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~Dec Edition~
Hieroglyphic texts refer to Hatshepsut as female and male with no consistent correlation to femme/masc presentation, so I will be using he/him and she/her pronouns interchangeably.

Many historians ponder if Pharaoh Hatshepsut of Ancient Egypt was the first “trans/nb” leader in history. She rose to the highest political rank in a society over 3,000 years ago! Though there is no way to prove if he was the first trans/nb leader in history (and I highly doubt it since GNC folx have always been around and the meaning of leader varies across cultures), his GNC ruling is truly remarkable. Not only did she reign as a genderbending pharaoh, her reign was also known as a very prosperous and peaceful one; displaying such an impressive reputation for herself that following pharaohs wanted to be buried nearby, thus creating the Valley of the Kings.

So what is recorded to hint towards Hatshepsut’s GNC journey? Starting before and continuing through his reign, he had images of himself appear more masc over time. With that being said, she also chose a femme name for her new name (Khenemetenamen, meaning “Hatshepsut, United with Amen,” a masculine god) and chose a royal name that tied herself to the spirits of the dead (Useret-kau), unlike kings prior who chose names such as Ka-ankht, meaning Strong Bull, to demonstrate how macho they were. In early depictions, Hatshepsut is shown wearing traditionally men and women’s clothes with more “feminine features,” such as breasts, and small shoulders. But later on he is shown with more “masculine features,” such as a flat chest and broad shoulders. And he is only wearing men’s garments: false beard, crown of the pharaoh, king’s kilt. Another thing to note is the change in skin color on Hatshepsut’s statues. Women’s statues were painted yellow, while men’s statues were painted red. Hatshepsut had transitioned from using yellow to using orange, suggesting androgyny across the female and male depictions. However, by the end of her reign, he used the red skin associated with men.
Amelio was a Black Latinx trans man born on Nov. 3, 1889 in Xochipala, Guerrero to a wealthy Catholic family. He grew up being schooled about Catholic “girl duties,” but was able to escape that (and an arranged marriage) and become more of his true self by cutting his hair short, legally changing his name, and joining the Mexican Revolution in 1912. By 1919 Amelio had led and won many battles as Zapatista Colonel Amelio Robles Ávila, key leader in the Mexican Revolution. However, after Emiliano Zapata was assassinated, Amelio surrendered (along with 315 men under his command). In 1920 he joined Alvaro Obregón, a General in the Mexican Revolution, who became president of Mexico from 1920 to 1924. It took the military until 1970 to officially recognize him as a veterano (male veteran) and not a veterana (female veteran), which also made him the first officially recognized trans soldier in Mexican military history.

In battle, Amelio was known to shoot his pistol with his right hand while holding his cigar in the left. With his friends, his family, and somewhat the military behind him, Amelio lived openly as a man until his death at age 95, threatening anyone who misgendered him with a pistol! In fact, out of the numerous times he drew his pistol to signal his sincerity, he did end up actually shooting at a group of soldiers who assaulted him after discovering he was trans. Amelio killed two men and was sent to prison in Chilpancigo, where he faced more transphobic dehumanization, being held in the women’s prison. In the words of historian Gabriela Cano: “the most arduous battle that Colonel Robles fought did not take place on a cross-country, had no smell of gunpowder, [but was rather] a cultural battle, a silent and slow struggle, whose great victory was to become a male[...].” And to that, Amelio was at peace with knowing and being out full heartedly as a man, with the support of his friends and family and eventual wife Angela Torres and adopted daughter Regula Robles Torres.
Lucy was a Black trans woman born in 1886 in Waddy, Kentucky. When she was little, her mom took her to the doctor, concerned about Lucy’s insistence on wearing dresses to school. Surprisingly, the doctor recommended that Lucy’s parents raise Lucy as a girl, and surprisingly both of Lucy’s parents did! So from a young age, Lucy was able to begin living as her authentic self and by the age of 15 she had changed her name legally to Lucy and left home. Lucy started working domestic jobs for rich families and then she eventually saved up enough to own and operate a brothel in Oxnard, CA, where she had moved to in 1920 after marrying her first husband Clarence Hicks (she divorced him in 1929). Lucy had created a great reputation for herself in the community through her award-winning cooking and fancy dinner parties for wealthy folk, which made it a little easier to run her brothel. Apparently once when she was arrested for selling booze, she was bailed out by the town's leading banker because he wanted her to cook for his dinner party that evening!

