of the ‘straight’ photographs it takes, the sense of honesty, where nothing is erased or added. This is important to me. The Rolleiflex is my travelling companion and in front of it I am myself, before its lens I am naked. Like the above quote, the image appearing never ceases to amaze me. Even knowing about silver halides, the developing process, demystifying it, adds to the amazement.

\textsuperscript{104} For an exhibition held at Maitland Regional Gallery, \textit{‘Photo voices – a photographic essay of maitland and the hunter’s gay and lesbian community – Sharon Aldrick. 29 June – 5 August 2007.}

The artist book has been an aspect of my art since I started my studies in 1991. Books are an important part of my life. I was always encouraged to read and always had books around me. For the book to be a part of my art was a natural progression. Now I am the content or I choose the content. I have kept journals and diaries on all my overseas trips and it is these writings which form the basis of my text in the two books exhibited. The photographs included in these two books are of myself and of significant places I have visited overseas. The images of specific places invite contemplation and their timelessness about them is deliberate. I do not want the date to be obvious. A book should be something we want to pick up, look inside and be taken somewhere, even if it is a cookery book. Adrienne Monnier was a lover of books and catered for a similar book loving public, the select few. Monnier, before a person bought a book from her shop, would let them take it home to see how they felt living with it. This has been lost to a certain degree in western culture. It is however still present in antiquarian bookstores in cities such as Paris. I purchased a book in Paris in 2003 and the way it was wrapped, as if it was a gift, in paper gave one a sense of this. Wrapped so as to protect this precious item. It had been suggested I put my book on the computer and use the click of the mouse to turn the page. This was an insult. From my 1939 camera to my 1920s typewriter there is no place for a book on a computer, a contradiction in terms, computers do not contain the personal elements which are integral aspects to my art. The physical attributes of the book are important: the feel of the cover, the feel of the text on the paper, the indentation on the other side of the paper

108 Her correspondence with Cahun is held in the Bibliothèque littéraire, Jacques-Doucet, Paris, which holds her papers.
110 1997 Canberra School of Art, Australian National University.
from the typewriter keys, the feel of the pages themselves. It is a tactile and sensual journey. The text is typed on my 1920s Royal typewriter. The noise when a key is hit is more pleasing than the click of a mouse, more pleasing than the semi-quiet tapping of a computer keyboard.

I envy (in a manner of speaking) every man who has the time to prepare something like a book...111

André Breton, Nadja.

I stacked each book one upon the other, an edition of nine. Countless hours I had spent sewing them together in preparation for my final work in my degree in visual arts112 in 1997. All nine spines were beautiful. Unbound, these books became an art work in their unfinished state. I could look at them for hours. The criss-crossing of the final stitching had dedication sewn into it. When finally the books were covered in red velvet, I laid them all out and ran my hands over them. Visual, tactile, in a hand held size, portable art.113 The idea of opening up the book onto an indiscriminate page, at any time as the size allows it to be carried around, is portable accessible art. Photography and text I prefer to use in one art object, the artist book, easily accessible to others if they choose to access it. Books literally speak volumes and the photographs can contain a thousand words, so much said in a book. I could never choose to make my book on the computer as was suggested, it goes against every reason why I choose the book as my medium.

How many cities have revealed themselves to me in the marches I undertook in the pursuit of books!114

