

Tracing Parallels between Inverts and Two-spirits:
Discussing Marguerite Antonia Radclyffe Hall's *The Well
of Loneliness*

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Abstract:

For much of the last century, *The Well of Loneliness* by Marguerite Antonia Radclyffe Hall was considered a bible of lesbian literature. However, upon close study, it becomes apparent that the protagonist of the novel Stephen Gordon is not a lesbian but a congenital invert, that is, a woman with propensity for masculine behaviour. In the Native American cultural context, Stephen Gordon would be termed a *niizh manidoowag* or a two-spirited person who is blessed with the ability to experience the world through the eyes of both man and woman as well as to undertake alternative gender roles. By drawing various instances from the aforementioned text and available literature on two-spirited people, this paper will examine parallels between Stephen Gordon's experiences as an 'invert' and the experiences of two-spirited people in Native American cultures. In addition to that, this paper would argue that Stephen Gordon's way of defining her identity is akin to Native American two-spirited individuals.

Keywords: gender, inverts, two-spirited, masculine behaviour