

TransSisters

\$4.50

The Journal of Transsexual Feminism

Issue # 5

Summer 1994



Fool's Paradox: An Interview with Kate Bornstein

Plus:

Reviews of Her
Book, *Gender
Outlaw: On Men,
Women and the*

Rest of Us and Her New Play, *Virtually Yours*

Also: A Rose Is a Rose: the Nomenclature of Sex and Oppression • Lesbian Separatist Identity Crisis • What Sex Are You? • Lesbians Who Date Transsexuals • Blossom of Boneheads • She Walks, She Talks, She Crawls on Her Belly Like a Reptile • The Grande Alliance • ICTLEP vs. HBIGDA • and more



TransSisters

The Journal of Transsexual Feminism

4004 Troost Avenue
Kansas City, Missouri 64110
(816) 753-7816
davinaanne@aol.com

Publisher / Editor:

Davina Anne Gabriel

Staff Writers:

Christine Beatty

Renee Chinquapin

Davina Anne Gabriel

Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan

Rachel Pollack

Mustang Sally

Riki Anne Wilchins

Staff Cartoonist:

Diana Green

Contributing Writers

This Issue:

Justin Bond

Kristine Wyonna Holt

Brenda Thomas

C. Cailin Thompson

Statement of Purpose

In recognition of the fact that transsexual persons have been systematically silenced, marginalized, maligned and even brutalized, not only within mainstream society, but also even within feminist philosophy and culture,

TransSisters: the Journal of Transsexual Feminism has been created to further the process of "reading ourselves;" that is, of defining ourselves and creating our own reality, rather than allowing others to do so.

As such, *TransSisters* is committed toward accomplishing the following objectives:

- 1.) to providing a forum dealing specifically with issues of transsexuality from a feminist perspective;
- 2.) to giving voice to the ideas, feelings, concerns and perspectives of transsexual feminists;
- 3.) to ending the misperception that transsexuality and feminism are antithetical;
- 4.) to ending the invisibility and marginalization of transsexual persons within the feminist community;
- 5.) to fostering understanding of the phenomenon of transsexuality among nontranssexual feminists;
- 6.) to promoting dialogue, understanding, cooperation and reconciliation between the feminist and transsexual communities;
- 7.) to promoting feminist consciousness within the transsexual community;
- 8.) to promoting honest examination of the complex issues which affect the lives of transsexual persons in a constructive, non-dogmatic manner within a feminist context leading to the empowerment of transsexual persons through feminist principles.

Although the primary focus of *TransSisters* is on issues of concern to male-to-female transsexuals, issues of concern to female-to-male transsexuals are also relevant to its purpose.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| Letters to the Editor | 2 |
| Trans-Action News | 6 |
| Michigan Womyn's Music Festival Update | 11 ^v |
| Fool's Paradox: An Interview with Kate Bornstein by Davina Anne Gabriel | 12 |
| To Live Outside the Law You Must Be Honest by Davina Anne Gabriel | 24 |
| Kate & Ally (& Diane & Valerie & Greta) by Justin Bond | 31 |
| Identity/Crisis by Mustang Sally | 32 |
| My Summer Vacation by Renee Chinquapin | 35 |
| What Sex Are You? by Christine Beatty | 36 |
| Lesbians Who Date Transsexuals by Christine Beatty | 38 |
| A Rose Is a Rose: the Nomenclature of Sex and Oppression by Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan | 39 |
| Blossom of Boneheads by Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan | 42 |
| Introducing Diana Green | 46 |
| Always a Way Around It by Diana Green | 47 |
| She Walks, She Talks, She Crawls on Her Belly Like a Reptile by C. Cailin Thompson | 48 |
| The Grande Alliance by Kristine Wyonna Holt | 52 |
| Revise ICTLEP, Not the HBIKDA Standards of Care by Brenda Thomas | 54 |

Retailers:

TransSisters: the Journal of Transsexual Feminism is available to retail sellers in quantities of five or more for two-thirds of the cover price, postage paid. Payment is due 90 days after receipt. Full credit (minus return shipping cost) will be given for whole copies received within 30 days following publication of next issue. Call (816) 753-7816 or write to 4004 Troost Avenue; Kansas City, Missouri 64110 to order.

Donations:

Since *TransSisters* is a relatively new, small circulation publication, and every effort is made to make it as inexpensive as possible, so as to be affordable to the greatest number of people, *TransSisters* does not have a large operating budget. Therefore, *TransSisters* greatly appreciates receiving donations, both financial or otherwise, (e.g., stamps, envelopes, labels, computer software & equipment) of any size or kind. Such donations are a way for those who are better off financially to help insure the continued survival of *TransSisters*, to make possible improvements in the quality of the publication and to help keep its cost down, so that those who are less well off financially can continue to afford it.

Thank You!

TransSisters recently received the very valuable donation of a Global Village TelePort/Bronze 2400/9600 baud fax/modem from Digital Queers of San Francisco, California. The request for the donation of this fax/modem was made on behalf of *TransSisters* by Kate Bornstein.

TransSisters can now be contacted by fax at its same telephone number, but you must call first, as there must be someone here to receive the fax when it is sent. *TransSisters* can now also be reached via e-mail at davinaanne@aol.com.

TransSisters also recently received the very valuable contribution of DOS Mounter Plus software, enabling us to now

receive submissions on both MacIntosh and DOS formatted 3.5 inch disks, from Riki Anne Wilchins.

TransSisters wishes to express its sincere gratitude to Digital Queers, to Kate Bornstein and to Riki Anne Wilchins for their generosity and assistance in enabling it to receive these very valuable donations.

TransSisters also extends a sincere thank you to Vicki Brennan and Routledge Publishers for providing the photographs of Kate Bornstein included in this issue as well as the advance copy of her book.

Receive *TransSisters* Free!

TransSisters is in need of finding more retail outlets which will be willing to carry it. If your local alternative (or mainstream) bookstore does not already sell *TransSisters*, and you are able to persuade them to do so, you will receive a complimentary one year subscription. Just inform us of the name and address of the bookstore you have contacted, and have your bookstore mention your name along with its order. Wholesale rates are listed elsewhere on this page.

TransSisters: the Journal of Transsexual Feminism is published quarterly by Skyclad Publishing Co; 4004 Troost Avenue; Kansas City, Missouri 64110; (816) 753-7816. Opinions expressed or advertisement contained herein do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its publishers or staff. Content of all advertisement is the sole responsibility of the advertisers. *TransSisters* reserves the right to refuse publication of any advertisement, article, letter or other submission which it considers contrary to its goals and purposes. Publication of the name, photograph or likeness of any person, business or organization is not to be construed as any indication of the sexual orientation, gender identity or personal beliefs of such persons, businesses or organizations. All rights reserved. Contents may not be reproduced except for personal use without permission of the publisher. Subscription rates: \$18.00 for four issues in the United States, Canada and Mexico for four issues; \$19.00 outside of United States, Canada and Mexico for four issues. Back issues are available for \$6.00 each in the United States, Canada and Mexico; \$6.25 each outside of United States, Canada and Mexico. Payment for all subscriptions, back issues or advertisements must be made in United States funds only. All checks or money orders should be made payable to Davina Anne Gabriel. Entire contents copyright 1994.

☺ Letters to the Editor ~



Dear Ms. Gabriel:

My lover and I were browsing through one of the local bookstores a few days ago and discovered, quite by accident, *TransSisters* issue # 3 sitting in the magazine rack. I cannot tell you how excited we were. You are well aware of the paucity of easily accessible information concerning transsexuality, and the lives of people who have found that their skin doesn't fit their souls. I have never and will never consult the medical profession and their literature for primary information on any subject, and unfortunately on this subject there isn't much else around -- not in Vancouver anyway.

I am most impressed with the bold approach *TransSisters* # 3 takes on issues that most feminist publications have not bothered or dared to tackle. Feminism needs the discussions your journal brings. The gay and lesbian communities need them, those hell-bent-for-hegemony straights NEED them, and I need them on a very personal level. My life is a different manifestation of "skin not fitting the soul" -- in my case, *souls*. There a lot of very different persons co-existing (generally harmoniously!) in my body. The shrinks call it "multiple personality disorder." I call it family, home, SURVIVAL, and for easy reference, multiplexity. The connection I see, the reason I am writing, is that your magazine is taking on the core tenets that support the patriarchy's eradication of your reality *and* mine -- dualism, hierarchy, misogyny, and divine right. *TransSisters* has spoken to these issues in ways that meaningfully intersect with my own experience, and I want that dialogue to continue.

I look forward to further discussion regarding the exclusion of transsexual women from lesbian and women-only events. In my three years in Vancouver I have never heard a single local whisper on the subject. Vancouver has the largest population of lesbians in Canada, to my knowledge, and it is indeed true that the voices of many are not heard or recognized within our community as they should be. Lesbians who work as prostitutes, lesbians who are imprisoned, lesbians who deal with severe physical challenges; all of these women live on the fringe of the community if they are involved in it at all. In the last year some brave women have begun the long overdue discussion about lesbian battering; work on racism struggles along; femme and butch lesbians are speaking up loud and clear; the reality of lesbian prostitutes is barely muttered about, but at some level there is the acknowledgement they exist. Transsexual lesbians? The concept is so closeted that the closet doesn't even know they're in there.

I am a producer for "The Lesbian Show" on CO-OP Radio, a community owned and operated FM radio station here in Vancouver. The station's mandate is to provide media access to people, music, and opinion that cannot be fairly heard in mainstream sources. The programming includes a number of shows in languages other than English, representations by anarchists, women of colour, people who have survived the psychiatric system, environmentalists, and two or three shows

produced by native and metis people. "The Lesbian Show" has been broadcast continuously since 1979, and is the oldest radio program of its kind in Canada. Our program mandate is to provide media access to all lesbians in the area and to address issues relevant to them. Being completely a volunteer and part-time venture for all of the cooperative members, we are not always as successful at meeting that mandate as we would like. To my knowledge "The Lesbian Show" has never touched the issues of concern to transsexual lesbians, certainly not in the three years I have been involved with the program.

Ms. Gabriel, I would be most interested in corresponding with your regarding a future interview on "The Lesbian Show" if you believe such an interview would serve a useful purpose. "The Lesbian Show" has an enormous variety of listeners, and when we cover a topic deemed "controversial" we inevitably make meaningful contact with a listener who's reality is being ignored or challenged.

Congratulations on a fine publication.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Forster

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Dearest Davina,

Thank you for the latest copy of *TransSisters*, which as along with the previous issues, is interesting, fact finding and a total enjoyable read. I have to fight off my partner for who gets to read it first and she usually wins!

Info: I hope to be up and running shortly or very soon with our own group which I hope to be calling "Sister T.H.O.U.G.H.T. (Towards Helping Others, Understanding Gender, Helping Transsexuals)" within the group organization of SisterSpirit, M.C.C.

One point or a plea, which I would like to put forward to either yourself or to the readers and helpers of *TransSisters*. After reading in the last issue on the survey by members (sorry, wrong word), by other postop women, could someone or persons please put together a reliable list of surgeons who are performing the operation, what techniques they use, rough cost, and most of all what sensations 0-100% persons feel afterwards?

I raised this question while attending the "Coming Together Conference" in Portland, at which our local surgeon Toby Meltzer gave a talk on the techniques he uses. He talked a lot about depth and how the vagina looks, yet very little about sensations. I am afraid he got a little red-faced when I cross-questioned him on this, and when I told him about the techniques James O'Dalyrmpole of London uses, he said that he "could not really remark on another surgeon" which to my of thinking was not a very good answer. I then went on to question him about cost, to which he replied "about ten thousand dollars in all." When I tried to get more info, he asked for more questions from the other people present.

Signing off once again.

Love and bright blessings, and a very happy Bealtaine,
Tracey Cross
Vancouver, Washington

(Editor's reply: Dear Tracey, As far as I know, no such list as the one that you describe has ever been compiled by anyone. However, I do agree that such a list would be of enormous benefit to our community. Unfortunately, compiling the data to create such a list would entail a massive undertaking well beyond the capability of *TransSisters*. This might be a project that organizations such as IFGE or AEGIS might want to undertake, either separately or together. Perhaps you should suggest it to them. -- Davina)

Dear Editor,

Gail Sondegaard's request for information regarding my reconstructive surgery is a point well taken. My surgeons were David W. Foerster and Charles L. Reynolds, who performed the plastic and urological surgeries respectively on August 20, 1979 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. My understanding is that Foerster and Reynolds are no longer performing SRS; however, individuals contemplating SRS would do well to read in the September 1979 issue of *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery* the paper presented by Foerster and Reynolds at the annual meeting of the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons on November 7, 1978 in Hollywood, Florida.

Shawn Tonnesen's request for details on objectionable surgeons I must sadly decline to provide in this particular forum, as I am sure surgeons so identified would take legal action in retribution for any decrease in blood-money precipitated by such criticism, and I do not wish to jeopardize this publication.

Finally, I'm sorry Dallas Denny felt my use of quotation marks around her "professional credentials" somehow implied anything more than the fact I was simply quoting her own self-description. Sad to say, I have no doubt Ms. Denny is, indeed, a "licensed psychological examiner."

Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan
Portland, Oregon

Dear Editors,

This letter is in response to Margaret O'Hartigan's article "Surgical Roulette" which appeared in the Winter 1994 issue of *TransSisters*.

I was offended and appalled by O'Hartigan's views and statements about transsexualism, sexuality, and gender. Although she complained about psychobabble, her attitude throughout the entire article served only to reinforce the myth that transsexuals can not make their own decisions and are in need of psychiatric care.

I was particularly disturbed by her statements that transsexualism is about sex. It's not. Transsexualism is when a person is born into the wrong body. It's about gender. To say

that people only have surgery so they can "have sex without a prick getting in the way" serves only to devalidate the entire community and individuals' rights to choose to have a body that corresponds with their gender identity.

Also, I found her article to be filled with sexist remarks. Simply the sentence about "pricks" is sexist in the fact that not everybody is born with a penis. What about female-to-male transsexuals? Do they just not exist?

Sex is not just about orgasm. The sole purpose of sex is not just to come. It's the straight male attitude that to be sexually fulfilled we need to get off that we need to get beyond. Sex can be a wonderful, fulfilling thing with or without orgasm.

Yours,
Lyn Duff,
San Francisco, California

Dear Davina,

Thanks for sending *TransSisters*. It's a wonderful publication and I stayed up half the night last night reading them all cover to cover. I am a completely out M to F TS/TG full time musician / songwriter (I'll be a year old in a couple of days) based in the rural community of Winchester, Va. As I read your publication I am heartened to see that there are others like me out there. Thank you for the gift of this work that you are doing.

Peace,
Zythyra
Winchester, Virginia

An Open Letter to Mustang Sally

Dear Mustang Sally,

In your plea for understanding *your* "agony" of relating to *your* role as a woman when you are publicly "labelled" as a TS you have inadvertently acknowledged a prevalent TS attitude of "blending into society to escape the persecution of the TS." This may be a prevalent attitude but it has some flaws. By *hiding* in an existing population (lesbian or straight) you are a thief in the night always at risk of discovery and forced to lie about your past, hardly a prescription for "normality." But the far more devastating result of "disappearing into society" is to reinforce the myth that what we are is depraved and evil and we should strive to deny our shame. I don't buy it. I am not a poor victim. I have a surgically correctable birth defect.

I keep hearing that "we all follow different paths to transition." Maybe so, but this also makes a greater shared reality of our experience: PAIN. One of the great tragedies of our community is its members focus on our individual pain. Each of us lives in our own little hell. What a waste, what a "guy thing." We who have achieved some level of peace need to reach out to our sisters and let them know that things do get better. Nowhere is this more important than in dealing with the kids that are dying

for lack of role models to let them know that they can be happy someday.

By buying into the myth of transsexuals as victims and hiding from future generations of sisters you deny them a past, a path and, in too many cases, a future. I think it should be a matter of conscience to a TS that has been open and out in the past to be there for her sisters who have been beaten down by society. You don't let people hurt or die for lack of support if you can give it.

Not every sister needs to put herself at risk by being public. But some of us, particularly those of us with some public history, need to reach out to our new sisters and let them know it will be alright.

Sincerely,
Rachel Koteles,
Portland, Oregon

Dear Davina,

Okay, it's four days after my fifth anniversary (of final surgery) and this is my third attempt at getting some news out to you, as well as some thoughts on *TransSisters*. The latter is exceedingly difficult since reading #4 evoked such wide and powerful reactions and feelings. I've felt the lack of community among transgenders on a larger scale to be one of our largest problems. I see *TransSisters* as a giant step in that direction. So I've decided that, for # 4 at least, I'm going to put aside whatever bones of contention I have with the content, and just revel in the fact that it exists!

Okay, except for two points that I just can't pass up. First, I've noticed that the entire regular staff (with one possible exception) is lesbian. I hope I'm safe in assuming that that's just the way it worked out, and not the result of a deliberate effort. I'm bisexual, and a large number of my dearest loved ones are straight transgenders (which is not an oxymoron). I'm reasonably sure you have no intention of denying voice to any of us. But for obvious reasons, I'm a bit wary of the slightest prospect of rejection. I have similar reservations about the preponderance of Wiccan thought and material (14 out of 32 pages of editorial content in # 4 are directly related to this belief system). I agree with some Wiccan principles, as I understand them, but that is not where my spirituality is drawn. Again, it may be coincidental. After all, if no one is submitting anything else, you certainly can't publish anything else.

Please understand that this is intended as observation, not as indictment. I'm just very passionate about *all* voices being heard.

Second point: Christine Beatty's observations ring true. I remember being asked in a rather rude manner once whether I'd had surgery. I replied, "I'll answer that right after you describe your genitals to me!" This shut him up rather efficiently. But there's another aspect to this issue (only one more? hardly.) Surgery was very difficult for me to get. In the process I was forced into bankruptcy, abandoning a career and living off the state (in my case, Social Security), to say nothing of the price paid in

my relationships. Others have similar tales, many worse. The point is that, for myself and many of my sisters, genital surgery was and is a vital part of our self-identified gender. We all fight hard for our right to self-determination. And we have the right to celebrate ALL aspects of Self, including the celebration of physical transformation, if we so choose. I agree we sensationalize it as a society, and the transgender community is indeed culpable by its participation.

Possibly if there were a more recognized contemporary societal rite of transitions, similar to tribal rites of maturity or the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, a rite which acknowledged gender as the rainbow it truly is and which accepted any individual's choice of which part(s) of that spectrum reflected their soul, surgery might be seen as what it truly is: an option, a formality, of interest primarily to clinicians and consumers, yet a part of our lives we have a right to celebrate *if we so choose*, without fear of having any other aspect of our selves ridiculed or ignored.

Surgery was a joy to me. I know many with like perspectives. I love having a vagina. I celebrate it every day, but once a year, on April 20, I find some way to REALLY celebrate it. No question, surgery was not the happily-ever-after culmination of mine nor any other life. But I can still celebrate SRS without diminishing myself as a writer, an artist, a musician, a poet, a lover, a child or a woman.

As for the talk shows, Ms. Beatty uses as a starting point for her observations, I'm glad *she's* that brave. I've no desire to sit in the center of a coliseum and subject myself to ridicule and ignorance from people who have seemingly chosen shallowness over insight, people seemingly more interested in participating in a barrage of name-calling than in an exchange of ideas, and most significantly, people who really don't give a tinker's damn about us. But if it helps any, I *have* seen her on a show or two, and she at least got *me* thinking (but talk about preaching to the converted.)