111 Margaret Cohen, Profane Illumination – Walter Benjamin and the Paris of the Surrealist Revolution, p. 70. Taken from Nadja.
112 La Femme Livre was the title of this book. I obtained my degree in Visual Arts at The Australian National University.
113 I carried Barnes ‘Nightwood’ on every overseas trip I undertook.
114 ‘I have made my most memorable purchases on trips, as a transient. Property and possession belong to the tactical sphere. Collectors are people with a tactical instinct, their experience teaches them that when they capture a strange city, the smallest antique shop can be a fortress, the most remote stationery store a key position. How many cities have revealed themselves to me in the marches I undertook in the pursuit of books!’, Walter Benjamin, (ed). and with an introduction by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn, ‘Illuminations’, (New York, Schocken Books, 1969) p. 63.
People still enjoy books, as is evident through my experience in working in an antiquarian bookstore. This was in the same year I found, *la trouvaille*, Cahun’s book of self-portraits in Paris. One of my first jobs in England, after arriving from Paris, was a job in an antiquarian bookstore opposite the British Museum in London. With books being such an integral part of my life I could not believe my luck, to be surrounded by them and to be paid for the priviledge, truly a *trouvaille*. Shortly after I was successful in obtaining another bookstore job located just around the corner. The antiquarian bookstore did not pay much, how was I going to survive in London? How would I buy books? The second bookstore paid better though it was more of a student/scholarly bookstore with remainders and only one small section on antiquarian and first edition books. I left this job to stay in the lesser paid one. Why? People came looking, searching, to find a book from their childhood, a book to return them home, nostalgia, a book which had made an impact on their lives; when found, their expression was worth the small amount of pay I received. Some cried, some smelt the book and said it was just as they remembered it, they all paid the asking price, their searching over. I learnt the ‘trade’. I spoke with others who were interested in books, books as a form of art, books as learning and books as profit. An affinity was experienced in this bookshop, an affinity with those customers when they cried after finding their book. It was a passion and I was not alone. People I told this to laughed, they laughed at my passion and told me to obtain work in a café or shop as I would earn more money. I did not, I could not. I wrote when not in the bookstore, in the cemetery at the end of my street, Eardley Cresent, where I lived. I wanted to make another book with my text and photographs as I had for my degree though with more text. I had written and photographed whilst in Paris and this continued across the channel.

*Every step, on a bridge, on a square, recalls a great past – at each corner of the street, a fragment of history unfolded.*


116 One book I bought was by Renee Vivien which led to meeting other interested parties. The book details were as followed, Renee Vivien, *Brumes De Fjords*, (Paris, Alphonse Lemerre, 1902) 1st ed. Rebound in vellum-backed marbled boards it was from the library of the celebrated courtesan Liane de Pougy with her crowned monogramme at the tail of the spine. It appears to be a gift from her friend Natalie Clifford Barney who has written in the book in two places.

117 *Tempus Perditum*, was made in 2002 for my Honours.

The books, containing photographs and text, are titled, *Peregrinations* and *Autoportraits* and are hand bound. *Peregrinations* contains thirty six black and white photographs and one page of my text (figure 10), the photographs are of places overseas which have significant meaning for me and which create a contemplative effect upon me whilst viewing them (figure 11). *Autoportraits* is self explanatory, this is a self-portrait. A self-portrait in nine photographs and thirty four pages of text. The text has evolved through my travels, through the changes experienced within myself. These self-portraits have been taken in a variety of places, the churchyard where Cahun is buried (figure 12), Hotel Recamier (figure 13), which is mentioned in *Nightwood* and, mostly, in places where I have lived and stayed in France and England. They have personal significance also in some instances as I went to where my family came from as well as those with connections to these women. I have been fortunate during these travels; not only do the photographs in the book remind me of my wanderings, they also transport me back to a time which has no date, nostalgia. This seems easy to do anywhere in Europe as antiquity surrounds you with cityscapes and landscapes changing little through time. It was whilst printing these photographs that I realised the majority are of solitary places, where solitude is invited. A religious solitude, reflecting the calmness in me which bought on my contemplation and in turn, nostalgia.

*The past, whilst retaining its ghostly piquancy, will recapture the light and movement of life, and become present.*

Charles Baudelaire\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{119} Charles Baudelaire, *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, p 392.
Here I show my images of my wanderings. Timeless appeal of Europe is shown in every image and of a lost era. To close one’s eyes and be transported back to a time imagined is possible. To walk the streets and come upon ‘la trouvaille’ - lucky find - and allow oneself to go wherever coincidences take you is what is here. Everything talks, communicates, and an affinity develops for what you can not pinpoint but feel so strongly. In ISO format I try to capture this, to have forever, and thank those who have wandered before me. They walked these streets, they saw these monuments, they sat in these churches, they contemplated these ruins, they bought me. Words they wrote inspire the wanderings.