In 1944 Lucy married Reuben Anderson, a retired soldier, and they had a happy first year of marriage. Then everything changed for Lucy in 1945 when there was an outbreak of venereal disease in the Navy, which was traced back to Lucy’s brothel. A doctor examined all the women working there and persisted to examine Lucy as well. Being transphobic, the doctor outed Lucy to the public. This created a tumultuous decade of charges of perjury for “lying” on her marriage license (because only men and women could marry and they didn’t see Lucy as a woman) and fraud for receiving money as the wife of a soldier. However, through all of this bullshit, Lucy bravely claimed: “I defy any doctor in the world to prove that I am not a woman.” After this, Lucy became the first trans woman - Black trans woman! - to defend her gender identity in U.S. court. After her and Reuben’s time in jail, they were banned from Oxnard, and so moved to quietly live the rest of their lives in Los Angeles, CA.
Claude was a Jewish artist who used his art to play with gender and defy people’s expectations of how she should be presenting herself. Born in France in 1894, not only was it huge to be so public about gender nonconformity, it was also huge that he would so proudly claim his Jewish heritage in the face of the heightened anti-Semitism of postwar France. Claude also had a partner in his performances/art pieces: Suzanne Malherbe, whose alias was Marcel Moore. At age 15 they fell in love and Marcel actually became Claude’s step sibling after her dad fell in love with Marcel’s mom.

It is unclear exactly how Claude identified his gender, but of course, this is also way before modern day TGNC language came about (though we do know she used he/him and she/her pronouns). When Claude took on his name Claude Cahun in 1918, she may have been suggesting how she felt about her gender identity. The first name Claude is gender ambiguous in French. And in his book *Aveux non Avenus* (published as *Disavowals* in English) Claude writes: “Masculine? Feminine? It depends on the situation. Neuter is the only gender that always suits me.” Furthermore, in line with his Jewish pride, the last name Cahun derives from the Jewish surname of the priestly lineage (this was a big act of defiance against anti-semetics especially because her prior last name was “Schwob,” which derives from German). Claude was also a founding member of Contre-Attaque (along with André Breton and Georges Bataille), a group established in 1935 to fight fascism. In the early 1940s Claude and Marcel anonymously dispersed anti-Nazi messages throughout the island of Jersey. However, in 1944 they were arrested by the Nazis and sentenced to death. Fortunately, the war ended before they could be executed. While in prison, much of Cahun’s art was destroyed. And after being released, Cahun continued to work on her art and text, but unfortunately never fully recovered physically and emotionally from his imprisonment. Cahun died on Dec 8, 1954 from complications that developed while he was in prison.
We’wha was a Zuni Lhamana: a Zuni specific word that falls under the contemporary umbrella term two-spirit. She was born in the Zuni pueblo (located in so-called New Mexico) in 1849 and grew up performing the ceremonial, economic, and social roles of men and women. She is most known for being an ambassador between her Zuni community and the U.S., as she was invited to D.C. for a 6 month stay in 1886, where she even met with President Grover Cleveland. Two-spirits are known to have kept indigenous cultures together, bridging the masculine and feminine, and thus are held in honor as extraordinary and influential beings. Which is why the Zunis weren’t surprised when We’wha traveled thousands of miles and overcame language and cultural obstacles to live, mingle with, and influence those in power in the U.S. She not only educated U.S. leaders on Zuni culture, but also advocated for her people; all while the U.S. was still (and still does today) suppressing Indigenous cultures, forcing Indigenous folx into U.S. schools and onto reservations, and murdering those who did not comply. Which is why We’wha’s ability to make a favorable impression on U.S. leaders is very notable.

There’s not much on We’wha that isn’t from the mouths of white anthropologists that used her to write a “break through” text on Zunis. What is clear is that We’wha was a creative, bold, and resilient person, figuring out ways to make a profit off of white folx while helping to raise awareness about her culture. For example, she was the first Zuni to sell Zuni textiles and ceramics to outsiders for cash, which helped raise the value of Indigenous art in white art collector’s eyes. We’wha was also the first one to start a laundry business that made profit off of white folx once chemical soap was introduced to the Zunis. After her travels to D.C. We’wha went back to the Zuni pueblo and lived out the rest of her life until 1896.