Earl Lind’s robust sexual history and absorption in sensuous pleasure in *Autobiography of an Androgyne* constituted precisely the kind of sexual adventuring that Edward Carpenter censured in *The Intermediate Sex*: ‘to confuse Uranians (as is so often done) with libertines having no law but curiosity in self-indulgence is to do them a great wrong.’\(^1\) It was a denunciation that the character Barnaby echoes (*pace* Carpenter) in Rose Allatini’s pacifist novel of 1918, *Despised and Rejected*: ‘Of course there are those who enjoy it – who wallow in the perverted sensations of their own abnormality, as normal sensualists wallow in their own “permissible” lusts’ (p. 348). Barnaby, needless to say, isn’t one of them. For Carpenter, as for Allatini, to emphasise a connection between being ‘intermediate’ and being artistic was also to legitimise same-sex desire by making it useful: the intermediate type was the potential saviour of enervated post-war modernity, come to revivify English culture both socially and artistically, filling the gap, as Carpenter put it, created by ‘the alienation of the sexes from each other, of which much complaint is so often made today’.\(^2\)

Whilst narrative representations of androgyny in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries served as explanations for same-sex (though mainly homosexual) sensibilities and desires, there was a recognisable shift in how androgyny came to be reconfigured as the ‘intermediate type’ or ‘intermediate sex’ by writers like Carpenter and Allatini. Whereas Krafft-Ebing’s case studies theorised, even as they constructed, degenerate subjectivities, Carpenter took his intermediate types out of the consulting room and away from the asylum, arguing that they had a great part to play in ‘general society’. The antithesis of Krafft-Ebing’s pitiable patients, Carpenter’s ‘Uranians’, promised to be the upholders and regenerators of civilisation, not least because (like
Radclyffe Hall’s Stephen Gordon)³ they had the ‘double point of view’: ‘with their extraordinary gift for, and experience in affairs of the heart – from the double point of view, both of the man and the woman – it is not difficult to see that these people have a special work to do as reconcilers and interpreters of the two sexes to each other.’⁴

Carpenter’s self-appointed task was to legitimise or authorise what degrees of intermediacy were and were not appropriate, but in the ‘extreme specimens’ (as he clinically describes them) their corruption is marked by the ways femininity and masculinity apparently invade and infect the male and female body, marking the en travestie as travesty. At a stroke, he naturalises and reifies the orthodox relationship between gender identity and the sexed body, even as he indicates some of the ways in which they can also be re-ordered. His sketch of the ‘extreme’ type of intermediate suggests a surprisingly illiberal repudiation of queer identities, marking the androgynous intermediate type as distinct from Lind’s representation of the androgyne as fairy. The extreme male intermediate is ‘effeminate … sentimental, lackadaisical, mincing in gait and manners, something of a chatterbox, skilful at the needle and in woman’s work’.⁵ The extreme intermediate woman is egregious, like her male counterpart: ‘markedly aggressive, sensuous rather than sentimental in love, often untidy, and outré in attire, her voice rather low in pitch; her dwelling room decorated with sporting scenes, pistols, etc., and not without a suspicion of the fragrant weed in the atmosphere.’⁶ Carpenter never discloses whether his models of the ‘extreme specimens’ are based on his reading of case studies, or whether they are drawn from observation or prejudice, but their ‘extreme’ is strategic in helping him to present the ‘normal’ intermediate not just as the ideal, but also as one who might permissibly ‘pass’ in hetero-normative culture without attracting a second glance.

Despised and Rejected

Rose Allatini’s anti-war novel Despised and Rejected (1918), which she published under the pseudonym A.T. Fitzroy, was clearly influenced by Carpenter in its attempts to refashion and dignify the cultural implications of homosexual desire, the sublimation of which was presented as both intermediate and intrinsic to a noble and civilised modern culture. The original advertisement for the book described it as being partly concerned with ‘the so-called Uranians, whose domestic attachments are more in the way of friendship than of ordinary marriage’,⁷ although the novel remains circumspect about those ‘domestic attachments’. The