In all of these places time gone is apparent and these inanimate buildings, pavements, hold imagined and also real scenarios. Art movements, literary traditions have all gone before and we learn and develop new movements, new traditions. Following a desire to be where my inspiration sprang from, to pay homage to the people who gave me this inspiration, has led to many more paths I traversed with an unbound pleasure. All leading, in unexpected ways, my la trouvaille, to a growth in my being which only travel could bring.

Open to old and new, old creeps up and suddenly becomes the new and I look upon everything in a dateless way. To explain is difficult if one is not aware of all this and telling to such is futile. On a different soil one grows a strange mixture and it is up to the individual to what extent they choose to do with it. Mixing mine with theirs a hybrid mix is produced and these images the result. Dead people speak loud with what they have left to us. For me it is the women of the ‘lost generation’ who speak the loudest and to whom I respond. I leave my own country to find myself, not to recreate, not to capture this era, but to sit, walk, live, where I feel I will. To grow in the past. Modernity hides a little of the past and it requires a digging of archeological means to find, research and appreciate the importance of this.

Fig. 10. Jacqueline Morgan, Peregrinations (typed text), 2007, 28.5 x 21cm.
Fig. 11. Jacqueline Morgan, *Peregrinations* and *Autoportraits*, 2007, 29.8 x 22 x 5 cm and 29.8 x 22 x 4.5 cm.
Fig. 12. Jacqueline Morgan, *Self-portrait, Jersey, Channel Islands, (Claude Cahuns grave)*, 2003, 12.5 x 12.5cm.
Fig. 13. Jacqueline Morgan, *Self-portrait, Paris, France, (Hotel Recamier)*, 2003, 12.5 x 12.5cm.
Together with the photographs presented in book form, the exhibition will comprise of twelve self-portraits, and, directly facing them, twelve contemplative images of significant places visited. With the books displayed on a table, this exhibition will be a place of discovery and reflection. These photographs include some images and self-portraits which appear in both books and some which do not. These photographs are a documentation in 120 format. The light is an aspect in all of them though it is those where the light is let into the photographs, the interior which adds to the ambience of the photograph and the past becomes the present. In the photograph of *Lacock, England*, (ironically the birthplace of modern photography), the light comes through the window of a small room off the cloisters to fall onto a cauldron/pot of great size (figure 14). In it is the past, the present, and the future. All three in together and illuminated through the medium of photography. Across from this is a pensive self portrait taken in St Helier, Jersey in Fairholme where I stayed for two weeks in 2003. I look at the camera and it captures a moment in my life where I am contemplating where I am and what and whom I have seen. By this, I am referring to Cahun’s archives and my meeting with Mr Mière. In another self-portrait, half of my body is shown whilst standing near Cahuns headstone. My head is out of the frame. The eye of the viewer is led into the photograph by the headstone then to the non-identified body; the headless body. In this one self-portrait, I am at the same time both in and out of the frame. In it, I have ventured into the early twentieth century, the past of Cahun, though still remaining firmly in the twenty-first century. These photographs are placed on the wall to take the viewer on a journey, to locate them, a journey from the twenty-first century and then onto the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the form of travel ephemera displayed in the glass cabinet. On the far wall will be a selection of large works, enlargements of pages taken from material researched in the archives of Cahun and Barnes. They bring a personal component to these women, they are not material of what is already in books dedicated to them, but of such a nature to be highly appropriate to this research. They are material not yet published. One example is a postcard Barnes sent to her brother from Paignton in 1933. This of course being where my father was born. Another is a draft of a letter Cahun has written, there is also an inventory of Barnes’ flat in Paris, itemising objects from her daily existence and a typed letter Barnes wrote from the Hotel Recamier.
Fig. 14. Jacqueline Morgan, *Lacock, England*, 2003, 10 x 10cm.
In the middle of this space will be a display in a glass cabinet of various printed material and photographs I have amassed whilst travelling. These include mass-produced, pocket-sized photographs of Paris; the androgynous postcard referred to earlier, advertisements for photographers which they placed on the back of their photographs in the late 1800s and early 1900s and recent postcards of Paignton featuring old railway posters. These hark back to a lost time, far removed from the one where digitally enhanced images are an everyday occurrence; hence the museum-like appearance of the glass cabinet. This material represents my ‘tourist’ purchases, my souvenirs; purchases authentic to their time and also ones of replicating a time gone. These have influenced and enhanced my nostalgic picture of this time of which I write, especially the photographs of Paris. Similar in size to my printing size, the ease with which you can carry these around is akin to the pocket-sized book. Walking through this exhibition will be a journey again.