Enough of my pissing and moaning, pontificating and abstract thought. Here's some local news: I recently discovered that our state legislature has attached an amendment to an already-controversial welfare reform bill, which eliminates state medical assistance coverage of SRS. The addition of the amendment passed overwhelmingly in both the State House and Senate. An addition to the amendment which allowed exceptions for medical necessity was rejected by an equally overwhelming majority. Although the bill this nasty little clause is attached to has not yet passed, it's unclear whether surgeries are to be covered in the interim. (*Editor's note: This bill was subsequently vetoed by Gov. Arne Carlson.*)

This is the result of a tabloid TV "news" report aired on Channel 11, KARE-TV, last year. Channel 11 is owned by Gannet, who also own the local mainstream daily and *USA Today!* It's always struck me as both odd and sad that those who have so much seem so scared of giving so little to so few. As I got my surgery through the state welfare system, I'm very concerned about the impact this is going to have on those who want SRS and are impoverished. But I'm afraid that, as the

official rep from Allan Spear's office told me, "Sadly, it's a done deal."

No press available, but two days ago, St. Paul Mayor Norm Coleman refused to sign the annual Gay Pride Proclamation which is usually signed without much fuss by both Twin Cities mayors. His reasoning was that "this proclamation specifically includes bisexuals and transgender people, and those are lifestyle choices, not sexual orientations." A protest campaign is being mounted by the University Bi community, and a lot of us have been haranguing his office to get him to recant.

That's it for now. Keep the faiths.

Yours in gender sisterhood,
Diana Green,
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Dear Davina,

I was thrilled to see a copy of your fine publication (#4) for the first time recently! I have never seen anything like it in my 17 years in the transsexual / lesbian / feminist community. My longtime best friend and I started a transsexual / lesbian / feminist organization in L.A. in 1979 called "Triskellion," but it didn't last long. I am glad that more of us are starting to heal our wounds and become cohesive, accepting ourselves and each other.

Sincerely,
Joy Diane Shaffer, M.D.,
San Jose, California

Dear Davina:

Thank you for your contribution of *TransSisters* to the [Sexual Minorities] Archives. Please do continue to send future issues.

You may not be aware of this, but I am a non-surgical female-to-male transsexual. And I love your publication! I am reading the copies you sent from cover to cover.

Leslie Feinberg recently visited the Archives here, and we have a group I co-founded two years ago: the East Coast Female-to-Male Group (ECFTMG). It's for FTMs and our partners.

I hope you can visit the Archives if you are ever in New England. Keep up the wonderful work!

Best regards,
Bet Power,
Sexual Minorities Archives,
Northampton, Massachusetts

Dear Davina,

It's great to see *TransSisters* doing so well. My partner and I recommend it to anyone interested in TS issues, and it looks like you're succeeding in opening doors between TS & feminist communities. Thanks for your work.

There's one thing I'm not sure I like though. Some of Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan's potshots at "feminist academics" (#4, p.18) as well as her statement that "The Gallae . . . far pre-date women priestesses in the worship of the Great Mother." I would think that claim would be impossible to prove (which "Great Mother," where and when?), in which case O'Hartigan is herself guilty of "unsubstantiated assumptions" similar to the ones she complains of.

But the real issue to me is the hostility to feminism implied in the article (as in the identification of a genocidal attitude as "feminist"!) Perhaps some further dialog of what we understand as "feminism" would be appropriate. It sounds as if O'Hartigan has some axes to grind here, and is possibly contributing to opposition rather than alliance in some of her views. In my view, such opposition seems unnecessary and unfortunate.

In hopes of expanding mutual understanding,
Beverly Woods,
Ashland, New Hampshire

Letters to the Editor

TransSisters the Journal of Transsexual Feminism welcomes your comments, suggestions, (constructive) criticism, as well as information affecting the transsexual community, but most of all, your compliments! All letters must be signed, but names will be withheld upon request, except for letters which criticize by name any individual, organization or entity. Anonymous personal attacks will *not* be published. *TransSisters* also reserves the right to refuse publication of any letter. Please include your address and telephone number in case we want to verify your letter. All letters are subject to editing. Please address all letters to: Davina Anne Gabriel; 4004 Troost Avenue; Kansas City, Missouri 64110. *TransSisters* can also be reached by fax at (816) 753-7816, but you must call first, as there must be someone here to receive your fax. *TransSisters* can also be reached via e-mail at davinaanne@aol.com.

Coming in the next issue of
TransSisters:

**Should preoperative
transsexual women be
allowed to attend the New
Woman Conference?:
conflicting views**

-and-

Transsexuals at Stonewall 25

TRANSACTION NEWS

ICTLEP Plans to Disrupt Stonewall 25

In response to the decision of the Stonewall 25 U.S. Steering Committee to not include the word "transgender" in the official title of the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, officials of the International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy (ICTLEP) have announced plans to disrupt the Stonewall 25 March on the United Nations, scheduled for Sunday, 26 June 1994 in New York City.

Vowing to "stonewall Stonewall," ICTLEP Executive Director Phyllis Frye has vowed that transsexuals, transgenderists and transvestites "won't be excluded any longer." The group plans to have protesters wearing t-shirts and holding signs which read "And, and, and!" referring to the addition of the above groups, as well as bisexuals, to the official title of the march, which is "The International March on the United Nations to Affirm the Human Rights of Lesbian and Gay People." "Instead of chanting 'Shame, shame, shame,' we will say 'And, and, and' meaning we want the organization to recognize gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders and transvestites," Frye was quoted as stating in the 20 April 1994 edition of the *San Francisco Sentinel*.

In addition, Frye has stated that some participants in the planned protest intend to risk arrest by physically blockading the march route, and that she will be the first to be arrested. Arrangements have also been made for observers to monitor any

possible arrests throughout the entire arrest-jail-court-release sequence.

Frye blocked plans for a similar type action against last year's March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay & Bi Equal Rights & Liberation because she felt that inclusive strides were being made with the addition of bisexuals to that event's official title. Frye now feels that that trend toward inclusivity has not made sufficient progress.

Guidelines for "Non-violent, Transgender Lead (sic), Civil Disobedience" issued by ICTLEP on 15 April 1994 for those wishing to participate in the disruption, state that participants in the "Educational Protest of Non-Inclusion" will be of three types: "(a) those who will carry signs, wear special t-shirts, place themselves (in repeating teams) into the march route and allow themselves to be arrested; (b) those who will carry signs, wear special t-shirts, shout 'AND, AND, AND' and observe the arrests from the curbside; and (c) those who will carry signs, wear special t-shirts, shout 'AND, AND, AND' and march in the event." The guidelines also stipulate that all signs must be white with black lettering, made of posterboard, and carried either by hand or on cardboard tubes (not wooden sticks).

A meeting for those wishing to participate in the planned protest is scheduled to take place at 3:30 p.m. on Saturday, 25 June in the law offices of Margo Diesenhouse at Suite # 404; 844 Sixth Avenue in New York City. All persons intending to join the arrest team must attend this meeting. Further information can be obtained at (212) 473-4750

The motion to add bisexuals, transgendered persons and drag performers to the march's official title was made by Jessica M. Xavier, Outreach Director of the TransGender Educational Association of Greater Washington (TGEA), at the Stonewall 25 organizing committee's third meeting, which took place in Atlanta, Georgia over the weekend of 15-17 January. Xavier was seated as a representative of Transgender Nation and FTM. The motion was defeated by a vote of 52-17.

Ironically, opposition to Xavier's motion was led primarily by drag activists, whose identification is primarily gay rather than drag. According to Xavier, most of the drag activists do not identify as transgendered because they interpret the word to mean transsexual, a term that none of them identifies with. One of Stonewall 25's three chairpersons, Nicole Ramirez Murray, who is a drag performer, stated that adding these groups to the title would be confusing to persons from other countries, some of which don't have translations for those terms. Murray has stated that Stonewall 25 is committed to the legal rights of these groups even if they aren't specifically mentioned in the event's official title. "Each is included prominently in the demands of the march as well as in its call to action. In addition, the central role of drag and transgender people at the Stonewall Riots underscores our importance in the gay and lesbian world," Murray was quoted as stating in the 28 January 1994 edition of *The Washington Blade*.

In a meeting between representatives of the Stonewall

What is the New

Woman Conference?

The New Woman Conference is a small group of postoperative male-to-female transsexual persons. The NWC's primary function is to conduct an annual retreat at which those who have recently had surgery and those whose surgery was years or decades ago come together. The experience is spiritual – some would say magical – as women from all across the United States enjoy the rustic setting with others who have shared their marvelous journeys. (Male and female partners are welcome.)

The Conference culminates with a ritual in which the attendees celebrate that which they all share – their blood sacrifice.

For Information About the New Woman Conference, write to:

N.W.C.
P.O. Box 67
South Berwick, Maine 03908

Executive Committee and the newly formed transsexual activist group the Transsexual Menace on 8 April, Stonewall 25 agreed to become more proactive in its inclusion of transsexuals, transgenderists and transvestites, according to a Transsexual Menace press release.

The specific agreements that Stonewall 25 agreed to at that meeting were:

1.) to "seek the participation of all people from the Gender community;" (defined as "people of transgender, transsexual, transvestite or drag experience, or anyone who identifies as having issues about gender identity or role");

2.) to "denounce discrimination or exclusion of the gender segment of the queer community;"

3.) to "increase visibility of the gender community's role in the Stonewall Riots;"

4.) to "provide sensitivity training for Staff/Police on gender issues;"

5.) to provide "adequate representation of Gender community speakers at the Rally;"

6.) to provide "representation among the Uncommon Heroes honored for their contributions to the Queer Community;"

7.) to "add a 'Transgender' preference on housing forms;" and

8.) to "make minor corrections to the Demands on the U.N."

In response to the agreements reached with Stonewall 25, Denise Norris of the Transsexual Menace's Stonewall 25 Outreach Team stated in a press release dated 3 May 1994: "We're very encouraged by Stonewall 25's recognition of Gender involvement at the Stonewall Riots and it's place in the celebration twenty-five years later."

In that same press release, Transsexual Menace stated that although it would prefer that Stonewall 25 adopt a more inclusive title, that "it would prefer a single umbrella term, rather than a long list of descriptive names," and that it is "more important that an organization be proactively inclusive of the Gender community than to have a name included in an event's or organization's title as an empty gesture."

In a similar action, organizers of Gay Games IV, scheduled to take place in New York City during the week before the Stonewall 25 commemoration, previously dropped all requirements for documentation previously required of persons in the process of sexual transition in response to protests organized by the Transsexual Menace. Gay Games had previously been requiring transitioning individuals to provide proof of legal change of name, continuous hormonal therapy for two years, and a statement from a therapist explaining why it would be detrimental for that individual to participate in the category of that person's birth sex.

Jay Hill, executive director of Gay Games IV, was quoted in the 15 April 1994 edition of the *Washington Blade* as stating that "Transgendered and transsexual individuals are welcome to compete in good faith, in the gender in which they live their daily lives." All participants will now be required to sign a release pledging compliance with this policy. A board will be set up to review any alleged violations.

Pennsylvania Establishes Legal Right to Transition on the Job

Civil protections for transsexual persons took a giant leap forward in Pennsylvania in March.

In an unprecedented move, the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania handed down a ruling on 29 March which affirms the right of transsexuals in transition to "crossdress" on the job. The case at hand was Northwest PA Training Partnership Consortium v. Unemployment Compensation Board of Review, no. 2297 C.D. 1993. In his Memorandum Opinion, Judge

Pellegrini held that, "We have consistently recognized that a medical problem or illness may establish good cause for an employee's failure to comply with a work rule . . . transsexualism is a recognized medical condition for which there are established guidelines for treatment . . . which require Claimant to participate in a 'trial period' of

cross-gendered living." The Court concluded that, "under these circumstances . . . Claimant's actions were medically necessitated and, as such, did not constitute willful misconduct."

In a separate but related matter, Robert Barnett, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, designee of the Governor, ruled on 15 March in the matter of Kristine W. Holt v. Northwest PA Training Partnership Consortium, Governor's docket no. 12331. In his discussion of the case, Mr. Barnett stated, "Holt's treatment was different from that of all

"It can be argued that, in effect, a protected class of transsexual persons has been created in Pennsylvania."

--Kristine W. Holt

Subscribe to:

Rites of Passage

**The Newsletter of the
New Woman Conference**

**\$12 for four issues.
Send check or money
order to:**

**N.W.C.
P.O. Box 67
South Berwick,
Maine 03908**

other employees and that difference had nothing to do with her performance, attitudes or abilities . . . neither the causes used to justify Holt's dismissal nor the unique restrictions applied to her were reasonable or appropriate in light of the circumstances." The State found that NPTPC had violated the Federal statutes under which they operated by disregarding their own merit-based personnel policies, and ordered Ms. Holt's reinstatement.

Ms. Holt, who represented herself in these actions, characterized the rulings as "groundbreaking." "We have now established, under case law, the fact that transsexualism is a recognized medical condition, and that the standard course of treatment demands 'crossdressing' on the job. The justification some employers have used to defend their discriminatory actions, that is, the 'dress code' issue, has been eliminated. It can be argued that, in effect, a protected class of transsexual persons has been created in Pennsylvania."

As to the Order of the Department of Labor and Industry, Ms. Holt reports that Northwest Training has yet to comply with the Order. "It is my understanding that they wish to appeal this administrative ruling to the Commonwealth Court also. In this eventuality, I feel confident that the Court will affirm the Secretary's decision, and give further support to the creation of a protected class of transsexual persons."

A third action is being pursued with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, currently in the fact-finding stage. The intention is to establish in the private sector the same protections that have been realized in the public (i.e., government and sub-

contractors) sector. These recent rulings give overwhelming support for the case set before the Commission.

In an effort to offset some of the expenses associated with these legal actions, a legal fund has been established: the Kristine W. Holt Legal Fund, c/o Northwest Savings Bank; 13th. & Liberty Sts.; Franklin, Pa. 16323.

Transsexuals Organize to Fight Washington Initiative

In response to an initiative petition in the state of Washington that would, among other things, prohibit legal recognition of sex-change surgery by declaring that "the State of Washington recognizes that gender that is established at the time of conception of all persons is the only and natural gender of that person for the duration of their life," and that "any physical alterations to the human body do not affect the natural gender, known at birth or before, of any resident of the State of Washington," transsexual persons in both Washington and Oregon have begun to organize to fight that initiative. That initiative, Initiative 610, is sponsored by the Citizen's Alliance of Washington (CAW) which is affiliated with Lon Mabon's Oregon Citizens Alliance which sponsored the infamous Measure 9 in Oregon in 1992.

Since the initiative was filed in January, two groups of transsexuals have formed to fight it. A Transgender Caucus of has been formed within Hands Off Washington (HOW), based in Seattle, which is a gay and lesbian group formed to fight the initiative. Another group of transsexuals, centered around Portland, Oregon, has also formed to fight the initiative on its own terms in response to its perception that HOW is not adequately addressing transsexual concerns.

The Transgender Caucus of HOW has so far sponsored two projects. The first was a fund-raising party at the Ingersoll Gender Center in Seattle on 10 April. The second was a march in Seattle on 14 May. The Caucus has also compiled a mission statement, and is creating a question-and-answer booklet explaining the cause, HOW and transsexualism, transgenderism and transvestism. According to Ingersoll Gender Center founder Marsha Botzer, the goal of the Caucus is "making as many of our various communities aware of the effect of the initiatives" and "making people aware that 'natural gender' as described in these initiatives would invalidate all of our lives . . . [and] make legally invisible anything we have done."

In response to the perception that HOW is inadequately addressing transsexual concerns, a second group of transsexuals based in Portland, Oregon has formed to fight the initiative outside the auspices of HOW. The group has no formal name. A member of the group, Roxanne Koppenhaver, who worked to defeat Measure 9 in Oregon two years ago, has stated: ". . . the gay and lesbian groups which are fighting the initiatives -- none of them know that much about us and the effects of including us in the initiatives. HOW doesn't know how to use or exploit the transsexual issue; they don't realize the importance of our issue."

The Portland transsexuals are pursuing a different strategy than is HOW. Instead of regarding transsexuality as a sexual

Preserve It for Posterity!

Books, magazines, newsletters, journal articles, videotapes, films and newspaper clippings about transsexuality, crossdressing and transgenderism are wanted for the newly formed

National Transgender Library and Archive

Materials can be shipped via U.S. Post Office to: AEGIS; P.O. Box 33724; Decatur, Georgia 30033 or by U.P.S. or other private shippers to: AEGIS; 1898 Chisholm Court; Tucker, Georgia 30084

Please contact us before shipping large amounts of materials. We can be reached most evenings at (404) 939-0244

orientation, as it is described in the initiative, the Portland group is pursuing a strategy of stressing that transsexuality is a recognized medical disorder and that the implication of passage of this initiative is that it sets a dangerous precedent of legislating treatment for other medical disorders. "Determining treatment for one medical condition at the ballot box sets a dangerous precedent -- today it's our condition, tomorrow it may be yours," is the message that the Portland group is trying to take to the public.

According to Roxanne Koppenhaver, the Portland group originally considered working with HOW's Vancouver chapter, the Southwest Washington Fairness Coalition (SWWFC), but decided against doing so because HOW bylaws require prior approval by HOW's Seattle office of every piece of printed material that is distributed, as well as require persons participating in its speakers' bureau to affirm in writing to refrain from expressing any disagreement with HOW policy or procedure when representing HOW.

Ms. Koppenhaver and other transsexuals attended the HOW fund-raiser in Seattle on 10 April, but felt that "It was the same old rhetoric. Everything was about gay/lesbian issues -- there was nothing about the transsexual issues and how the initiatives would impact us," stated Ms. Koppenhaver. Another member of the group, Rachel Koteles, stated: "We were a bit disappointed that some of the obvious ramifications of the bill weren't stressed. Passage of these bills would mean death for transsexuals, and they were still arguing 'civil rights'."

The Portland group's efforts have included addressing the Clark County (Vancouver) chapter of NOW and the diversity task force of the Vancouver YWCA, as well as the placing of opinion pieces in both straight and queer local media. Ms. Koppenhaver has also spoken as an openly transsexual woman at a forum held by the Clark County Community College.

Transsexual Woman Runs For Seat on County Board of Supervisors

Susan Kimberly, who served on the City Council of St. Paul, Minnesota for four years in the 1970s before undergoing sex-change surgery, is now a candidate for a seat on the Ramsey County Board of Supervisors. While serving on the St. Paul City Council, Ms. Kimberly was the president and chair of the city's Housing and Redevelopment Authority. After undergoing sex-change surgery, she lost her bid for re-election.

Ms. Kimberly recognizes that her transsexuality will be an issue in her upcoming race. "I think a substantial number of people have been able to set aside that issue, at least to the point where they can consider voting for me. I did have a sex-change operation, and I'm perfectly pleased to tell you that. I have nothing to hold back, nothing to be ashamed of," Ms. Kimberly was quoted as stating in the 24 February - 3 March 1994 edition of the Twin City queer newspaper *Equal Time*. "Will it be an issue in the campaign? Yes, it will be an issue, more likely than not it will be an unspoken issue. The fact is, this hasn't been done before."

Two transsexual women currently hold elected office in the United States -- a City Council member in a small Colorado town and a legislator in the Massachusetts State Assembly -- though neither ran as openly transsexual candidates during their campaigns.

