

# down the winding road, part 1

By midnight

It gets old sometimes, waiting for things to happen. The skies break and mend themselves again, and things stay the same.

A pond ripples in the forest, ever-clear and shimmering. Its waters reflect my face - or perhaps it belongs to someone else now.

A rock breaks the surface, thrown by my own hand. I cannot bear its image.

Sunlight filters through the trees, beaming from the setting sun. It shines on my face, though there is nobody here to see it.

I rise from my place at the water's edge, and slowly begin down the road.

Part Two: Elagabalus. Elagabalus (who will be referred to with they/them pronouns) was a roman emperor who took power in 218 CE but was assassinated after four years, their one claim to fame was that they might be transgender or nonbinary. Born male, Elagabalus expressed an unusual amount of attraction to men, for context Roman (and Greek) men were supposed to be attracted to men and would regularly have romantic and sexual relationships with men and women, Elagabalus (at least from what weâ€™ve heard) would only have relationships with men and in fact married a man and would call themselves his wife, he later, when meeting a man who he hoped to add to his collection of lovers, would request to be referred to as a woman, wore jewelry and makeup (which was not the norm for men) and requested the invention of bottom surgery so he could receive it.

Part Three: indigenous societies and third genders. Before the advent of colonization, many societies had genders other than male or female which held ceremonial or traditional roles (like in mesopotamia). While they might not identify as nonbinary, trans or genderqueer in the “traditional” sense they are an important reminder of the prevalence of gender nonconformity in society.

- Hijras are a third gender present in hinduism, they are made up of people who are born male or are intersex and receive religious education as they are seen as religious figures. Their existence has resulted in protections for nonbinary people in portions of southeast asia.
- Muxes are a group in Mexico of people who are born males but typically have a female gender identity, often holding a traditionally female role in the household. They originate in indigenous Zapotec culture.
- Bakla is a word originating in the Philippines to describe born males who present a feminine identity, many are LGBTQ+ and traditionally served as leaders in the community even though this faces opposition due to the effects of colonization.
- Two-Spirit is a term used to describe people in Native American communities who traditionally are thought to hold both a male and female spirit in them, they are seen as having a unique perspective and were traditionally leaders, they were actively suppressed during colonization. Two-Spirit is a blanket term and does not belong to a specific tribe or group.
- South Sulawesi third genders, in Indonesia the island of South Sulawesi has multiple traditional third genders (it is not a literal term). There are the Calabai, who are born male but occupy a traditionally feminine role, The Calalai are the opposite, they are born female but occupy a role similar to that of traditional male roles. And finally there are the Bissu, which are seen as both male and female, they perform religious ceremonies and are seen as religious leaders.
- The Sekrata are a third gender that originates in the Sakalava people of Madagascar, they are born male but present female and hold a third position within society. They are seen as sacred.