_We leave an imprint each time we enter into a history._

Anonymous\textsuperscript{120}

It is the ‘self sufficiency’ of the book, no electricity needed, in reference to my book being put on the computer. The ‘self sufficiency’ of my Rolleiflex, no batteries required and also the ‘self sufficiency’ of my Royal typewriter. All portable. The combination of all these elements bring together a completed artwork. Using traditional methods of photography is important in this world of ever changing technology. Will Anderson writes in his article _Tech, No Logic_,\textsuperscript{121} about how the younger generation are missing out on not having to wait for a roll of film to be developed or of the fact that photographs can be examined straight away and a form of nostalgia develops for what has happened only thirty seconds ago. I am a contemporary photographer who chooses to work using traditional photographic methods. Choosing to do this brings authenticity to the work, due to the knowledge that there has been no manipulation.

\textsuperscript{120} Citied by Walter Benjamin in Latin without source in Walter Benjamin, _The Arcades Project_, p. 516.

To plunge into the depths of the abyss – heaven or hell. What does it matter? Into the heart of the unknown To seek the new.

Charles Baudelaire

Europe was my unknown, my abyss, and I plunged into it to return again and again. I sought the new out of the old and was never left wanting. Unfolding information on these women, especially when found in their personal archives, shone a light into the abyss which found formation in my writing, self-portraits and photographs. On the edge of Dartmoor, only a few miles from the village of Buckfastleigh is Hayford Hall. After a few bus changes, I arrived in the village and started my 4-5 mile walk up into the beginning of the moors (figure 15). In the middle of the mostly one car lane there was a grassy island with a signpost showing the way to Hayford Hall. Peggy Guggenheim had rented Hayford Hall out in the summers of 1932 and 1933 and one of her guests was Djuna Barnes. It was at Hayford Hall where Barnes wrote a major part of Nightwood. Hayford Hall was not far from Paignton where I was staying, in Clifton Lodge, King street where my father was born. I had been to Paignton before and gone to Buckfast Abbey not knowing how close I was to Hayford Hall and where the book I travelled with was mostly written. It was not until I did further research that I found the location and eventually made my way there. Walking towards it, I remembered the line Miranda spoke from the later Antiphon (1950’s) which Barnes also wrote:

‘Where are we, indeed, that we are only here?’

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123 Six trips to Europe were made.
126 Peggy Guggenheim, ‘Out of This Century - Confession of an Art Addict’, p. 114.
127 Djuna Barnes, Selected Works of Djuna Barnes, Spillway, The Antiphon, Nightwood’. (Faber and Faber, London: 1980) p. 92. This is the book that I took on every trip with me.
Fig. 15. Hayford Hall Map, 29.5 x 21cm.
Fig. 16. Jacqueline Morgan, *Hayford Hall, England*, 2001, 10 x 10cm.
I knocked on the door; no answer so I photographed Hayford Hall (figure 16). Due to bus timetables I had limited time to spend there. I reflected then walked back down to the village.

Barnes had been to Paignton and there was a certain pleasure in knowing that when she visited, my great grandmother was living there, still alive and still living in Paignton. When I was there, I asked about Paignton and surrounding areas in those years. Living history.

Obtaining access to the relevant archives was integral to my understanding of these women, especially the archives of Cahun and Barnes. The microfilm containing the archives of Djuna Barnes could have been seen in my own country, though by doing this I would have done a great disservice to myself. For two weeks I looked at the rolls of microfilm, both of Barnes and the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven. At the end of this I was asked would I like to see Barnes’ archival material, her photographs, address books, everything. I sat at a huge desk with the first box in front of me and I proceeded to look at the life of Djuna Barnes. It was the archival material that was not in books about Barnes that made Barnes real to me in a very personal sense. Amongst this very personal material, it was the everyday objects that stood out and created an image different to that which I had created from books written about Barnes.