Ms. Kimberly is optimistic regarding her chances of victory, citing the results in her district of the 1990 campaign to prevent St. Paul's gay rights ordinance from being repealed. "And when I win this election, that issue is going to die. It's like when Harvey Milk finally got elected in San Francisco. Someone has got to break the ice. And once it breaks, it quickly becomes commonplace," she stated.

Ms. Kimberly is campaigning for the fourth district seat, an L-shaped area encompassing nearly one-quarter of St. Paul. She is currently the executive director of the St. Paul Coalition for Community Development, a non-profit agency devoted to building housing and facilitating economic growth in low-income neighborhoods. In addition to serving on the St. Paul City Council, she also served for six and a half years on the Metropolitan Waste Management Commission and for two years as an assistant to former Mayor George Latimar.

Ms. Kimberly's candidacy has received the endorsement of the St. Paul Building & Construction Council; the Trades & Labor Assembly; Council 14 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; Minnesota N.O.W.; the Feminist Caucus of the Fourth District Democratic Farmer & Labor (D.F.L.) and the Christine Jorgensen D.F.L. Caucus.

If Ms. Kimberly wins her party's endorsement at its state

"I did have a sex-change operation, and I'm perfectly pleased to tell you that. I have nothing to hold back, nothing to be ashamed of."

--Susan Kimberly



THE JOURNAL OF
GENDER STUDIES



At Last... A Professional Publication that:

- Features articles on all aspects of the gender issues (for females and males)
- Introduces excerpts from new titles on gender both fiction and nonfiction
- Reviews selected titles on various aspects of the gender world
- Includes works of poetry, arts (where feasible) and theater on gender questions

Truly a must for all students of the sociology, anthropology and psychology of gender perceptions, roles, and lifestyle options

Outreach Institute
Publication Dept. (JGS)
406 Western Ave., Suite 345
South Portland, ME 04106

Subscriptions are \$16 for 1 year or \$30 for 2 years.
A complimentary copy will be sent on written request.

convention on June 18, she will then proceed to run in primary elections scheduled for September. If she wins in that race, she will then go on to run in the general election scheduled for November.

San Francisco Trans Rights Hearing Sets Historic Precedent

Over forty transsexual and transgendered individuals testified about their personal experiences of harassment and discrimination

because of their transsexuality or transgenderism before a historic four-hour hearing conducted before the San Francisco Human Rights Commission (HRC) on 12 May 1994, the first such hearing of its kind ever anywhere in the world. The hearing was initiated by the Transgender Advisory Committee, which is a subcommittee of the HRC's Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Advisory Committee.

Among those testifying before the Commission was a hard-of-hearing transsexual lesbian parent who described how a San Francisco police officer ignored her cries for help when she was being raped on a public street. She and other transsexual parents also described their constant fear of having their children taken away from them simply because of their transsexuality.

The aim of the hearing was to have legislation enacted that would protect them from discrimination.

Rachel Timoner, coordinator of the Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center (LYRIC) Youth Talkline and a member of the HRC's Transgender Task Force was quoted as stating in the 19 May 1994 edition of the *San Francisco Bay Times*: "Usually, psychiatrists and other service providers speak to hearings like this. It was wonderful that so many transgender people got to speak for themselves."

Powersurge Drops "Woman-Born Women" Only Policy

In a reversal of a policy adopted last year, the lesbian S/M conference Powersurge has adopted a policy for this year's conference that allows postoperative transsexual women to attend all events scheduled at the conference. After having no such restrictions for its first conference in 1992, Powersurge adopted a "woman-born women" only policy last year, but that conference was canceled. The policy adopted by Powersurge this year states that "all women-oriented women are welcome to attend this conference." However, the 'dick-in-the-drawer' rule still applies to all evening parties, and valid female ID is required of all conference attendees." The "dick-in-the-drawer" rule stipulates that "you must be able to put your dick -- if any -- in a drawer, slam the drawer shut, and walk away without causing yourself bodily harm." The conference will be held in Seattle, Washington from 2-4 September 1994. Further information can be obtained by calling (206) 233-8429.

Attention, Subscribers! Are You Moving?

If you have recently moved or are planning to move to another address in the near future, it is very important that you notify *TransSisters* about your change of address as soon as possible. Since the United State Postal Service does *not* forward third class mail, *even if you have filed a change of address form* with the Post Office, your subscription copy will be returned to us, postage due, causing us an unnecessary expense if you do not notify us of your change of address. This also will greatly delay your receiving your subscription copy since we have to re-mail it.

So if you have recently moved or are planning on moving in the near future, please take the time to fill out the change of address form below and to return it to *TransSisters* immediately. Thanks in advance for your cooperation!

Old Address:

Name _____
 Apartment or Suite Number _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State _____
 Zip/Postal Code _____

New Address:

Name _____
 Apartment or Suite Number _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State _____
 Zip/Postal Code _____

Effective date: _____

Mail to: Davina Anne Gabriel; 4004 Troost Avenue;
 Kansas City, Missouri 64110

TransSisters Newswatch

TransSisters: the Journal of Transsexual Feminism appreciates receiving news clippings or copies of articles about transsexual persons and the issues affecting their lives. You can help *TransSisters* keep the transsexual community informed of events and issues affecting it by sending copies of any such news clippings or articles to: Davina Anne Gabriel; 4004 Troost Avenue; Kansas City, Missouri 64110. Articles and clippings can also be sent by fax to (816)753-7816, but you must call first, as there must be someone here to receive your fax.

Protest Against Michigan Womyn's Music Festival's Exclusionary Policy Will Continue This Year

The brochure for the 1994 Michigan Womyn's Music Festival was published in April, and again contains the same discriminatory language as it has in the previous two years; that is, that "MWMF is a gathering of mothers and daughters for all womyn born womyn."

As the producers of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival have made clear that they have no intention of changing the festival's policy of discriminating against transsexual womyn, the effort to change that policy that has been conducted at the previous two festivals will continue this year.

The individuals who were expelled from the festival last year agreed that if the producers specifically stated in their literature that the festival is for nontranssexual womyn (rather than "womyn born womyn") only, that they would not enter the festival this year. However, since the producers have retained the same language as has been used in the previous two years, one or more of us might enter the festival again this year.

This does not mean that we will consider the issue resolved if the producers specifically state that transsexual womyn are not allowed to attend the festival. We continue to believe that the policy of excluding transsexual womyn from this event is unfair whether or not it is clearly and unambiguously stated.

All of the transsexual womyn who were involved in last year's protest intend to be at the festival again this year, and several others have indicated an interest in being there also.

We have decided that the focus of our protest will be conducted outside the festival, across from the main gate this year; however, one or more of us might also enter the festival.

In addition to distributing literature to festival participants and seeking to enlist their support in our efforts, a number of workshops on a variety of topics will be conducted at our campsite. We are also very pleased that Leslie Feinberg has agreed to join us in our protest and to conduct several workshops for us, as well as to conduct readings from her novel *Stone Butch Blues* and book signings.

Since there is a great deal of expense involved in conducting this type of activity, we are in great need of financial assistance to continue with this important work on behalf of the transsexual community. Our expenses include such things as literature, buttons and stickers to distribute, transportation, festival tickets, food, camping supplies, postage, telephone calls, faxes, among other expenses. Altogether, it requires a sum of several thousand dollars to conduct this activity each year. The individuals involved in this activity also spend hundreds of hours of their time and expend enormous amounts of personal energy on it.

However, we all feel that our effort is very worthwhile because what happens at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival not only affects that event itself, but has wide-ranging implications on what happens within the lesbian/feminist

community throughout the world. Women come from all over the world to attend the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, and they take back to their local communities what they have learned at the festival. Conducting this kind of educational activity at Michigan is simply the most efficient and effective way of reaching the entire lesbian/feminist community and of drawing attention to the exclusion of transsexual womyn from lesbian/feminist events everywhere. *The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival is, quite simply, the frontline in the struggle against the exclusion of transsexual womyn within the lesbian/feminist community.*

Please help us to continue to the vital work that we have begun at the festival. We have managed to accomplish a tremendous amount of consciousness-raising both at the festival itself and in the larger lesbian/feminist community, and we know that the vast majority of womyn who attend the festival support our right to attend. We have no doubt that we will succeed if we only persevere. But we need help in order to sustain our momentum.

We need to raise a lot of money in a very short period of time. Any amount of money that you can possibly contribute to this vital effort will help us to continue the process that we have begun, and will help to further the empowerment of our community everywhere.

In addition to money, we need more transsexual womyn who are willing to go to the festival and to help us conduct our consciousness-raising activities. We are in need both of transsexual womyn who are willing to enter the festival knowing that they might be expelled and of transsexual and nontranssexual womyn who are willing to help us conduct consciousness-raising activities outside the festival gates.

Please send whatever financial contribution that you can afford to:

Janis Walworth
P.O. Box 52
Ashby, Massachusetts 01431

If you would like to get involved personally in the consciousness-raising activities that will continue to take place at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, please contact Janis Walworth at the above address or by telephone at (508) 386-7737, or contact Davina Anne Gabriel at 4004 Troost Avenue, Kansas City, Missouri 64110 or by telephone at (816) 753-7816.

Thank you for your consideration.

--Nancy Jean Burkholder
--Rica Ashby Fredrickson
--Davina Anne Gabriel
--Wendi Kaiser
--Janis Walworth
--Riki Anne Wilchins



Fool's Paradox:

An Interview With Kate Bornstein

by Davina Anne Gabriel

Kate Bornstein should already be no stranger to the readers of *TransSisters*. Over the past several years Kate's outspokenness has achieved for her a position of visibility and prominence within the transsexual community. Kate is probably best known for her work as a playwright and performance artist, but she is also the founder/director of her own theatre company, Outlaw Productions. Her first play *Hidden: A Gender* was co-produced by Outlaw Productions and Theatre Rhinoceros of San Francisco and was first performed in November 1989 on the studio stage of Theatre Rhinoceros. Her second play, *The Opposite Sex Is Neither* followed in 1992. Her most recent play *Virtually Yours* completed its premiere run in San Francisco in March 1994. Kate will be performing *Virtually Yours* off-Broadway in New York City in June 1994, then touring the East Coast and Europe with it.

Kate is also well-known for her numerous appearances on television talk shows including *Donahue*, *Geraldo*, and *The Joan Rivers Show*. She is the author of numerous articles on the subject of transsexuality and transgenderism, as well as a writer for the *Bay Area Reporter* in San Francisco, California. Kate's first full length book, *Gender Outlaw: On Men Women and the Rest of Us* has just been published by Routledge.

The following interview with Kate was conducted by telephone on Saturday, 23 April 1994:



Kate Bornstein

photo by Dona Ann McAdams

Davina: In *Hidden: A Gender*, Doc Grinder says: "You can't be a woman. You still love women." Is this something that your surgeon or some other medical professional actually said to you?

Kate: Yea! [laughs] Yea! I was told by three surgeons to go back and get more therapy. It was only Biber who said to me, "So you're a lesbian? Okay, fine." He was totally cool. He was just curious because that had to do with vaginal depth. By the time that I interviewed with him I had been on hormones long enough so that my penis had shrunk considerably, and he was considering doing a graft if we didn't get in there soon, and I said, "I'm really not that concerned about depth," and that's how that conversation came up. But with the other doctors, it was "Ohhh, well maybe you should get back into therapy, then come back and see us. Maybe you're not really a woman. Have you thought that maybe you might be a gay man?" [laughs]

Davina: Well, that doesn't make any sense at all.

Kate: Right, so they were Doctor Razor and Doctor Weener, the surgeons in *Hidden: A Gender*.

Davina: There is also a scene in *Hidden: A Gender* in which the transsexual character is the spokesperson for a Scientology type organization and another transsexual woman comes in and

is in tears because this organization has convinced her that she was wrong to have the operation. Did something like this actually happen to you?

Kate: Yes, it did.

Davina: How did that make you feel?

Kate: I was stunned. This woman walked into my office, she sat down, and she was going "Boo, hoo, hoo." She was crying like that literally. I had never heard anyone cry like that, and so I thought, "This is a crazy woman I've got on my hands," and then she told me that she was transsexual. I was representing the top Scientology organization and if you really had problems, you'd come to my organization and we'd fix 'em, and she said she'd been to everyone else and they couldn't help her, and that they'd said that she was really bad for having fucked with her body, and could she grow another penis if she gave enough money. And the way I felt was like . . . You remember the ending of *Bonnie & Clyde*, when all the bullets hit their bodies in slow motion? That's how I felt. I wanted to hug her, but there were these guys in the doorway behind her laughing, so I felt totally trapped. I felt like either way I turned I was a traitor. If I embraced her I was a traitor to what was my life support group, Scientology. If I had gone ahead and laughed with them, I would have betrayed my sister, and so I couldn't move, and all I could say was, "I don't know, I really don't know . . ." I never saw her again.

Davina: So you didn't know what to tell her?

Kate: I couldn't buy that party line that what she had done was wrong, and I didn't. And she was clearly wealthy, and I had very few scruples when I was in Scientology about taking people's money. We would always take their money, but I didn't. I said, "I don't know."

Davina: In an interview you did with Anne Ogbon a couple of years ago, you said that having surgery was for you the beginning of "a process of discovering that you are not a woman." Could you describe what this process was like for you, and how you arrived at that decision?

Kate: Yeah. After my surgery, I felt that this was the final barrier to my being able to live a complete life as a woman, so then I thought, "Oh, great, now I can get on with life," and then talking with other women in the lesbian community, really bright women, who would question me, and say, "How can you be a woman when you don't have the same socialization and the same hormones and the same chromosomes?" and all of these other different good questions, and me not having answers. So then I started to take on the question and ask myself, "Well, how can I be?" Then there were women who would say to me, "You're a castrated man," and that really hurt because I felt that I had worked so fucking hard for this. So then

I started buying all of this lesbian feminist literature, and reading it and trying to figure this out, and I came up with the fact that if someone sees me as a castrated man, then fine, that's their view of me, and there's nothing that I can do about it. But what I can do

"I'm strong in my conviction that we have an opportunity as a people to come up with a movement that really embodies love, compassion and strength, and to include anger as part of its organizational structure would be a mistake."

is say, "Well, okay, what's a man?" and no one can answer that, and that throws a big monkey wrench into the works. I can say, "What's a woman?" and no one can answer that, and that throws another monkey wrench into the works. So I don't really care anymore what people think I am; I know I'm not a man. I know that rock bottom certainly. And what I've come to realize is that it's not worth all the trouble trying to be a woman either, and so I'm so curious about people who feel like they have to be one or the other, or feel that they are, because I never, ever, ever felt like I was. I wanted to be. I desperately wanted to be. I wanted to belong. I wanted to fit in somewhere, and not have to work so hard. But now that I've got more of a sense of humor about it, I can just ask those questions, and it doesn't matter what people think I am. They're right.

Davina: But isn't doing that turning over your power to define yourself to someone else?

Kate: Sure, and the great paradox of that is that by turning it over that they don't have it either, and I can be whatever I want to be. You know the Fool in the Tarot deck? Are you familiar with Tarot cards?

Davina: Yes, very much.

Kate: Okay, cool. Well, what the Fool is carrying in that bindlestiff is all the other cards of the deck, and that's the key to the Fool. The Fool is all of the cards. That's why it's number zero. And I think that this message of zero is what we can bring to the area of gender. We hit a point of zero, and we can go to the Emperor, the Empress, or we can go to any other place we want.

Davina: I still don't understand what you mean by stating that

when you turn your power to define yourself over to someone else that that means that they don't have it either. Could you elaborate on that?

Kate: I don't have to listen to them.

Davina: Well, no, of course we don't have to listen to them, but some people do have the power to enforce those definitions in certain circumstances.

Kate: Well, then I would just ask them enough questions to see if they could prove it; that's what I would do. I don't think that any one could prove it.

Davina: No, it is ultimately unprovable I believe.

Kate: Yeah, and that's what I'm getting at. Now if they get to the point of nailing me down, that's another story. I'll wriggle out of any kind of definition. I'm good at that. I think we all are.

Davina: Yea, I think that the problem is when someone tries to impose their definition on someone else.

Kate: Yea, I think so too, and I think that's where I totally agree with you on this. But that's different from going to a public space and someone saying I am not permitted because . . . whatever. So I would agree with you on that, but I think the difference in our approach is that I would stand at the gate and ask questions, and that's pretty much all that I would do.

Davina: In that same interview you explained that you do not feel that you are a woman because you're "not a woman in the way that woman is constructed in this culture." It seems to me that according to that criteria that lesbians would also not be women.

Kate: Absolutely, and I'm not the first to point that out. The first person to point that out in writing was Monique Wittig in this beautiful essay, "One Is Not Born a Woman," in which she defines "lesbian" as "not man, not woman" because in this culture woman is defined by heterosexuality.

Davina: Yea, I've read that essay too. You also said in that interview: "How can we call ourselves women, how can we call ourselves men? We just lose all of our sweetness." This seems to me to be a remarkably broad and sweeping generalization, and also one that I don't find a lot of evidence for. I certainly know quite a few transsexual women who identify as women and who are among the sweetest people I've ever known.

Kate: I think what I meant to say was that I know a lot of people who identify as neither, who identify as transgender rather than as men or women, and that I admire that, but I really didn't mean to make a broad, sweeping generalization like that and say that people lose their sweetness. Boy, that was dumb of me.

Davina: Yea, I've made statements like that too, then I look back on them and wonder how I ever could have said something like that. In that same interview, and in a number of other places, you described yourself as "neither a man nor a woman," but I've never read you describe yourself as *both* a man and a woman. Why always neither rather than both?

Kate: Because both implies that's all there is, and I think that's a limited way of looking at it. I think there are genders way beyond man and woman. But I would include that I can be man, I can be

woman, I can also be a drag queen or a he-she or a drag king or a she-male, I can be anything I choose to be genderwise because no one is really writing that book except us.

Davina: In that same interview Anne commented that she found it difficult to organize in the transsexual community and you replied: "Maybe it's not up to us to organize. Organize implies creating boundaries, it implies antagonism, it implies something to surmount, someone to overcome, and I think we've had enough challenges and boundaries and enough things to overcome in our individual lives," and that organizing "ties us down to systems that constantly lead to revolution" . . .

Kate: Well, that's very different from saying that we *shouldn't* organize. I think that the transgender movement needs to organize in the way that the women's movement has organized. If we're going to follow a pattern of successful revolution, it would

be *that* one. I think it's the most nonviolent, most love-filled, most life-giving movement that we can emulate. But Anne was talking about organizing in the way that the lesbian and gay movement or the black and other civil rights movements have organized, so in that context "maybe we shouldn't organize" was taken to mean that. I'm strong in my conviction that we have an opportunity as a people to come up with a movement that really embodies love, compassion and strength, and to include anger as part of its organizational structure would be a mistake. But to use that anger to fuel the speed with which we carry forward our love, that's another story. Maybe there are other ways of doing things, and I'll say that again. I'll say it all anew. Maybe there's another way of doing it; maybe there is. Maybe means I may be wrong too. We have some really bright people, so we have an opportunity to do this really brightly. Why we have to go down the same garden path, that's what puzzles me.

Davina: Okay, that's a lot clearer to me now. In your book, you state that "lesbian oppression at the hands of the dominant ideology is not the same as exclusion experienced by the transgendered at the hands of lesbian separatists -- lesbians just don't have the same economic and social resources with which to oppress the transgendered." Do you see any parallels between these things even if they are not exactly the same or to the same degree?

Kate: Sure, and I go on to point them out later in my book. I think that transgendered people are excluded by some members of the gay and lesbian community -- and I would say both gay and lesbian -- just because we push an awful lot of buttons. So there are parallels, but I think that aiming the war cry of "We must overcome," at lesbians is a futile exercise. I think that we should be aiming to make peace, and then together looking at who's oppressing us and aiming our war cry in that direction.

Davina: But would you regard the exclusion of transsexual lesbians from the lesbian community to be a form of oppression?

Kate: I don't think any transsexual lesbians are excluded from the lesbian community. I don't think the lesbian community is monolithic, and I've never experienced exclusion from the quote lesbian community. I have experienced exclusion from

"I think that aiming the war cry of 'We must overcome' at lesbians is a futile exercise."

small groups of lesbians. Is that oppression? Well, how do you define oppression? Maybe we're using the term "oppression" differently. Someone has to have power in order to oppress. I think exclusion is different from oppression, and those words can't be tossed around lightly. So I don't think we're being oppressed by any community of lesbians, no.

Davina: In your article "A Plan For Peace," you wrote that "transsexuals are nothing short of violent if they demand admission into the ranks of 'women born women' lesbian separatists who don't want them there."

Then later, in an interview you did with Dallas Denny, you said that you didn't intend this to mean women-only space, but that you were referring specifically only to lesbian separatist space. I didn't realize that there were transsexual women demanding admission into the ranks of lesbian separatists. Are you aware of any such instances?

Kate: I was referring to some letters that were going back and forth in the *Bay Times*, and I don't remember the exact specific letters, but I was *furious* at the way the East Bay lesbians were screaming at transsexuals and the invectives they were using, and I was *furious* at the way transsexuals were screaming back at the lesbians from the East Bay. I couldn't pick up a paper without crying; that's how I felt.

Davina: So, did you perceive those letters as transsexuals demanding entrance into separatist space or into the ranks of lesbian separatists?

Kate: Yes, that's how I perceived it.

After all, the letters were written to lesbian separatists. I wanted to acknowledge that I didn't think that it would be right to enter separatist space, and that there was a space where I felt transgendered people had no right to force themselves, and I needed to make that very clear. What I failed to make clear was that that does not mean women-only space, and that these were being grouped together. So I didn't make that clear, but that particular passage stands as written, I don't think we have a right in separatist spaces. I think that I went to a generality and I was looking for points of agreement, and rather than trying to propose that there would be these two kinds of spaces, one called separatist and one called women-only, I wanted to give them something.

Davina: Yea, I would agree with that, but then can a transsexual be a lesbian separatist?

Kate: I don't think so. But here's the sad thing. I think that separatism is a really important part of some people's lives. Separatism is simply the extension of that anthropological model that Anne Bolin describes about transgendered people; that kind of moving away from the culture, the shifting of identity, and then going back into the culture with your arms open. I think that's

the anthropological model for separatism. These are people who have been deeply wounded, and they need to move away from the culture, gather some strength and come back. We're not seeing them come back, and so, with the failure to come back, we're just going to see them choke off their lives. If you don't continually press out the envelope of your identity, you die. So I think that places that won't accept us, that won't eventually embrace us will wither on the vine because there's nothing inherently wrong with us. [laughs] But for now, we need to respect people who need their space. I really think that's important.

Davina: But even if we let the separatists have their space, there is still a conflict that exists when some women say, "Because we don't want this kind of people, we can impose our definition of what a woman is on the rest of the community," and so what you were saying in that article doesn't really address *that* conflict, does it?

Kate: No, you're right. It doesn't, and that was what I think was the shortcoming of that article.

Davina: Also in "A Plan for Peace" you stated: "There are also *transsexual* separatists these days: a group of male-to-female transsexuals who go off to spend healing and learning time with one another, and they permit only postoperative transsexual women." I don't understand why, if you distinguish between lesbian separatist space and women-only space, do you not distinguish between transsexual-only space and transsexual separatist



Kate at age four

space?

Kate: At one point it was transsexual separatist. It was postoperative only.

Davina: But does that make it a separatist event?

Kate: Yes, that is by definition separatist.

Davina: Then why isn't a women-only event a separatist event?

Kate: In one degree it is, but there are different degrees of radical separatism. And what we're talking about when we're talking radical separatism is a way of exclusion, a way of defining self. Radical separatists believe that there's an essential femaleness, an essential womanness that male-to-female transsexuals do not have, nor will ever have. I don't agree with them, but I don't even necessarily agree that *they* have it. I think that everyone works really hard at building this thing called "womanhood." I think that male-to-female transsexuals are the ones who acknowledge that, or at least at some point in their lives they understand that. Some male-to-female transsexuals agree with the separatists that there is this essential thing. What they don't agree on is who has it, who's entitled to it. I say that anyone who wants it is entitled to it, but just because I say it doesn't

mean it's true, and I don't believe that the separatists have to listen to me. I don't believe that the separatists have to listen to any other transsexuals who say that they belong and that they have this essential womanhood. But that's me; I don't believe that gender is an essential quality to any human being. I think it's a construct. So when I see all this fighting done in the name of this thing called "essential womanhood," it makes me cry. I kinda go, "Why are you bothering?" What's your view on that?

Davina: Pretty much the same, but I don't subscribe totally to a social constructionist theory either. I see the dichotomy between social constructionism and essentialism to be somewhat of a false dichotomy.

Kate: So how do you see gender?

Davina: I see it as some of both, as both essential and socially constructed. I would say that, yes, that there is a certain essential quality to it, but that it's not contingent on what kind of genitals that you're born with.

Kate: What is the quality then?

Davina: It's not something that I can define.

Kate: Well, let's say that there's women-only space, and a man comes on the land. What's the essential difference?

Davina: Well, I would concede that that person may be a woman, but a woman in a male body.

Kate: No, let's say that he says, "No, I'm a man, but for today I'm a woman."

Davina: No, I wouldn't accept that because I see gender as something more enduring than that.

Kate: Oh! See, that's where we disagree. I don't think that gender is enduring; I think that gender is really mutable.

Davina: Oh, I agree that it's mutable, but I wouldn't say . . .

Kate: On an hour to hour basis.

Davina: I wouldn't say that it's *that* mutable.

Kate: I would! I would say that it's the social construct part of it that says we can't slide and have fun with this stuff. But let's get back to this. What is the essential difference between a man and a woman? What's a man and what's a woman? Those are the questions I really don't have answers for. It seems like you're saying that there is an essential difference. I want to know what it is. I've always wanted to know that.

Davina: Well, I can only speak from my own perspective. When someone asks me, "What do you mean when you say that when you were growing up that you felt like a woman?" what that means to me is that I had an identification with having a particular type of body. So I do see it as somewhat connected with having a certain kind of body, but it's a combination of things. It's no one single thing. I think that when we try to put our finger on this one thing that is gender that it is always going to elude us because there is always something else there that we're missing.

Kate: Yes, and that's my point. I think we can take off on that and go, "and that's one of the great mysteries of life," or we can say, "Well, maybe it's not such a mysterious thing after all. Maybe in fact it's the emperor's new clothes, and that there's

nothing mysterious about it. It's elusive because it's not there." So what worries me is the anger and the hostility that is raised in the name of this elusive, unnameable quantity.

Davina: In "A Plan for Peace," you say "transsexuals are nothing short of violent if they demand admission into the ranks of 'women born women' lesbian separatists who don't want them there." How exactly would you define violence?

Kate: I would say that violence would be a nonconsensual entering of someone else's space or person.

Davina: Some women, including the producers of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, clearly did not consent to me and other transsexual women entering the festival in 1992 and 1993. So would you consider what we did to come under your definition of violence?

Kate: I think that the transsexuals who went there broke a rule, but according to the survey you did, it didn't matter to the majority of women who were there whether you were there or not.

So what needs to be considered is whether or not there was really a condition of nonconsent. That's what was really brave about

what you and the other women who did that did, that you went there and raised the questions of "Is there really consent here? Who is it that is saying that we can't be here?" And I think that you understood, and in fact, went on to show that the issue of consent was not in the hands of the few, but

that in fact, the majority had made it clear that consent was available. So, in those terms, no, it was not violent. It was a brave and wonderful and absolutely vital thing that you did for all of us.

Davina: Oh, thank you very much. I appreciate that. In "A Plan for Peace" you also said that transsexuals are pre-Stonewall. Some transsexuals would say that Stonewall was their event too because there were transsexual people at Stonewall. Would you agree that Stonewall was our event too?

Kate: No, because we didn't pick up the banner and run with it because our shame was greater than the shame of lesbians and gay men; our oppression was greater than the oppression of lesbians and gay men. We stayed hidden while lesbians and gay men picked up the banner and called it "lesbian and gay pride." We continued to bow down, cowtow, play the subservient, play the other, to lesbians and gay men who've done such a remarkably incredible job with moving forward with the Stonewall Rebellion. Of course, it was all transgendered people, but that has since been appropriated and it has since become a symbol and a battle cry for lesbians and gay men. I think that to galvanize now as a community we would be wise to galvanize at a point of love rather than at a point of fire.

Davina: Do you think that we deserve to be named in the title of the upcoming Stonewall commemoration?

Kate: I actually wrote to Franklin Fry about that, and he wrote back something interesting. Because it's an international thing, people outside of the United States had a lot of objections to calling it Stonewall in the first place because that was so blatantly U.S. chauvinistic, so there were a lot of people to

"Let's have lots of genders; I think the more genders the merrier. I don't want to abolish gender; that would be boring."

consider in this. Should we be named? Probably not, I think it would be a silly name. Kathy Jones of Transgender Nation here in San Francisco came up with a really good solution that I like concerning the Freedom Day Parade here. She said we should name it the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Day Parade and include everybody that we want, but then just shorten it down to "the Stonewall Parade" or simply "Stonewall" in the press, but formally call it that which includes all of us in it. Oh yea, I think that's great, but acknowledge that the media wants a sound byte.

Davina: In "A Plan for Peace" you also say that transsexuals have no role models. Do you still believe that?

Kate: No, but I still don't think that we have role models in the popular culture. However, you can pick up *TransSisters* or *T.N.T.* or *Gender Outlaw* or *My Story*. There are more positive role models coming along now, but they are still in the subculture. Melanie Phillips, who single-handedly created a transgendered forum on America Online for over 350 transgendered men and women is the unacknowledged Mother Teresa of the transgendered world to me. She created a whole haven where there could be a free exchange of information. That's a positive role model for me. That's someone who went into a space and claimed our territory for us. I think the women who are raising the issue about the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, and who are saying, "Wait, what do you mean we're not allowed there?" I think the women who are doing that are role models. I think that it's important to raise those questions, to continually push out the boundaries of our ghetto.

Davina: Well, thank you again. You don't agree with the metaphor of being "trapped in the wrong body." You've said that that's a cliché. Even though you might not identify with this metaphor yourself, do you think that it might be valid for other transsexuals?

Kate: Of course it might. My problem with it is that it was devised by a medical doctor, and put on us, and that some transsexuals blindly accept it without going beyond it, so it's their metaphor for us: "the wrong body." I would be much more comfortable saying "a wrong body." *The wrong body* again implies a binary. It's like "the other" or "the opposite sex." Now, "another gender?" Yes. So that's my fear, that we're being co-opted into accepting that metaphor, but for some it is obviously perfectly valid.

Davina: You claim that this is a metaphor that was "designed by the medical profession in order to fit within cultural restrictions." This is also a claim made by Janice Raymond in *The Transsexual Empire* to attempt to prove that we are not women, that we are just deceiving ourselves by saying that we are. What evidence do you see that this metaphor was designed by the medical profession? Couldn't they have just as easily gotten it from us?

Kate: That would be ascribing an awful lot of tolerance and compassion to the medical profession that to this date I have not experienced, and I grew up with it. My father was a doctor. What

other loving, kind, considerate thing have they done for us in the past?

Davina: But from reading the medical literature, it never seemed to me that they ever really accepted this metaphor, that they never really considered us to be trapped in the wrong body or a wrong body, but that they merely observed that that was how we described ourselves, because, they would still refer to us as "men" or "male" even when we described ourselves as women.

Kate: Well, here I think it gets down to a difference in world view. We grew up in utter isolation, desperate for metaphors, desperate for a language that would describe who and what we were because we weren't like the other boys and girls. And so we grew up building up a world-view that could explain our craziness, our otherness, and that world-view would include for me *The National Enquirer* article that broke the Christine Jorgensen story and Tula's first book *I Am a Woman* and Canary Conn's book. It didn't include John Money because I just couldn't understand the big words, but it included everything I could read. It included a lot of pornography. Oh god, I would read all that porn, and in my head all the crossdressing and the fetishism would

"I feel that I was manipulated into this surgery. I really feel that, and that's where my anger comes out at this stuff. I'm glad it worked; I was lucky."

get all mixed up with sex and gender. So my world view was built up on every scrap I could inhale. From other transsexuals whom I talk to, it was a common experience that we were just so hungry for ourselves, which is why I think something like your magazine is so important because it's providing a way to look at ourselves as not crazy, as not utterly isolated and alone. But when you bring that world-view in contact with someone else -- say you and I, here we are talking -- and I grew up with one world view that said one thing, and you grew up with another thing, and we really have nothing to pin it on because it's all based on the shifting sands of "we don't really know what it is, but we feel it's there," then we threaten each other. And I think that that is the stumbling block to community. We need to maintain our own world-views; we need to maintain our own integrity, and we need to link arms with those who don't feel exactly the same way we do, and we need to take real care not to silence voices in our community. I think we can take real care to nurture differing voices in our community and welcome them.

Davina: You say that we need to create new metaphors, and I agree with that, but you don't provide any new metaphors to replace the old ones. What are some new metaphors that you would suggest?

Kate: I wouldn't. I would very much hesitate to suggest metaphors. I would say that the thing I would encourage anyone who is looking at gender change is just to start asking questions. A metaphor is an answer, and I think that we need to do away with some answers for a while, especially answers that are grounded in a culture that would kill us.

Davina: You've said that passing is the same as assimilating, but you obviously pass very well yourself. Don't you think that one can pass and still not accept or conform to the societal expectations of what a man or a woman is supposed to be?

Kate: Sure, I do. As you said, in the past I said that passing is assimilating, but in my book I expand on that and say that passing is a double edged sword. It's a wonderful thing. I love walking out on the street and not being yelled at, not being beat up. I think it's wonderful that people don't throw knives at me. On the other hand, I think that anything carried to an extreme can kill us, and that *enforced* passing, when we feel that we *have* to pass and that we have to carry that into every aspect of our lives, that would be where it steps over the bounds of consensual play and into oppression. I think that when we're forced to pass and to the degree that so many of us are, and to the degree that *I'm* forced to pass because my life depends on it, and any of our lives depend on it, *that's* oppressive.

Davina: The title of your book is *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and the Rest of Us*. Is this title meant to imply that all transsexual people are neither men nor women?

Kate: No, and I very clearly state in the book that there are some transsexuals who consider themselves men or women, and not transsexuals, and I honor that. So there's men and there's women and there's the rest of us. Maybe there's not that many of us, but I am meeting more and more people, transsexual or not, who are considering themselves neither men nor women in the way that the culture defines men or women.

Davina: But I see that as a false dichotomy. I don't think that there is any dichotomy between being a transsexual and being a man or a woman. I see transsexual women as a subset of women and transsexual men as a subset of men.

Kate: I don't disagree. I would agree that transsexual men and nontranssexual men are all men and transsexual women and nontranssexual women are all women, but I'm neither, and that's who I'm talking about in terms of "the rest of us." If you're not one of them, that's cool.

Davina: You write about transgender people coming together under a banner of a "third." Is it possible to be such a "third" and to still be a man or a woman?

Kate: This is Marjorie Garber's concept of "third space" which permits an unlimited number of options to a binary, not a third numerically. So, I'm talking about all of the people who don't fall strictly under the binary.

Davina: So, then the people in that category are people who identify as neither man nor woman, right?

Kate: Yeah.

Davina: So if you identify as a man or a woman, then you're not in that category?

Kate: Not if you don't want to be.

Davina: But *could* you be if you wanted to?

Kate: Of course, it gets back to what I was talking about earlier in terms of community that would be inclusive. When I say "transgender" I'm talking about anyone who transgresses gender rules, anyone whose performance of gender brings into question the binary. That's what I would call "transgender" -- anyone who's not satisfied *completely* with their gender identity, role, assignment, whatever. That's a transgendered person; all it takes is admitting it.

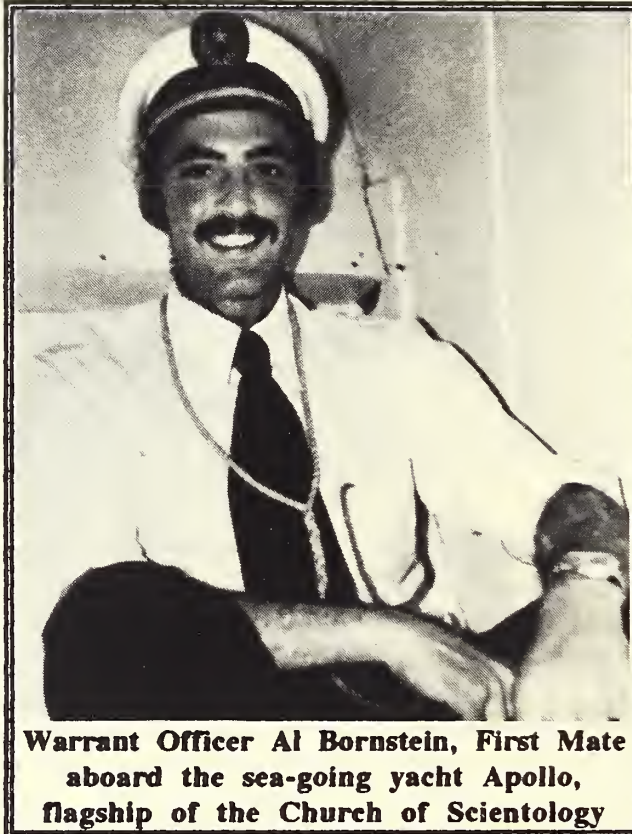
Davina: Okay, then If you can be a man or a woman and still be in this "third" category, then why not just expand the definition of what it means to be a man or a woman? Why do you need a third category?

Kate: Let the men and the women do that; it's up to them. If they're not letting me into their category, then that's not a place I want to be because it's a little too rigid for me, and they won't let me move in and out of it. So the men can do what they want to do and the women can do what they want to do. It's not up to me to expand their categories. Their categories don't include me, so I say, "Okay, here's another one."

Davina: Most transsexuals whom I know would object to be classified as a "third" or as an "other" or as "neither male nor female" because of the potential that it would have to marginalize them to an even greater degree than they already are. How would you address their concern about being further marginalized?

Kate: Well, they're joining the men or the women, so they can do what they want to do, and I'm doing what I want to do. You know what I mean? If you want to be a man, then be a man, but I'm not really fond of men. And in terms of women and the way the culture is setting that up, I think that women have moved out of and are constantly embracing the category of "other" to question their oppression. So I would be more willing to side with what the women are doing in questioning their oppression by men than I would be to side with men. But what women are doing is what women are doing. I'm trying to question the binary, which I think will bring about a cessation to the oppression based on gender. We all do it from different places; I'm not trying to tell everybody to climb under my banner. I never say that.