In Cahun’s archives, it was the act of ‘seeing’, seeing the photographs of Cahun that she had physically seen herself. They were not reprinted, they were printed by Cahun or if not by her, then by her own specifications. I was privileged also in the fact that I was going to be one of the last researchers to see these original photographs due to the damaging affect of the light on them. The early photographs of Cahun, not published, emerging from the acid free paper held my attention the longest. My whole visit changed. As with Djuna Barnes, I had come to Jersey with a preconceived idea of the many Claude Cahun, made up from her published self-portraits and written material about her. Her address book, something so ordinary, everyday, contained Cahun’s (and Moore’s) friends, acquaintances

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128 Postcard Barnes sent from Paignton to her brother. Series 1 Box 5 Reel 3 folder 17, writing side 0068, picture side 0069. Djuna Barnes Papers. Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries. McKeldin Library. USA.

129 I thank Beth Alvarez for this rare opportunity.
and a keyhole into the life of Cahun. An eclectic range of people featured in this address book, crossed out in some cases and rewritten again with new details. How many times would Cahun have picked this up? Now I had picked it up. Physically touching an item of such importance, Cahun’s contacts, gave me a sense of bewilderment which I could not dismiss. Of all Cahun’s masks, this was her most personal, to me at least.\textsuperscript{130}

After spending many hours looking through Barnes’s archives at the McKeldin Library at the University of Maryland,\textsuperscript{131} I found no evidence that Barnes knew of Cahun. Looking through her life on one roll after another of microfilm, it was evident that Barnes moved mainly in different circles to Cahun, attending Barney’s Friday salons and frequenting the bars and cafés of the day. Barnes was well-acquainted with the Baroness;\textsuperscript{132} reading the Baroness’ unpublished letters to Barnes this is quite evident. The Baroness told Barnes of her struggles, how she was forced to live in poverty as the world ignored her poetry and her art. The Baroness also wanted Barnes to write her autobiography. Barnes does not appear as political as Cahun, her writing containing issues on human behaviour, on relationships and the ‘otherness’ of humans, especially in \textit{Nightwood}.\textsuperscript{133} Barnes appears in memoirs from this period in a social setting, never a political setting like Cahun. It is easy to hypothesise that Wood knew Cahun and Moore, especially Moore. Not only Wood’s silverpoint artwork but Barnes being an illustrator as well makes this a possibility more so. Moore illustrated Cahun’s book, \textit{Vues et Visions}.\textsuperscript{134} Brooks’ archives\textsuperscript{135} holds material from a later period to when they were all living in Paris at the same time. Diaries from when she lived in Italy reveal nothing on this period. No mention either in the Baroness’ material at the McKeldin Library, University of Maryland.

\textsuperscript{130} I have Val Nelson to thank for this experience.  
\textsuperscript{131} November-December 2004.  
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid, p. 93.  
\textsuperscript{134} Published in 1919.  
\textsuperscript{135} Romaine Brooks archives are held in the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington DC. USA.
Conclusion

What does your conscience say? – “you shall become the person you are.”

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882)

It was not to ‘adopt’ these women as gay icons that this research was undertaken, it was undertaken to ascertain if they influenced one another in anyway. Cahuns self-portraits have given me a journey, physically and artistically. I started out wanting to know. To know what exactly, took time to decipher. Various places have been visited, Hayford Hall, (UK) where Barnes wrote part of *Nightwood*, Cambronne in Nantes where Cahun lived with her grandmother, Paris, where these women lived and in all these places, and the others not mentioned, I have photographed and written. Their influence is there, they bought me there. The number of women living in Paris who participated in the art and literary scene of this time were still overshadowed by men. If Marcel Duchamp wore anything remotely as abstract as what the Baroness wore, it would be as well known as *The Bride Stripped Bare* or his urinal. If Man Ray produced self-portraits as genderly ambiguous as Cahuns they would be as well known, if not more so, than his rayograms and portraits of others. Instead Cahuns work was lost to obscurity, waiting to be found when the world was ready for them. Only Barnes in her life time saw *Nightwood*, her novel from 1936, become a cult classic. In Cahuns case, there is some satisfaction when an artist cannot be classified, when there is only speculation and hypothetical reasons on why they produced their work. It is in a similar way, the same as wanting to know a persons sex, and when not knowing, becoming inquisitive.