Davina: You've stated that it was the absence of feeling; that is, that you felt that you weren't a boy, rather than that you felt like you were a girl, that determined your gender. Do you think that this is true for all transsexual people or do you think that for some transsexual persons it is the actual presence of a gender that



Warrant Officer Al Bornstein, First Mate aboard the sea-going yacht Apollo, flagship of the Church of Scientology

is the opposite of their biological sex that determines their gender?

Kate: I'm very interested in talking with people like that because that's something that I don't understand. And the word "opposite" is something that I don't understand either, because that implies that there are only two genders, or at least that there are several polar opposites of those gender continuums, and I don't understand that because I don't think that that's a natural phenomenon.

Davina: You go on to say that when you underwent surgery that you expected the war within yourself to end, but that postoperatively "there were still wars going on in [your] brain." Could you describe what kinds of inner conflicts you were still experiencing postoperatively?

Kate: Well, it was this whole thing about feeling at last that I'm a woman, and then these brilliant women asking me how could I be, and having to answer these questions inside myself and having to go, "Wait a minute. What is the biological imperative here? What is the hormonal imperative? I'm insisting I'm a woman, well, what is that? Is it hormones? That means that anyone who can get a prescription can change their gender. Is it just genitals? Is it the way I act?" This is what was going through my head, these unanswerable questions.

Davina: Do you still experience such inner conflicts?

Kate: No, I just accept that they're there, and that I don't have to be either, and they disappeared.

Davina: You said that after 37 years of trying to be male and over eight years of trying to be female that you've come to the conclusion that neither is really worth the trouble, but you also said that you were glad that you underwent surgery and that you would do it again, so clearly going through the surgery was worth it to you, right?

Kate: Oh, absolutely, for me it was. I know some people for whom it wasn't. But for me the surgery and the state of the flesh in my genital area has nothing whatsoever to do with my gender. I like my vagina because it permits me to experience things in an erotic way in the way that I've always wanted to. But that's sex, that's not gender.

Davina: So then, you're distinguishing between the surgery and being a man or a woman?

Kate: Right, because I don't view genital surgery as making one a man or a woman.

Davina: You've said that the most difficult identity for you to give up was that of lesbian, but that you've come to see that even this identity was "choking" you. Could you describe how this identity was "choking" you?

Kate: That's specifically in reference to my lover having gone through a gender change and becoming a guy, and "What does that make me?". It brought up all kinds of questions, and I'm still questioning them. As it is, our relationship is really on shifting sands right now. In the same way that I had the bottom line conviction right after my genital surgery that I was a woman,

over the past seven years I've built up this rock bottom conviction, this kind of core part of my identity, that I'm a lesbian. So then when my lover went through his gender change and there I was all of a sudden living with a man, it really made me question: "Well now what am I? Am I a heterosexual? Do I stop being a lesbian?" It really shook me up, and it made me question: "Well, what does 'lesbian' mean? Is it a political point of view? Is it a sex thing?" I like girls, and for me it comes down to I like girls. So I really think I am a lesbian, but now I tend to qualify that.

Davina: In your book, you state that we don't hate any part of our bodies that we aren't taught to hate, and that transsexuals who do hate their genitals are taught to do so. But as I remember it, growing up as a boy I wasn't taught to hate my genitals. In fact, I remember being taught quite the opposite, that I should value them very highly and consider that they made me superior to those who had female genitals. What evidence do

"I'm a masochist. I'm a submissive. I'm also a sadist. I'm also a dominant. I'm trying to awaken all of these parts in me."

you see that male-to-female transsexuals are taught to hate their genitals?

Kate: But did you feel that you were a boy?

Davina: No, I didn't.

Kate: Well, that's why I think that you were taught to hate it. I think that boys are taught to love their male genitals, and if you teach that to a child, assuming that child is a boy, but the child is a girl, then what you're teaching that child is to hate that organ. I was also raised that way. I did like the physical sensations of it. What I hated was not so much my penis as what it made me, and that what I'm hearing from you is that you hated your penis.

Davina: Right.

Kate: Right. And so I think that you were taught to hate it because you were taught: "Good boy, you love your penis," and you thought, "No, no, I'm not a boy." And penis and boy became equated, so of course you'd hate it.

Davina: You also say that the demand for genital surgery is perpetuated by a "cultural genital imperative," but you also say that you like your new genitals and that you would do it over again if given the chance. Do you think that your decision to undergo sex-change surgery was the result of this "cultural genital imperative?"

Kate: Absolutely, and I resent the hell out of it. I feel that I was manipulated into this surgery. I really feel that, and that's where my anger comes out at this stuff. I'm glad it worked; I was lucky.

Davina: Then do you believe that before this "cultural genital imperative" that there were not any individuals who desired to have different genitals?

Kate: Oh sure, but I believe that there were unicorns too.

Davina: Oh, I've *seen them!*

Kate: Well, then, there you go. But I really have no idea of what existed before my life unless I go into trance and I remember my lives from when I lived in those times, but to me, the way I take the experience of, "Yes there were" is to say the brouhaha

about gender is so temporal. In different cultures it's gone through in different ways.

Davina: In your book you also say that you guess that you were forced into surgery, but in your interview with Anne you described a ritual that you did before surgery to remind yourself that you were not forced into it, that it was your own free choice. Was there something between the time of that interview and when you wrote your book that made you change your mind about that?

Kate: No. I think that the cutting that I did was a way of taking my power back, and making the decision myself. I was pressured all the way up into it, and there was no way I felt I was going to turn back at that point. So the only way I could claim my power was through that ritual. That sentence

you're talking about is part of a prose poem, and it's talking about the pressure that's brought to bear on us to go through with genital surgery, and again it's *maybe*. "I guess I was forced into it."

Davina: You say that our culture seems

to regard surgery as the only option for people who are "gender dysphoric." Yet there are an increasing number of individuals who are taking the non-surgical option. Why do you feel that society gave you no other option than surgery if there are now so many people who are comfortable with the non-surgical option?

Kate: Oh, I do think that we have a lot of options. I think that it is very brave people who take them, but I don't think those options are available in anything culturally sanctioned. They have to carve that out themselves, so I think these are incredibly brave people who are living wonderfully gender-fucked lives.

Davina: In your book, you say "rather than to try to fight for the equality of gender, to deconstruct gender," and that "the idea of gender itself needs to be done away with," but previously you say that you do not want to abolish gender. Isn't this a contradiction, or are you making a distinction between abolishing and deconstructing?

Kate: What I'm saying is that the equality of *the genders* -- being male and female -- I do not feel that male and female can be equal. I do not feel that anything in any binary can be equal, and I think that the existence of the binary is the source of our oppression as men, as women or as neither. The existence of the binary oppresses us and that any fight for gender freedom needs to include the deconstruction of the binary. We need to deconstruct the binary, but we don't need to abolish gender. I'm saying the *system* is what we need to take apart, this kind of false mandate that says you're a man or you're a woman or you're weird. And that system includes that men have the power and women don't. And so any fight for women's right or any fight for men's spiritual freedom in the face of this oppression needs to include the deconstruction of the gender system. But gender? Let's have lots of genders; I think the more genders the merrier. I don't want to abolish gender; that would be boring.

Davina: In your book you describe some of the benefits you received as the result of male privilege. Do you think that some of these benefits might be the result of your race and socio-economic class rather than your sex?

Kate: I think that there are all kinds of benefits that you get from belonging to socially sanctioned categories. Race gives some kind of benefits; socio-economic class gives some kind of benefits; education gives other kinds of benefits and gender gives another, but the specific points that I was making were in specific reference to male privilege, so no, the benefits I was speaking of were specifically male privilege, not the other kinds.

Davina: You also admit that you were pretty successful in the male role, and in your interview with Anne you stated that you weren't an effeminate child. Do you think that your experience of male privilege is any different from that of effeminate males and other males who aren't so successful at the male role?

Kate: I'm sure that there is less privilege involved, but I'm sure that there is more privilege involved than in being a woman.

Davina: In your book, you say that some women also experience male privilege. Do you likewise think that there are some males who do not experience it?

Kate: I haven't met any that I know of, and I think that the women who experience male privilege fight for it tooth and nail. Now, as for the other way around . . . Barbara Ehrenreich wrote this book called *The Hearts and Minds of Men* in which she talks about how if women are sex symbols, then men are success symbols, and men are born with the chains of having to live up to a certain hierarchal standard in the same way that women have to live up to a certain biological or sociological substandard. So to be born without that . . . I can't imagine it. I mean, can you imagine a woman born without the oppression that comes with being woman? No. Now, what we call male privilege is oppressive to men, but to come back to your question, no, I don't know of any men who have had no male privilege, unless they've worked to get rid of it. Women need to get rid of their chains through consciousness raising, and I think men need to work to get rid of their privilege. I think it's there unless you had some parents who were really enlightened and you were born off on a commune somewhere.

Davina: Do you think that male-to-female transsexuals in general experience the same degree of male privilege as do nontranssexual males?

Kate: I don't believe that there is any "in general." I think that there are as many ways of expressing transgender as there are transgendered people, and I think that what you mentioned was really smart about all the other forms of privilege -- like being white, like being middle-class, like being well educated -- I had other forms of privilege that influenced my journey that other transgendered people didn't. So there are all kinds of factors that weigh in.

Davina: Do you think that it is possible that some male-to-female transsexuals might also internalize some of the same messages of inferiority that girls do?

Kate: I did, and when I went through my change I thought that that was the kind of woman that I would have to be because the message I got about women as a man was that women were inferior.

"I acknowledge the male in me that I was for thirty some odd years, and it informs the way I live my life as a woman."

Davina: In your book, you say that we must give up the male privilege that we have previously experienced. Some women would say that you can't really give up male privilege; that if you've had it that you will always have certain advantages over persons who did not have it. How would you respond to that?

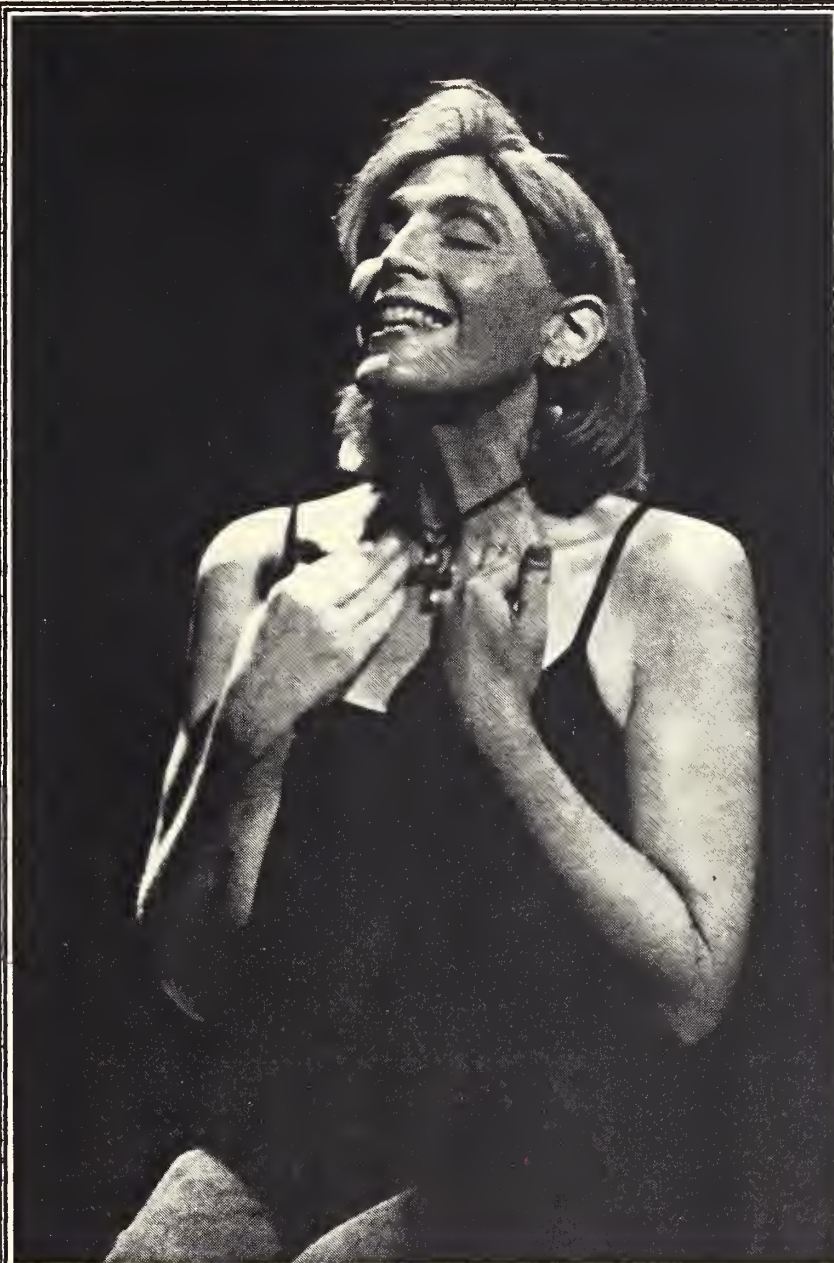
Kate: They're probably right. Absolutely, there are certain privileges, and there are certain drawbacks to having had that. I mean, it's kind of like wounds. You're going to have scars. Some scars are going to be deeper. Some scars are never going to heal; some wounds are never going to heal. I don't know that anybody's perfect, but I think that working in that direction is a sign of good faith and love, and you can't do more than that.

Davina: In your book, you mention a friend of yours who says she is able to recognize a sense of male entitlement in male-to-female transsexuals who "insist on acceptance as women." "Insist" can be interpreted in a number of different ways. For instance, I do recognize everyone's individual right to accept or to not accept me as a woman, but I also do *insist* that I will not allow myself to be marginalized within the lesbian community. What exactly do you mean by "insist," and would you consider my attitude to be the kind of insistence that you were referring to?

Kate: Well, the sentence you're referring to needs to be taken in context here. If I were using conversation in a male fashion to bludgeon someone over the head, and someone said, "Hey, that is really male behavior," and I said, "*Unh-unh!* No way; I am a woman!", that is the kind of insistence I am talking about there.

Davina: In your book you mention some passages from transvestite fiction and refer to them as "the erotica of my people." I never identified with that stuff at all; I've never considered that stuff to be my erotica. It seems to me that transsexuals don't really have any of their own erotica, that the whole idea of transsexual erotica is just too threatening, both to

society and to transsexuals themselves. Would you agree or disagree and why?



Kate Bornstein in *The Opposite Sex Is Neither*

photo by Dona Ann McAdams

Kate: But I did. It was my erotica and when I say "my people," I'm not just saying transsexuals; I'm including crossdressers; I'm including the heterosexual husband who wears his wife's panties. Those are my people. They've got to be. But I would agree that there are some people who would find that offensive and objectifying and they don't see it as erotica because it is objectifying. But by and large it was written to be erotica. It was written to be sexually stimulating. But what I found interesting in those passages that I used was the cultural imperatives and the way they have informed the way many of us choose to live our lives, and how they embody these fears we have about being found out. Whoa! Scary, scary stuff! So that was the purpose of putting those in there. And you mix those kinds of fear with sex and you get a really powerful drug, and it's really nasty brainwashing I think.

Davina: In your book you also describe practicing sadomasochism, and I've noticed that a lot of other transsexual women do so also. Do you see there being

a relationship between your transsexuality and your interest in sadomasochism, and why do you think that so many transsexual women are into it?

Kate: I don't know that there are so many. Certainly the women that I hang out with are involved in that, but I don't know how many other transgendered people are.

Davina: It seems to me that a very large percentage of the ones whom I know are.

Kate: It's really tempting to say that because a lot of the ones I know are, that a lot of them are, but I don't know a large percentage of transsexuals. I would really hesitate to agree with that, but I would certainly say that there is a relationship between transgenderism and sadomasochism in that these are both ways of playing with power. Transgenderism plays with power from the

point of identity and sadomasochism plays with power from the point of relationships, so when we cross genders we slide on a continuum of power. To play with power is to play with gender. When we do this in relation to another person, when we play with power with another person, that is sadomasochism; that is dominance and submission when it's done consensually. So, yeah, I think that there's a tendency, that a lot of people who are into sadomasochism, but are not transgendered themselves, do gender play. So there's a point of overlap because the basis of gender is power. But, yea, I also see a great number of transgendered men and women who are into power play, but I don't know if that means that a great percentage of transgendered people are. That would be really interesting to find out though, wouldn't it?

Davina: Yes, it certainly would. In *The Transsexual Empire*, Janice Raymond accused all transsexual women of being masochists. Do you think that she was onto something there, that there is perhaps at least a grain of truth in what she said?

Kate: I think she's one of these people who misappropriate terms and then redefine them for their own use. I'm a masochist, I'm a submissive. I'm also a sadist. I'm also a dominant. I'm trying to awaken all of these parts in me. But to me, living in my bottom space, living as a submissive when I'm being that, living in my masochist space when I'm feeling that, I'm more powerful. I'm more alive; I'm more vibrant; I'm more able to give than I ever am. Similarly, when I'm living in a top space, when I'm dominant, when I'm sadistic, when I'm hurting somebody I'm spiritually kneeling at their feet and giving them exactly what they want and serving them. [laughs] It's a beautiful dance, and to be reduced to "Oh, I want to be degraded" [laughs] Oh, please, she is such a fanatic, and fanatics make those kinds of statements and expect us to look for grains of truth, and nah, there's not a grain of truth in that.

Davina: In an interview you did with Shannon Bell, you're identified as a Buddhist, but in an article you wrote recently for the *Bay Area Reporter* you identified yourself as a Pagan. So, are you a Pagan?

Kate: Not any more, but catch me on Thursday and I might be. I burn incense before I do my shows. I pray to various incarnations of Gods and Goddesses before I go onstage. I read Tarot cards. I'm designing my own deck. I really, really get off on meditation. I like mushrooms. So what does that make me? I don't know. I don't drink. I don't eat much meat, but I do occasionally like pork. So what am I? What are you?

Davina: I'm a Pagan. I'm a Witch. I'm also a Unitarian Universalist.

Kate: Cool. So there you go. Exactly! I love that, and if we could just do with gender what we do with spirituality!

Davina: Several times in your interview with Anne you said, "Don't give me this Goddess stuff." That seems to me to be an odd thing for someone who identifies as a Pagan, at least sometimes, to say. What exactly did you mean by that?

Kate: What was I referring to?

Davina: You were talking about transsexual spirituality and your play *The Opposite Sex is Neither*, and you say: "If anything, Maggie is a slap-in-the-face to the dyed-in-the-wool essentialists who say that what makes a woman a woman is that essent part of her that is the Goddess, and to have a transsexual up there playing a Goddess was more of my idea. That would be 'Don't give me this Goddess stuff'."

Kate: Right, don't give me that I can't be the Goddess. I can. Don't give that "The Goddess is unique to some gendered experience." The Goddess to me is all embracing. The three-in-one Goddess does not exclude me. It includes me; that's what I'm saying.

Davina: But you're not saying that there's no such thing as Goddesses, right?

Kate: No, I pray to several Gods and Goddesses. I believe in that very strongly. But no, Maggie's a Goddess in training.

Davina: I was also surprised to read in your interview with Anne that you said that you had never heard of transsexual spirituality before. Don't you think that there are uniquely spiritual aspects to the transsexual experience?

Kate: Sure there are. I guess it just never occurred to me. I don't like resting at a point of being unique, and I think that this is what scares me about a term such as "transsexual spirituality." I think that there's a unique spirituality to every aspect of our lives, and just because we're transsexuals doesn't mean that we're somehow "better than." That's what bothers me, that "unique" often implies "better than." I get really afraid of this term I've heard occasionally, this term "nons." That makes me shudder. I think we need to be grateful that we have something we can embrace and can see that is so heavy in our lives that it's led to a spiritual awakening, whereas most people's issues are more subtle than that, and they have to go digging for whatever their point of spiritual awakening is going to be.

Davina: You once wanted to convert to Catholicism. What was it about Catholicism that appealed to you?

Kate: Yea! Because I thought it was pretty. They had beads, they had great saints; they had cards; they had pretty pictures. I loved the stained glass. Oh god! When I saw Audrey Hepburn in *The Nun's Story*, that's what did it. I wanted to be Audrey Hepburn so bad. I went out and bought a missal; I bought a rosary, and I learned how to say the rosary all by myself; I bought a "Book of Saints".

Davina: Oh god! I used to hate that stuff! I do admit that it was pretty though. So do you think that there was a relationship between your transsexuality and your desire to convert to Catholicism?

Kate: Sure. I wanted to be a nun. I wanted to look just like Audrey Hepburn. Who wouldn't?

Davina: Right, and I think that part of being transsexual is this appreciation of pretty things that boys aren't supposed to have. So, yea, there were some things about it that I appreciated too, like when I was an altar boy . . .

Kate: You were an altar boy! Oh that's so cute! [laughs]

"I get really afraid of this term I've heard occasionally, this term 'nons.' That makes me shudder."

Davina: Oh yea! And the thing I really loved about being an altar boy was wearing those vestments because that was the closest thing to a dress that I could wear in front of other people. [laughs]

Kate: That's so great! Wow!

Davina: Of course, judging from my own experience of growing up Catholic, I think that maybe there was more of a connection between your desire to become a Catholic and your interest in sadomasochism than with your transsexuality. [laughs]

Kate: Oh god! When Audrey Hepburn would whip herself on her back! Wow! That was a hot scene! She would take this leather whip with these metal nails in it and just wail on her back, and I thought, "Wow! That's what you get?! Cool!"

Davina: When asked if she thought that she would have any difficulty portraying a transsexual woman in *Tales of the City*, Olympia Dukakis stated that she didn't think that she would because she "has a lot of man in [her]."

What do you think of such a comment?

Kate: I think that it's uniformed, but getting back to the old "grain o' truth," I do think there's a grain of truth in that for many transsexual women, speaking for myself, I acknowledge the male in me that I was for thirty some odd years, and it informs the way I live my life as

a woman. So there is some truth in that. I think she did a marvelous job. I think she played it with honor, dignity, love and compassion and you couldn't ask for more. My beef is that why didn't they look for a transsexual actor? That really bothers me, but I think that will happen.

Davina: Your new play is call *Virtually Yours*. Some people have used the term "virtual reality" as a metaphor for transsexuality. Is this what you are intending?

Kate: Oh, yea. I wanted to borrow on that. I like titles that mean a lot of different things, that can be taken in a lot of different ways. The interview with Shannon Bell that you mentioned earlier appeared in a book called *The Last Sex*, and on the back cover they asked if the woman on the front cover was a real woman or "virtually a woman," and that always stuck with me. I mean what the hell is "virtually a woman?" What is a "real woman?" So *Virtually Yours*, the reason for that title is that it's the first of my plays that explores the nature of relationships more deeply than it explores the nature of identity. It's my crossover play from dealing with gender into dealing with putting gender into play in a relationship.

Davina: A major portion of your new play is devoted to exploring the conflicts that you have been experiencing as the result of your lover deciding to become a man. Can you elaborate on some of those conflicts?

Kate: Yea. The first character I use is Diane Arbus, the black & white photographer from the fifties and sixties. I used her to embody fate. It's like, "Oh my God, no matter what I do, as soon as I get comfortable with something, is something going to come up to make me question that?" I was very happy being a lesbian, and then he becomes this guy, and I go, "No matter what I do am

I gonna have to come up against these questions in my face?" The next one was, "Well, what are my models here? How do I deal with a man as a lover?" The only model I had when I was growing up were my parents, and I didn't want to become my mother, so my mother became a character. And the next one, would be the fantasy relationship that David and I had, that had really started when he had been a woman. We had started an S/M relationship. Can I still have that fantasy, this S/M life that is so important to me? So I tell the story of this S/M dyke bottom. Another is "This is a man, and I don't like many men and what they stand for." So I wanted to take this kind of separatist vision into my world and see how much of that I bought. And so Valerie Solanos became a character. She wrote the "S.C.U.M. Manifesto" -- the Society for Cutting Up Men -- and I have her making some very mean comments to the central character, saying, "Yea, well, you cut off your dick, but you're not a woman. Good try, but you're not a woman." So she's a very conflicting character for me.

Davina: Because she represents a part of yourself?

Kate: That doesn't like men?

Davina: No, does she represent that questioning within yourself?

Kate: Oh sure, absolutely.

Remember, we have to get back to my world-view, and I don't think I am a woman, so I can laugh at that, but I think I needed to present onstage the meanness with which it's presented to us because it gets presented to us with such vitriol that I wanted people to see it. So, sure, I'm tougher on me than anyone else. I think most of us are. We really tend to beat up on ourselves when we go at it. So I wanted people to see the meanness with which those words are said, so I have her say them. And the last character . . . I guess my biggest fear is "What if we do break up?" and frankly it looks like that's it. We've been talking the last couple of days and I think we're moving much closer to a friendship now than we are to a lovership, and so my fear was loneliness, not being alone but that horrible ache of being lonely and that fear of "Will anyone ever love a freak like me?" And the attendant fear that goes with that is going crazy, going completely mad. And so I develop a version of Greta Garbo that embodies both of those. So those are the questions that came up, and the whole idea of when we're in a relationship, and we agree with someone to be in a relationship, well, things shift, and they shift gently, and we evolve into this wonderful dance. But then someone immediately does this drastic change. They've caught catastrophic illness. They get fired. They become a fundamentalist. They become a Republican, or they become a guy. That really breaks out of the dance, and that nonconsensually shifts the identity of the partner, and you kind of go, "Wait a minute," 'cause the whole world is now looking at me like I'm a straight girl, and all the stuff that goes with that, and I'm femme anyway, so I have trouble in the lesbian community convincing some lesbians that I'm a lesbian because I like to wear dresses. And so now, I (continued on page 44)

"I have trouble . . . convincing some lesbians that I'm a lesbian because I wear dresses. And so now I wear dresses and I've got a boyfriend, so now they're saying, 'Sure Kate, you're a lesbian! Yea, tell us another one!'"

TO LIVE OUTSIDE THE LAW YOU MUST BE HONEST

Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and the Rest of Us by Kate Bornstein, published by Routledge, June 1994; 245 pages; \$23.00 cloth (\$28.95 Canada)

reviewed by Davina Anne Gabriel

In *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and the Rest of Us*, Kate Bornstein recounts the exhilaration of her childhood experience of discovering the meaning of new words within the pages of her family's oversize red leather bound dictionary. *Gender Outlaw* is Kate's attempt to transcend the prescribed dictionary definitions of gender and sexuality imposed by outside authorities and to replace them with her own definitions based on a lifetime of experience and questioning, and in the process to reclaim her own power, and by extension, the power of all transsexual and transgendered persons.

As Kate points out, transsexuals who wished to share the insights of their lives have heretofore been limited by the demands of the publishing industry to the genre of autobiography as well as the constraints of societal conceptions of gender. Though *Gender Outlaw* does draw extensively on autobiographical material, it is by no means another transsexual autobiography in the tradition of Christine Jorgensen, Jan Morris, Renee Richards, Canary Conn and Caroline Cosey. Rather, Kate ventures into territory heretofore reserved for the detached scrutiny of academic analysis, which has consistently denied the legitimacy of the voices of transsexual and transgendered persons. *Gender Outlaw* is thus the first book on the very nature of the intersection of gender and identity by an actual transsexual person and a groundbreaking work both in terms of historical precedent and analysis.

But unlike academic examination of gender, *Gender Outlaw* is anything but detached; rather it is thoroughly engaged and engaging. As Kate observes, *Gender Outlaw* represents a "reversal of the trend of examination based on observation rather than conversation." Like her plays, *Gender Outlaw* creates a space in which "assumptions are challenged and realities become unhinged."

But it is not so much gender *per se* that Kate is concerned with here as much as with the gender system; that is, how

concepts of gender are institutionalized within society and serve to mold individual lives in particular directions. As the title indicates, Kate's exploration of the gender system is as an outsider, as someone who has deliberately rejected its structures, boundaries and limitations, but, likewise as someone who has been oppressed by those societal structures, and whose life has been profoundly impacted by them. In the process, Kate very deftly penetrates the underlying assumptions that perpetuate its existence, thoroughly, turning them upside down and inside out, thus revealing the "ephemeral, undefinable nature of gender," deconstructing the "rigid, nearly monolithic universal gender system," and exposing it as a class system. But Kate is not out to

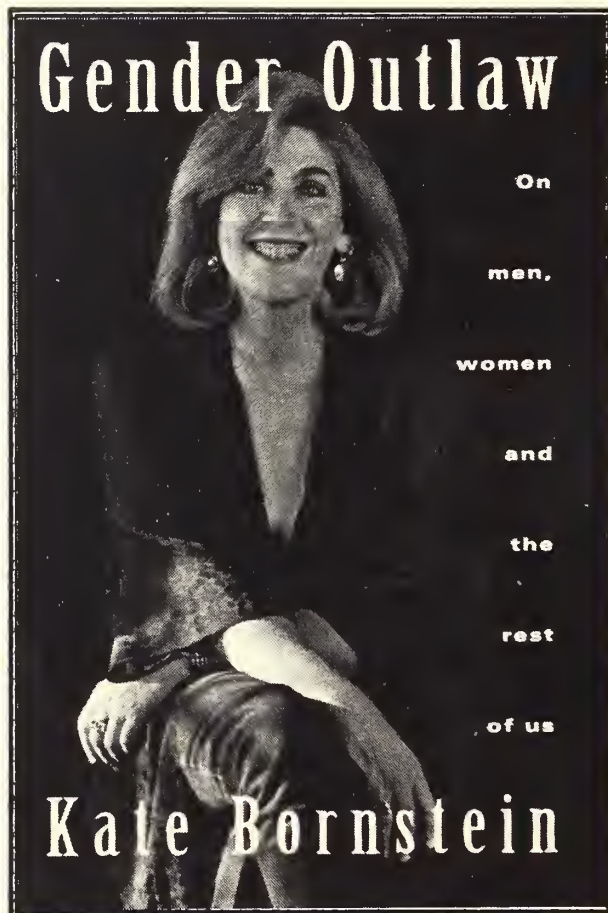
abolish gender, but merely to deconstruct it as a system. In place of that system, she envisions a postmodern model of gender that is fluid, beyond labels, limits and analysis, and based on her own experience within the S/M subculture, that is "safe, sane and consensual."

Kate deconstructs the gender system by revealing the mechanisms whereby culture creates gender, the role of the gender system in preserving the structures of patriarchy, heterosexism, misogyny, male privilege, transphobia, etc., how the medicalization of transsexuality functions to keep the gender system intact, the myriad contradictions inherent in the medical conceptions of gender, as well as how thoroughly this schema has permeated the totality of society, not just within the walls of academia and patriarchal religion and politics, but also even among many cultural feminists, segments of the men's movement and even by some transsexual and transgendered persons themselves. Drawing on her own experience as a member of the Church of Scientology,

Kate illuminates the process whereby the gender system functions as a cult by demanding unconditional and unquestioning allegiance to it and punishing those who question its dictates by turning them into outcasts and social pariahs.

Though dealing primarily with transsexuality, *Gender Outlaw* also examines gender in relation to transgendered identity as well, creating an "all encompassing view that transcends the boundaries of transgender subgroups," and that continually "blur[s] the lines of identity and enabl[es] us to find common ground with one another."

Kate adopts a "collage" or "cut-and-paste" style of writing, ("a little bit from here, a little bit from there"), a style which she



equates with transgendered (meant to include transsexual according to her definition) expression, drawing on a vast array of resources including scientific and academic theory, mainstream popular culture, queer, Neo-Pagan and S/M literature, as well as transvestite fiction, personal conversation and correspondence and experience to piece together a view of gender and gender identity. The result is a remarkably coherent, insightful, provocative and frequently profound examination of the dynamics of gender and identity that effectively dissolves the narrow confines of textbook definitions and artificial societal boundaries.

But those who are looking for definitive answers regarding the ever elusive reality of gender will not find them here because Kate deliberately does not provide them. The one overriding theme of this book is that when it comes to matters of gender that there are no definitive answers, that gender is ultimately and ever unknowable and elusive, that the more one comes to understand it, the more elusive it becomes, but that it is only by asking questions that one realizes the ultimate unknowability of gender. Kate's message here could most succinctly be summed up in the Unitarian Universalist aphorism of: "To question is the answer."

Kate is remarkably successful in this regard; she is indeed asking all of the right questions. Kate asks not only everything you always wanted to know about gender but were afraid to ask, but asks questions that most people have probably never

"Kate asks not only everything you always wanted to know about gender but were afraid to ask, but asks questions that most people have probably never even imagined asking, resulting in perhaps the most thought-provoking exegesis of gender ever written."

even imagined asking, resulting in perhaps the most thought-provoking exegesis of gender ever written. But Kate doesn't even stop there, but proceeds even beyond gender to examine the very nature of identity itself.

Kate not only asks questions that it has not occurred to academicians, scientists, talk show hosts and medical professionals to ask, but likewise proceeds into territory that transsexuals themselves have feared to tread. Though it didn't radically alter any of my own conceptions of gender, it certainly did get me to thinking about gender more deeply and in ways that I previously had not. Some transsexuals may find parts of this book to be very disconcerting because it asks very challenging questions. As Kate observes, it is not the increased fear of being read that serves to keep transsexuals from interacting with each other, it is that we challenge each other's world views. However, Kate has no such hesitancy and instead demonstrates how a great many, perhaps most, transsexual and transgendered persons actually buy into the assumptions of the bi-polar gender system, and in the process preserve the structures of their own oppression. Kate likewise very adeptly deconstructs the many myths and misconceptions that have arisen within the newly emergent transsexual/transgender movement, providing valuable insights and advice that every transsexual or transgender activist should heed very seriously.

Kate's analysis of gender dynamics is especially profound when drawing on her own personal experience. There are so many situations -- ranging from the hilarious to the harrowing, yet all

deeply poignant -- that she describes that will most assuredly resonate very deeply with every transsexual who reads this book. Kate describes numerous situations that she has experienced which illuminate the absurdities and contradictions of the gender system that are so very nearly identical to my own that they could almost have been written by me. Since Kate and I are also very close together in chronological age, she also views the phenomenon of gender through a very nearly identical cultural lens as do I. The cultural referents that she alludes to, particularly those from the counterculture of the 1960s, added a particular personal resonance for me that others of similar age will appreciate, but may not be so by somewhat younger or older readers.

Kate is at her very best when expounding on the revolutionary potential of transsexual/transgendered persons, drawing on historical, mythological and religious antecedents, and examining the sacred and holy nature of transsexual/transgendered expression and the role of humor in the process of reclaiming that potential. This was my favorite part of the book, but I found it far too short and wishing for more. On the other hand, I was simultaneously grateful that Kate didn't elucidate this potential

any more than she did, and instead simply left us with a framework allowing for a wide variety of individual expression upon which to build.

Gender Outlaw also includes the script of Kate's marvelous (and frequently

hilarious) first play *Hidden: a Gender*, and a chapter on the role of theatre in creating a space for the "transgressively gendered," its role in the "challenging of societal boundaries" and in "lamprooning new stereotypes within the queer community," as well as presents her own guidelines for "queer theatre to insure that rigid notions of identity continue to be shaken up."

Yet despite all of its considerable erudition, I do have a few bones of contention to pick with this book. There were several instances in this book in which I felt that Kate was either engaging in gross oversimplification or I found her to be annoyingly glib. For instance, in describing the controversy surrounding her article "A Plan for Peace" in the *San Francisco Bay Times* in 1992, Kate greatly oversimplifies both what she stated in that article as well as the extensive criticism that it provoked.

Leading into this passage, Kate states: "lesbian oppression at the hands of the dominant ideology is not the same as exclusion experienced by the transgendered at the hands of lesbian separatists -- lesbians just don't have the same economic and social resources with which to oppress the transgendered." While, simply taken at face value, this statement is undeniably true, but it also oversimplifies and misrepresents what those who have stated that these things are "the same" mean by such a comparison.

Similarly, describing how she dealt with lesbian separatists who insisted on referring to her as a "castrated man," Kate recounts how she would tell them, "Yep, I'm a castrated man alright, if that's what you see," and how she enjoyed watching

their stunned reactions. While I don't doubt that those stunned reactions were probably quite delightful to witness, I also doubt very much that this would be a very effective strategy in convincing Boo & Lisa to allow transsexual women to attend the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival.

I did greatly appreciate that Kate specified that she was speaking only for herself throughout her book (something that has not always been apparent from her writing), but she did nevertheless seem to inadvertently regress into dogmatism on several occasions. The most notable such instance is her insistence that "Sex is fucking, gender is everything else," a position that I don't agree with, and which I did not feel Kate adequately justified. While I do recognize that this is certainly as valid a way of looking at gender as any other, it certainly is not the *only* valid viewpoint on the subject. However, on this particular point, it seemed to me that Kate disallowed the validity of any other perspective. It does not necessarily follow, as Kate claims, that to regard what she calls "biological gender" as "sex" means that one is granting paramount and overriding importance to biology. Rather, it is merely distinguishing between physical and psychological realities. One can still do this and grant psychological reality even greater importance than biology. But what I find most troubling about this position is that it ultimately leads to the conclusion that sex-change surgery is really nothing more than an elaborate form of drag, which is an accusation that some of the radical feminists whom Kate criticizes in this book have been making for years.

Similarly, Kate deliberately blurs the lines between transsexuality, transgenderism and transvestism beyond what I feel is accurate. While I don't deny that there are a great many similarities between these related phenomena, and that they should be acknowledged, it is likewise equally important to recognize their differences are not simply a matter of quantity, but of quality. Here again, Kate's position inevitably leads to the conclusion that transsexuality is an extreme form of transvestism. The differences are real and just as important as the similarities, and probably even more so, but Kate tends to minimize them.

Kate also seemed somewhat dogmatic in her insistence that the "trapped in the wrong body" metaphor so common among transsexuals is one that has been imposed upon us by the medical profession, not even allowing for the possibility that the medical profession could have just as easily gotten it from us, and despite the fact that the medical literature indicates that the medical profession has never really accepted this definition of ourselves as valid. In

doing so, Kate also seems remarkably unconcerned about the implications of validating in an unqualified manner one of the very arguments used by Janice Raymond in the most vitriolic anti-transsexual book of all time, *The Transsexual Empire: the Making of the She-Male* (which has just been re-issued).

There were also times when I felt that Kate's use of particular terms could have benefitted by greater clarification, such as when she mentioned a friend of hers who said that she could recognize signs of male entitlement in transsexual women who "insist on acceptance as women." It occurs to me that "insist on acceptance as women" could have more than one meaning, but it is not clear simply from reading the book exactly what she means by this term.