I sat for a long period of time, as if I’d reached an end in many ways, on the concrete wharf at St Brelade’s Bay, Jersey, after seeing Cahun’s house and her grave. Life and death. I photographed myself from the knees down with my shoes and the horizon, it seemed

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138 Baroness in various memoirs as well as Djuna Barnes, Brooks remembered for her long relationship with Natalie Barney and Claude Cahun, as a man until the 1980s.
appropriate (figure 17). I had held Cahun’s papers and books in my hands and now Cahun appeared more real. Negatives and photographs, intensely personal aspects of her life I sat and went through, taking what I thought I would need. The taking of what I needed had already been done when I discovered Photographe, Cahun’s photographs in a book. I felt a sense of voyeurism whilst looking at Cahun’s and Barnes’ papers, when physically holding the originals. A vulture picking over what had not been taken by other researchers and used and published before me. Cahun’s writing may have been influenced by Symbolism but her self-portraits are unique. They are still unique. It is this aspect which draws me back to her self-portraits, back to her gaze. Even today where androgyny is seen practically everywhere in our day-to-day life in advertisements and popular culture, Cahun’s self-portraits break androgyny down to its barest form. Cahun does not need props, does not need specialised clothes or an artistic influence. Cahun created her self-portraits in an era of emancipation for women, an era of uncertainty between the wars. She displays no uncertainty. With her unique abilities, surely Cahun influenced other women artists? This might have been true if her work was shown, though there are no records of Cahun holding any solo exhibitions. There was no evidence that these women knew of Cahun or if Cahun knew them. It seemed appropriate that the Wood in Cahun’s address book lived

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139 This is due to her uncles close involvement with the Symbolist movement. This is discussed further in Jean Cassous, ‘The Concise Encyclopedia of Symbolism’, (Omega Books Ltd, London, 1988) pp. 154, 177, 271.

140 Moore’s influence on Cahun is yet to be determined and also her level of involvement in these self-portraits.

141 Cahun did exhibit with the Surrealists in their group exhibition ‘Exposition surrealiste d’objets’ held in 1936 at Charles Ratton’s gallery in Paris and also assisted, albeit behind the scenes, for the exhibition which took place in London in the same year.

142 Margaret Cohen, Profane Illumination – Walter Benjamin and the Paris of the Surrealist Revolution, Cohen has written about Walter Benjamin and André Breton, ‘how did these men’s paths cross in the Paris of the late 1920s and 1930s, might their personal intercourse provide some clue to their textual exchange? Information on this subject (at least publicly accessible) is, however, absent, tantalizingly untraceable.- Certainly, one can speculate on the basis of suggestive details from Parisian intellectual life of the time.’ p.14. This is interesting in relation to my own research into Cahun, Barnes and Brooks and the fact that there is no factual evidence of any communication between them, especially in regards to Cahun.

143 Irene Gammel, Baroness Elsa – Gender, Dada, and Everyday Modernity. A Cultural Biography, Gammel has written of Cahun, ‘Just a few minutes from the Baroness’s hotel, on 70 rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, lived the radical performance artist, photographer, and poet Claude Cahun (1894-1954) with her half-sister and lover, the self-named Marcel Moore. Cahun would certainly have heard about the Baroness from Jane Heap and Geogette Leblanc, Cahun’s friends. Exactly twenty years the Baroness’s junior,..., Cahun belonged to the new generation of radical gender experimenters. Ridiculing socially assigned gender roles, she posed alternately in male clothing or as doll-like female with curls, pouting lips, and buttoned nipples sewn on her dress. Like the Baroness, she adopted a grotesque, estranged
in the same street as Barnes and Wood but that the number could not be found, it had been erased. These women, though deceased, were real and walking with me, Me as a flâneur.

aesthetic, bringing to light the strangely uncanny elements of the socially and culturally repressed. Yet where the Baroness indulged in anti-Semitic stereotypes, Cahun, as a Jewish woman, joined the resistance movement in the 1930s and was later incarcerated by the Nazis.’ p. 367. [Italics mine.]
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