And while I certainly do endorse a formulation of gender that is highly fluid and malleable, I found Kate's conception of gender to be considerably more fluid than my own. While I would agree with Kate that gender should never be fixed or rigid, neither is gender like "joining the Book-of-the-Month Club." Without denying that this might be exactly how Kate experiences gender, and even while recognizing its ever-evolving ephemeral and undefinable nature, I also find there to be something about gender that is highly enduring, consistent and resistant to change, and certainly less malleable than my body, even if absolute definitions elude me. If gender were indeed as malleable as Kate describes it, there would be no need for transsexual surgery; yet Kate acknowledges that such surgery has been highly beneficial to herself. Kate's tendency to consistently dismiss this aspect of gender is perhaps the greatest shortcoming of *Gender Outlaw*.

Yet despite these shortcomings, I found *Gender Outlaw* to be a remarkably intelligent, perceptive, witty, insightful, profound and visionary work, a breakthrough in the understanding of gender, and a book which I would highly recommend not only to all transsexuals, but to anyone interested in gaining greater understanding of the ever-elusive and ultimately undefinable phenomenon of gender.

Davina Anne Gabriel is a forty year old transsexual lesbian feminist Witch, the founder, editor and publisher of TransSisters: the Journal of Transsexual Feminism, and a long time activist for queer, feminist and other causes. She was one of four transsexual lesbians expelled from the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival in 1993 and is looking forward to celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of the completion of her sex-change surgery at the end of June. She lives outside the law in Kansas City, Missouri.



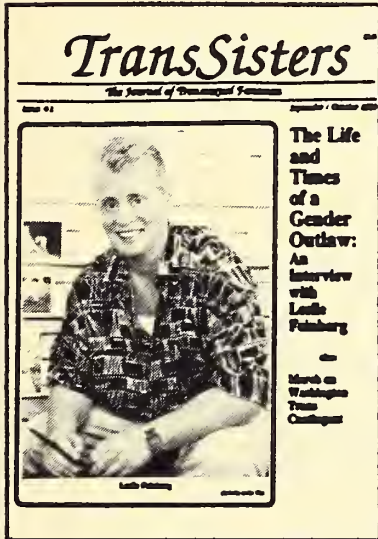
Davina Anne Gabriel

photo by Fran Windler

Subscribe to TransSisters

The Journal of Transsexual Feminism

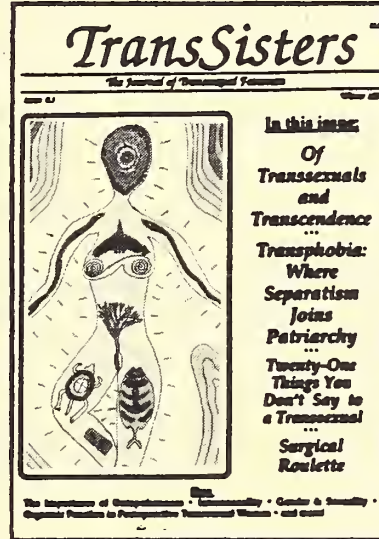
One year (four issues): \$18.00 Sample Issue: \$4.50
Back Issues Still Available : \$6.00 each



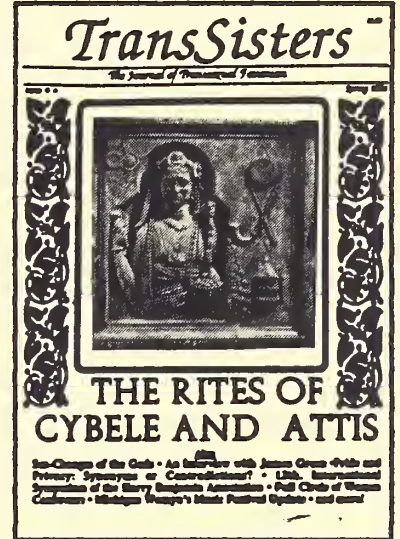
Issue # 1



Issue # 2



Issue # 3



Issue # 4

Subscription Form

- Please send me _____ sample issue(s) of *TransSisters* @ \$4.50 each.
- Please send me _____ one year subscription(s) (four issues) of *TransSisters*. @ \$18.00 each.
- Please send me _____ copies of back issue # 1 of *TransSisters* @ \$6.00 each.
- Please send me _____ copies of back issue # 2 of *TransSisters* @ \$6.00 each.
- Please send me _____ copies of back issue # 3 of *TransSisters* @ \$6.00 each
- Please send me _____ copies of back issue # 4 of *TransSisters* @ \$6.00 each
- Enclosed is a contribution in the amount of _____ to *TransSisters*.

(Outside U.S.A., Canada & Mexico add \$0.25 per single issue ordered; add \$1.00 for each one year subscription ordered.)

New subscriptions begin with next issue . To receive current issue, order sample issue.

Total Amount Enclosed: \$ _____ (U.S. funds only)

Name _____

Apt. or Suite # _____ Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

Please Make Checks or Money Orders Payable to Davina Anne Gabriel
Mail to: Davina Anne Gabriel; 4004 Troost Avenue; Kansas City, Missouri 64110

This order form is valid through 30 September 1994

NOW RECRUITING!
MEDICAL OFFICE
PERSONNEL FOR JAN 1995



WANTED! EXPERIENCED:
Office Manager / RNs
LVNs / Medical Assistants
Receptionist / Bookkeeper

Equal Opportunity: M→F or F→M

Send Resumes to:

Joy Diane Shaffer, MD

Internal Medicine

5667 Snell Avenue, Suite 173

San Jose, California 95123

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

TS MD Plans Private Practice

By way of introduction, I am a long term survivor of M→F SRS (Biber 1979). From 1980-1983 I was a member of the ACLU Transsexual Rights Committee organized by Joanna Clark (now Sister Mary Elizabeth). In 1981 I was admitted to Stanford Medical School. I believe I was the first *post-op* TS (closeted pre-ops would, of course, have no trouble getting into med school) in the world to enroll in med school. If you know of someone who managed it earlier, I would love to meet him or her. I was "outed" in medical school and survived intense harassment and many attempts by phobic physicians to kick me out of the profession. I am still fighting for my professional survival. Currently I do urgent care for a HMO and am not really available for my transsexual brothers and sisters. My contract will terminate 12/31/94 and I am thinking of taking a big gamble and opening a solo private office practice afterwards. Hillary or no! I am even hoping to recruit a M→F TS (14 years post-op) General Practitioner to be my partner in founding an actual post-op TS clinic and research foundation (The Benjamin-Jorgensen Clinic?). My primary research interests would include:

1) Starting a 30 year study of the risks of breast cancer in M→F TSs taking long term estrogen replacement. I fear the risk is substantial and will become a major problem as we age. This problem is compounded by the failure of TSs to receive good primary care.

2) Starting a 30 year study on the risks of "penile" cancer in M→F TSs who have had "inverted glove" (Biber-type) surgery. The situation is unfortunately similar to the setting in which uncircumcised males in the third world get penile cancer and deserves more study. We should be getting "PAP" smear equivalents and aren't doing so.

3) Writing a health care manual for transsexuals, with periodic updates to keep the information current.

4) Starting a long-term study of violent death (suicide and murder) in post-op transsexuals. I am especially disturbed by the persistently high rates of suicide in our people, even over 10 years after their surgery. These pathologies caused by a still hostile society deserve documentation and redress.

5) Restoring reproductive options for post-op M→F TSs. I believe that they can safely bear children with egg donation, IVF, and abdominal implantation. I am looking for a courageous surgeon or gynecologist to join me in this project.

6) Starting an egg and sperm bank for pre-op TSs so they will not lose their genetic options when (and if) they decide to undergo surgery.

7) Following F→M TSs on long term androgen therapy to monitor for the development of liver disease or coronary artery disease.

I am not interested in researching causes of transsexualism, for the roughly 10,000 living post-op TSs in North America, this is a moot point. I will leave this largely academic work for someone else to do. I also am not interested in getting involved with reassignment at this time, as even after 50 years it is still questionable whether transsexuals really obtain an overall, long-term benefit from reassignment. Reassignment is still a troublesome procedure from a medical ethics viewpoint. I doubt the existence of truly informed consent in most cases. No pre-op can really comprehend the lifelong stigmatization that they are entering into when they choose to undergo reassignment. Finally, there have always been plenty of physicians (perhaps too many?) quite ready to start people on hormones or render a psychological diagnosis of transsexualism. I see no community need to add myself to their number. We will also, of course, do gay and lesbian health care including outpatient HIV services, and treat anyone else who walks in the door, as there will never be enough transsexual patients available to fully support the operation of a medical office.

Full Circle of Women

Happy Spring!

Just wanted to let you know that the 1995 Full Circle of Women conference will be held at the Essex Conference Center on the weekend of April 1st and 2nd. (There were several people whose return trips were iffy because of the weather this year, and later in the spring will be less nerve-wracking for me.) The conference will begin on Friday evening March 31 and end Sunday afternoon, so it will be the same length (and the same cost) as this year.

Most of the suggestions for improvement of the conference centered on the workshops, so some changes will be made. The size of workshops will be reduced, and we will use more workshop areas so we can have more of them. The issue of expertise in workshop facilitation will also be addressed.

Wanted:

Ten people to register early so I can reserve the conference center (translation: send me your \$100 now!). If you can afford to do so, I would really appreciate your letting me use your money for this purpose (while reserving a space for yourself at the conference). I realize that this is long-range planning and anything can happen, so if you register now, your money will be refunded in full if you decide before January 31, 1995, that you can't make it.

So, mark your calendar and plan to spend April Fools' Day with a bunch of fools at Essex by the sea (if you're so inclined). I've tried to avoid conflicts with known events of interest to the gender community (as well as Easter, which is April 16)—hope I've succeeded. Also, spread the word, and please let me know of anyone I should add to the brochure mailing list. Thanks!

Have a great year,

Janis

PO Box 52, Ashby, MA 01431
508-386-7737



(Please make checks payable to Janis Walworth)

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

KATE & ALLY (& DIANE & VALERIE & GRETA)

Virtually Yours written and performed by Kate Bornstein; directed by Jayne Wenger; Josie's Cabaret; San Francisco, California; 9-20 March 1994

reviewed by Justin Bond

(Editor's note: This review was originally published in the 10 March 1994 issue of *The San Francisco Bay Times* and is reprinted with permission of the author.)

One-time heterosexual male Scientologist turned transsexual lesbian playwright turned...Kate Bornstein's new solo performance piece, *Virtually Yours*, currently running at Josie's Cabaret, asserts that "a relationship is identity in motion."

Four years ago Bornstein began her journey as a playwright with *Hidden: A Gender*, exploring gender identity from a very personal viewpoint, using her own life experience as a male-to-female transsexual. Juxtaposing her own story with the tale of 19th. century hermaphrodite Herculine Barbin, the playwright asserted, among other things, that sexual preference and gender identity are two very separate concepts. She illustrated quite poignantly the effects of societal oppression on the lives of gender transgressors, while holding up a mirror which reflected the fears and secret forbidden desires of many audience members.

At the time of *Hidden: A Gender*, Kate was most definitely a transsexual lesbian.

In her next piece, *The Opposite Sex Is Neither*, Kate played Maggie, a Goddess-in-training. During the course of the performance, Maggie's body housed the souls of seven characters in various stages of genderhood. She asked the questions, "What is a Man? What is a Woman?" and found that when stripped of their sex-role socialized constructs, most people would be more like Kim Novak with a real bad case of vertigo. It'd probably be fun once you got your balance, but who'd want to go through that, right?

Well, you'd be surprised.

In *Virtually Yours*, Kate plays a woman named Ally Silverman who is -- in manner, gesture and indeed life history -- suspiciously like Kate Bornstein. As we all know "Kate and Ally" was a situation comedy in the mid-'80s, starring Jane Curtin and Susan St. James. The situation, however, is very different.

Ally/Kate is under deadline pressure for her new show, which is scheduled to open to a "fictional" theater in San Francisco called Josie's Cabaret. Ally, a male-to-female transsexual, is having an identity crisis because her lesbian lover is becoming a man named "Daniel." She is forced to ask herself whether she is in love with the person or with that person's genitalia.

"Somewhere inside that man," she muses, "is the woman I fell in love with." As a transsexual herself, Ally is forced to deal with the fact that for the first time in her life the sensible shoe is on the other foot and the lesbian identity she struggled so valiantly for is rapidly disappearing.

In order to take her mind off the two dark shadows looming on the horizon -- opening night and heterosexuality -- Kate/Ally decides to play a new video game titled, "Virtually Yours." Being the ham she is, she decides to live out her worst fears in front of an audience (that would be us). And so the journey begins.

During the course of this interactive game, which features performance artist David Cale as the voice of the computer, Kate/Ally confronts her fears of destiny, history, fantasy, power,

loneliness and madness. The performance is a sheer tour de force. Bornstein the actress is in full control at every moment. She uses six different characters to illustrate her fears with humor, depth and intensity. Her homage to photographer Diane Arbus -- an outsider who would never fit

in -- is engaging, gruff and poetic. Describing the suicide of a young woman who jumped from the roof of her building, she says, "It's not like cartoons where people go splat. The just kind of crumple and stop living."

In order to confront her fear of history, she takes on the scary task of portraying her mother discussing "my son, the lesbian." Fear of fantasy leads her to become a hot bottom engaging in an interactive S/M scene with the audience. In order to explore her fear of power, she becomes Valerie Solanos (one of my personal heroes) of the Society to Cut Up Men or S.C.U.M (a.k.a. the woman who shot Andy Warhol).

With the help of director Jayne Wenger, these characterizations are rich, insightful and moving.

By the time we got to fear of loneliness and madness my megabytes were on overload. The vehicle for loneliness is Greta Garbo. Unlike Arbus and Solanos, both of whom I've read about a great deal, Garbo is already very heavily referenced physically, vocally and as an archetype. While the writing in this segment was fine, instead of listening to what she was saying I found myself trying to figure out how she could have better portrayed the character.

My only other criticism is that, once again, toward the end of the play, long after we had surrendered to the magic of the show, Kate dropped everything to give us a lecture on how we were supposed to feel and think regarding the work she had just presented. This only served to undermine our trust in what we'd already perceived.

However, the current Josie's run of *Virtually Yours* is a "work-in-development," being fine-tuned by Bornstein and director Wenger as it goes along. Someone who saw the show two nights after I did informed me that the (continued on page 44)

"That she manages to convey thoughts and concepts which are so simple and yet so revolutionary in such a fun and entertaining way is nothing less than remarkable. 'Virtually Yours' is going to put Kate Bornstein over the top, so see it now while it's only \$12."

Identity/Crisis

by Mustang Sally

As transsexual lesbians sit and lick the wounds suffered by virtue of our second-class citizenship in women's community, sometimes it's hard for us to remember that we're not the only ones giving lesbian separatists fits (though it can feel we're the most convenient outlet for their frustration). Bisexuality among lesbians, queer identities, leather-S/M dykes -- all the particulars of a modern, diverse lesbian population seem to gnaw at the separatists' sense of security in lesbianism as a pure way of life that will redeem a violently sexist world. As much of the lesbian world passes them by, their efforts to enforce separatist standards on anything labelled "lesbian" or "women's" intensify. The more their ideology is ignored by lesbians at large, the easier our lives as lesbians become -- yet the more critical it remains for us to understand what makes the separatists tick, given how critical to their basic comfort they seem to hold their ability to influence all lesbians' belief in whether we are women.

Ending transsexual exclusion from lesbian community is not an all or nothing struggle. We of all people know that the set of life experiences that make one a lesbian in the separatists' eyes (including a tomboy background and a history of severely squelched ambitions) are but one set among many; if it is important to women who see themselves as fitting that description to band together, then more power to them. We can recognize that it would be inappropriate to try to work our way into those circles. We can also recognize that there may be situations in which it is appropriate to include post-ops only (as in the women's orgy/play party "if you can slam your dick in a drawer and walk away" standard) or pre- or non-ops with a certain amount of full-time experience (as in not using generic women's or lesbian rap group to discuss transition issues). But even if we could make lesbian separatists cognizant of our understanding of these subtleties, they would likely continue to insist on our exclusion; their policy is less about us than about how they view themselves and their lives as lesbians.

In reviewing *Sexual Practice, Textual Theory*, an anthology of lesbian cultural criticism edited by Susan J. Wolfe and separatist guru Julia Penelope, Alice Molloy of *Mama Bears News & Notes* summed up "the battle over women's identities . . . being seriously waged in [the academic world]" with quotes from Elaine Marks ("Lesbian Intersexuality"): "There is no one person in or out of fiction who represents a stronger challenge to the Judeo-Christian tradition, to patriarchy and phallo-centrism, than the lesbian-feminist," and Wolfe and Penelope: "poststructuralist theory and methodology, unless challenged by Lesbian feminist

theory and politics, has as much capacity to destroy Lesbian identity as to construct it through deconstructing 'gender'."

Molloy thus appears to take for granted that the power in lesbianism -- a power that threatens patriarchy -- comes from defining one's self as a lesbian feminist (which implies that this identity has a fixed -- and therefore agreed upon -- meaning).

We know what this identity means to feminist lesbians. But what does it connote to the non-lesbian, especially the non-female? What is the first thing that comes to mind when you try to imagine the average man's picture of a lesbian feminist? Is it a woman of power, someone who poses a threat to his way of life? No -- the average man envisions a frumpy, frustrated granola-crunchy type: an inconsequential figure of ridicule. What threatens men is not the *identity* but the *behavior*. Women banding together (or even acting alone) in any manner that

excludes men or holds them or their behavior up to criticism or ridicule. And their greatest fear is not receiving this behavior from lesbian feminists (from whom they expect it) but receiving it from straight women (whom they expect to be favorably inclined toward them).

What woman most frightens men in 1994? Not the lesbian feminist with her anti-patriarchal rhetoric, but

a woman who believed in heterosexual marriage as her ticket to the American dream: Lorena Bobbit. There was minimal public bashing of lesbian feminists during the Bobbit trials, despite this prime opportunity for teeing off on women perceived as castrating manhaters. There was, however, immense public anxiety over the support Lorena Bobbit received from straight women. The collective national reaction to this affair was a kind of referendum on patriarchy -- yet it had nothing at all to do with lesbians or lesbian identities, and everything to do with the beliefs and actions of an ordinary housewife.

Transsexual lesbians can worry along with Alice Molloy over the attempts of non-lesbian academic critics to cut lesbians out of feminist discourse, and we can admire the academics collected in this anthology for sticking up for lesbians as a self-defining group (with a self-defined culture and a certain amount of shared values). On the other hand, we perhaps can see most clearly how meaningless this discourse over the power of a lesbian identity can be in real-world terms, seeing as how the fine points of lesbian-feminist identity theory can exclude us from womanhood even as we struggle with living our lives as women and as lesbians in a patriarchal society (sometimes while shut out of our local lesbian community support systems).

But all this has become academic in and of itself, given that in the real world, there now exist so many concepts of "lesbian" that the word has escaped the bounds of any proprietary definition. "Lesbian" means one thing to those to whom it is primarily a

"In the early '70s, when I was driven out of my local lesbian community, a woman working to have me bounced from an organization in which I was involved stated publicly . . . that lesbian groups should make maximum use of transsexual women's volunteer efforts and then kick us the hell out."

political definition, another to those who see it as naming a sexually-oriented subculture. It means one thing to women forming families together, but another thing entirely to fascinated outsiders (like Howard Stern, Joe Bob Briggs or Hunter S. Thompson). Indeed, a public image seems to be forming of lesbians as women who can be girl-next-door average while stretching gender boundaries (Note the mainstream stardom of k.d. lang), who can maintain day-to-day presentability while seeming to hold the key to the realm of exotic sexuality -- all while leaving the average heterosexual American just a little more in awe with each new media tidbit. Whatever archetype we end up being in the mass consciousness is likely to be the result of both the lives we live and public fascination with an all-female world that co-exists with theirs much like Avalon: capable of being glimpsed, yet unattainable to the uninitiated.

And that last description is more than just a pretty simile: trying to define what "lesbian" means is futile, because the only true knowledge of lesbianism is experiential. So how much experience does it take to "get it?" The separatists would say from the point of conception, but only if one's attraction to women is compounded by an aversion to things male, which to them includes (paradoxically) femininity (on the grounds that every bit of it -- not just the extremes -- is a male construct for weakening women).

But here is where the separatists have a slight problem: for most woman-loving women, there is unspoken consensus that the threshold of "getting it" is much lower. Women continue to come out as late as mid-life (or later); those who do so are generally acknowledged in the lesbian mainstream as having "gotten it." We have women with 15-20 years of post-op lesbian life; that's certainly enough time to "get it," and many of us have circles of friends who could never imagine us to be transsexual until we tell them. The vast majority of lesbians recognize each other as lesbians regardless of whether they match the separatist definition; as a result, the separatists are taking themselves out of the loop even as they see themselves as the center from which the lesbian community is eroding away.

In another *Mama Bears* review, this of *Boston Marriages*, a book on contemporary non-sexual female coupling that echoes the close companionship of Victorian women (especially the educated upper middle class), Alice Molloy strikes a decidedly defensive note, complaining that these relationships are being devalued as lesbian relationships because of their lack of sexual expression. Her tone underscores how important it is to her to have such women's community stalwarts' lesbian *identity* acknowledged, even in the absence of woman-to-woman passion. Ironically, whoever it is who is slighting their lesbian credentials might not care whether these women are sexual or not were the complainants not so quick to pass judgment on other women's lesbianism on strictly theoretical, political terms.

"The principle that women have a right to choose what access (if any) men may have to our lives and persons is both beautiful and liberating. It is a shame some women have made a fundamentalist religion out of this principle."

Most of us are familiar with the separatist definition of lesbian, one version of which (updated for 1994) goes like this: "a female-born female who wants lover relationships with females only and is *not sexual at all* or sexually attracted to men and is voluntarily sexual with females only" (emphasis added). This writer went on to state, "In a female-hating world where women are required to be sexual with men, being a lesbian by this definition is political resistance." I realize I'm belaboring a twenty-year-old point by noting the emphasis on being unavailable to or resisting the sexual attention of men. The freedom of not having to bother with involvement with men is certainly an attractive feature to many women, even those who may choose a certain amount of that involvement from time to time. What I would like to underscore is that to a certain group of women, this non-involvement (or resistance to involvement) is

what being a lesbian is all about, and that an identity based on that orientation -- to them, the only real lesbian identity -- is a precious thing, for some perhaps their only source of self-esteem and sense of being able to have some effect on their environment.

Some of these women, then, literally cannot include us as "lesbians," because doing so would shatter their concept of "lesbian" as someone who meets some very straight-forward criteria as a willful resister of a dangerous and frightening world order. Doing so would shatter their sense that this identity has power in the world, no matter how irrelevant it may be in actuality, no matter how meaningless an indicator it may be of romantic and/or sexual attraction to another woman -- or of support for women outside an elite group with daunting and highly judgmental qualifications. Our inclusion in women's and lesbian space, though no big deal in the greater scheme of things, precipitates an unavoidable crisis of meaning for them. While we readily see the flaws in the logic of their opposition -- and feel the purely emotional distaste for the very notion of us -- we would do well to recognize the nature of their fear of us, so we can avoid pushing the hot buttons that could trigger desperate, irrational actions against us.

Make no mistake: the separatists know the days when they defined lesbianism -- and could enforce that definition in lesbian communities -- is passing away. To them, that means lesbianism is in danger of disappearing. That's what happens when you value an identity -- a *theory* -- over experience. Listen to their words: Sarah Dreher, speaking at the 1993 Northampton, Massachusetts lesbian liberation rally about "the word Lesbian los[ing] its power and meaning" in a speech entitled "Woman-Born-Woman-Loving Woman -- A Real Identity." Elana Dykewoman saying bisexual and transsexual inclusion is "meant to divide and destroy us, to drive us literally out of our minds." How can lesbianism both be disappearing and making the covers of national magazines? Is it truly losing its political force, or are more women in the 90s better able to live reasonably secure lesbian lives without circling the wagons with the separatists?

One perception lesbian separatists both have and articulate is that they have created an entire culture where women can be together, and letting everyone in who wants to be in would destroy it. Well, it's more than the blah-blah-blah-only-blah-blah crowd who cherish women's space and the "visible, physical affirmation that we value ourselves and the connections and interactions we have with other women" (Sarah Dreher again), who "need to be with each other in a place where we can be free from harassment and not be influenced by the presence of men." And in actuality, it's very often the more inclusive groups of women (such as San Francisco's Whiptail Lizard Lounge Collective) who invest the time, energy and resources in creating that space.

It is a separatist myth that they create lesbian space only to have it taken over; too often, other women -- including transsexual women, including bisexual women, including leatherwomen -- create that space, only to see the separatists come along and claim to own it because it is for "women" or "lesbians." In the early 70s, when I was driven out of my local lesbian community, a woman working to have me bounced from an organization in which I was involved stated publicly -- in print, in a publication mailed to the membership -- that lesbian groups should make maximum use of transsexual women's volunteer efforts and then kick us the hell out. And yet, many of us would be happy to respect their space and leave them alone if

only they would stop preaching down to the rest of us.

While it feels very, very good to be able to stand up to the separatists, no longer being swatted away like gnats, it saddens me to think of two groups of lesbians seemingly arrayed in opposition to each other. They are not the enemy; they are our lesbian sisters (even if they won't return the acknowledgement). They are, however, caught in a trap of their own devising, having painted themselves into an ideological corner. There are two important reasons to understand what makes them feel about us the way they do. The first is that as feminists, we owe it to other feminists to consider their point of view instead of rejecting it out of hand. The second is purely tactical: stereotyping an opponent can be fatal.

The principle that women have a right to choose what access (if any) men may have to our lives and persons is both beautiful and liberating. It is a shame some women have made a fundamentalist religion out of this principle. We do need to protect ourselves from them and affirm our womanhood and lesbianism in the face of their transphobia; may we always do so in a way that reflects positively on us as women and as feminists. *Mustang Sally, who recently celebrated her nineteenth anniversary, is kind of pissed that this essay will probably be taken just as a transsexual advocacy piece and not as part of the body of lesbian feminist theory and discourse.*

TV/TS *Tapestry* Journal

for all persons interested in
Crossdressing & Transsexualism

150+ pages of informational articles by peers and professionals; and updated listings on conventions, hotlines, counseling groups, Medical and Psychological referrals, and other helping professionals.

All for \$12.00 an issue. Save \$\$ with a subscription of *four issues for \$40.00* (\$55.00 1st class), then you can submit a personal listing of your own, as well as take advantage of the *TV/TS Tapestry Journal* mail-forwarding service. Call or write for more information !

Published by

THE INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR GENDER EDUCATION

P.O. BOX 367

Wayland, MA 01778-0369

(617) 894-8340 FAX 899-5703

My SUMMER VACATION

by Renee Chinquapin

For years I wanted only to be done with the messiness of having once been a man. I went to great lengths to walk, talk and think in ways appropriate to my new role, so as to minimize my own and others' discomfort. Secretly I believed that a day would come when I would have arrived, refurbished like Eliza Doolittle, accepted by others, with ambiguity and androgyny safely behind me. This is a story of what awaited me once I "arrived."

Each summer solstice since 1979 two-hundred mostly white, middle-class San Francisco Bay Area women come together in a mountain retreat for a week of Goddess-oriented ritual, meditation, dreamwork, song and dance. Women come to celebrate, to take their soul work seriously, to network, to play, to be still. This Women's Alliance Camp epitomized the vaguely Pagan, feminist spirituality I most resonate with.

I spoke with the director months in advance to make sure that I would be welcome, despite having lived most of my life in the male role. After consulting with her Board of Directors, and warning me that some women might need some time to adjust to me, she told me I was nonetheless welcome, especially as this year's them was to be diversity. Alone, with no idea of what to expect, I arrived at what would prove to be one of the greatest challenges of my life.

The very first ritual involved dividing into two lines enabling us to make ten seconds of eye contact with the other hundred women, one at a time. This brought up all my self-doubt and projected worry as to what others would think of me. One woman whispered to me that she liked transsexuals, but instead of reassuring me, as she'd no doubt intended, I suddenly felt like I was wearing a sandwichboard proclaiming my oddness. No one smiled at me, I sensed that I was making women uncomfortable.

We were assigned to small "home circles," and encouraged to introduce ourselves by describing our greatest diversity, i.e., by sharing whatever caused us the most shame. When I did not bite this loaded bullet, and chose not to immediately open Pandora's gender box, the group leader threatened to out me at our next meeting.

So, when the bisexual women stood up and spoke about their oppression in front of the whole assembled camp -- as had in turn the Jewish, lesbian, disabled and African-American women -- I took the microphone and explained to the entire camp how grateful I felt for the support that I, as a transsexual woman, had received from Bay Area bisexual women.

Now the cat was totally out of the bag. Back in my home circle women were, to put it mildly, freaking out that a "man" had snuck into what they'd assumed would be a space safe enough to talk about their childhood Satanic abuse and family incest issues.

"Gradually the tide turned. Women began to seek me out and to thank me for forcing them to deal with their ignorance and insensitivity, or to welcome me into wonderful womanhood."

From this point on the group leader referred to me as "he," clearly defining me as the "other," whose every gesture and facial expression came under public scrutiny and discussion.

Straight women would come up to me and confide how weird they felt around all those "dykes," and how relieved they were at the presence of what seemed to them a sweet if eccentric gay man. Lesbian separatists resented my dilution of their definition of sisterhood, my prying open their rigid but "safe" boundaries excluding the male enemy. Projections flew at me fast and furious, reinforcing my own unfortunate sense of myself as a second-class, somehow less-than-authentic woman, since I hadn't been socialized as a girl, or experienced men as potential rapists, ever had a monthly cycle, etc.

But what must frustrated me was the silence of what I was convinced was another transsexual woman there who avoided me like the plague, and enjoyed wholehearted acceptance by everyone.

I chose not to reach out to her; maybe I was mistaken about her. Even if not, it was her right to handle the situation as she felt best for herself.

I began as best I could to respond to the suspicion and decidedly unspiritual knee-jerk mistrust and negativity showering down on me. I cried and

raged in my home circle, which one woman chose to leave rather than share with me. I confronted the leader every time she called me "he." I did a dance improvisation one evening in front of the whole camp to express my hurt and isolation. I gratefully swam and sang with some women who just enjoyed me for who I was, avoiding the ones who glowered at me. I led a dream workshop, played guitar every chance I got, and continued to participate in a daily singing workshop, even though the leader quite openly treated me like a case of the mumps she knew she'd somehow, if resentfully, have to deal with.

Gradually the tide turned. Women began to seek me out and to thank me for forcing them to deal with their ignorance and insensitivity, or to welcome me into wonderful womanhood. My little drama was overshadowed by the explosion of racial tensions a diversity workshop ignited. For most of the women there, and myself as well, mine became just another variant on the larger theme of diversity. It grew clear that what we all actually had in common was each woman's own particular shame: about having cancer or AIDS, being overweight, co-dependent, gay, black, Jewish, working class, etc. Each woman had her own pain, her own struggle, her own need for non-judgmental acceptance. All of us doubted ourselves, we all longed to be loved unconditionally.

At Women's Alliance Camp I experienced the impossibility of ever putting gender "behind me," any more than I can put growing up a white, middle-class, Jewish American in the 1950s behind me. What I have to be proud (*continued on page 50*)

WHAT SEX ARE YOU?

by Christine Beatty

I wish to preface this article by saying that I am not trying to anger anybody on purpose, however I know that some people will get very irate about the concepts I raise in this essay. Many of us have a significant investment in our belief systems and questioning those beliefs is not something we will do without a lot of kicking and screaming. It is not my intention to dictate anybody's thoughts: I merely want to open a few minds to some possibilities. Unfortunately this sometimes requires a crowbar and maybe some plastique.

This is *not* an easy subject to write about. On the surface, to those who have never really considered these issues, gender is a cut and dried topic. You are what you were born and that's all there is to it. Then there's those of us who know it is possible to change one's sex and who theoretically believe in more than two genders, but who still become mired in the binary gender system when trying to figure out a label for themselves. And there's a few of us, myself included I might unmodestly add, who maintain that no matter what surgery we get or how many hormones we take, we can never be women like (and I know I'll catch hell for this) *born-women*.

In some ways we can never be women. We will always be different. Please note I did *not* say "we will always be men" which I believe an important distinction. Now that your pulse is racing and I have your attention (assuming you're not already composing your rebuttal letter before you even finish this article) I would like to explain that.

Firstly, I wish we could all read *Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach* by Kessler and McKenna (University of Chicago Press, 1978). This book is the finest treatise on gender I have ever read because it approaches the subject with a minimum of assumptions and with no axes to grind. It is not overwhelmingly negative to transsexualism like Raymond's *The Transsexual Empire* nor does it go to the other extreme of Kim Stuart's *The Uninvited Dilemma*. Even *In Search of Eve* by Anne Bolin is tainted by the author's subjective positive bias toward transsexuals. Don't get me wrong. I'm overjoyed when people like us, but I believe it undermines their credibility when they are professionals who write about us with obvious favoritism. And that's how even Bolin comes across to me. Worst of all, most of these books fall into the ancient patriarchal binary gender trap: only two genders exist.

Not so with Kessler and McKenna's book. It is a supremely detailed discussion of the subject that makes no presumptions on its own. It methodically examines many facets of gender

including the various methods of categorizing gender, cross-cultural perspectives on gender, and social gender constructs. Kate Bornstein suggested this book to me, and I wholeheartedly endorse it to you. It's great stuff, a real eye-opener that will hopefully also open your mind.

An open mind is of crucial importance when discussing gender. We don't want to fall into the same traps as do those who steadfastly maintain that MTFs are men and will always be men. Closemindedness is never a virtue, so let's not practice it, okay? In that spirit, I'd ask you to set aside your preconceived notions, take a few deep breaths, maybe pop a few Thorazines if that's what it takes to read on.

"Kate Bornstein . . . once told me over dinner . . .: 'I still have a penis. It's just turned inside out.' I think I had a mouth full of chips and salsa at the time, and only the spirit of Emily Post kept me from spewing the well-masticated wad all over the table."

I think the evolution of my gender identity consciousness might help explain the point of reference from which I write this article. I have no memory of "wanting to be a girl" at age five or so. Many

transsexuals claim such memories, although I wonder just how many of us have selectively interpreted our childhood recollections because "true" transsexuals are *supposed* to have such memories. Such memories "legitimize" us.

Anyway, I didn't have any consciousness desire to be female; all I knew was that I didn't fit in. This persisted through my teenage years. The only indicators I had of a buried gender issue was a propensity to run from fights, a dislike of most sports, a hatred of showering in front of the "other" boys after Physical Education and a love of my own long hair. Not exactly compelling evidence, but it was all I had when trying to validate myself as a "true" transsexual. As a teenager, I thought I was different. I had no idea of what a transsexual was.

Then, at nineteen, I started cross-dressing fetishistically with *tremendous* guilt attached. Got married at twenty-six to "cure" that. Started reading about gender issues when I found that the only thing marriage did was to put a greater selection of female clothing at my disposal. Upon reading about gender issues and noting the number of parallels between myself and the transsexuals in the books, I began to wonder if I wasn't a "woman trapped in a man's body." Within a year I left my wife and moved to the Tenderloin of San Francisco. I started hormones and electrolysis, and became "Crystal" twenty-four hours a day. Got involved in heavy drugs and prostitution. Went back to trying to be a man for two years and was miserable. Got clean and sober and back on hormones at age thirty. Have been living as a woman ever since. Real talk show stuff, huh?

Anyway, the point is that I went from having a self-concept as a male, then a woman, then a man, and finally back to a woman. On this last leg of the journey, I was something I had never been: totally drug and alcohol free. I was now able to think clearly about my gender issues and all of their implications. I

started reading voraciously on the topic. And I began to question some of my rock-solid beliefs about gender. Then I saw Kate Bornstein's *Hidden: A Gender* and befriended this highly talented member of our community who helped me put the last piece of the puzzle into place: I wanted to identify as a "real" woman so strongly because *belonging* is so important to me as it is to most people.

It took a few years after that to become comfortable with the idea of being neither male nor female AND both male and female. I'd read some great stuff about spiritual androgyny but I only viewed it theoretically until then. Really, it's only been a year since I have fully realized the benefit of being a "third" gender: neither and both. Being clocked as a transsexual is no long a traumatic event, largely due to my new self-identification. I no longer feel like a freak when other people notice that I'm a transsexual. And I can do as I truly feel like, rather than checking my behavior against a stereotyped gender checklist. I'm talking *freedom* here, folks!

Okay, that's great. You're free. So what sex are you?

Good question.

First of all, let's establish a frame of reference on terminology. Many people use "sex" and "gender" interchangeably, including some authors who write on transgender topics. However, most writers use "gender" to refer to "psychological" and "social" sex, and they say "sex" when referring to biological characteristics.

Sure, fine. Now let's back up a little -- oh, say thirty years. When Harry Benjamin wrote *The Transsexual Phenomenon* in 1963, he set down principles that are still applicable today. In Benjamin's heyday, "gender" wasn't the trendy P.C. term it is today; he used "psychological sex" to denote one's self-identification and "social sex" to classify how others attributed somebody's sex. So to simplify this conversation, I will just use "sex" in all of its manifestations to denote "gender."

Fair enough. So now we have one problem: how do we know what someone's sex is? And guess what, boys and girls...It's a *very* complex question. After all, sex can be classified by chromosomes, genitalia, hormones, psychology, social attribution, legal status and history. So which one (or which ones) is the RIGHT one? What *truly* defines one's sex?

I told you it was a complex question.

A post-op transsexual whose opinion I respect once said that she recognized a multitude of genders, but only two sexes (three, counting hermaphroditism). I wish I'd asked her how she classified them, because that is the crux of the matter.

Well, I know I'm just guessing here, but I'd probably be in the ballpark if I said she would have classified the sexes by genitalia. And I wouldn't be too far off base if I observed that the vast majority of the transgender community also classifies sex the same way. After all, why else is "the surgery" so important to us? Of course, taking that point of view automatically labels all

pre-operative MTF transsexuals as *men* until they obtain SRS. (Shudder.)

Could it be that the gender community is caught in the same binary gender trap as the rest of patriarchal society? (Massive shudder.) Is it possible that most post-op transsexuals consider themselves more female than their pre-op sisters? (Gasp!) Is there an easy answer to this philosophical quandary?

Wait. It gets worse.

Kate Bornstein, who is post-operative, once told me over dinner at Chevy's: "I still have a penis. It's just turned inside out." I think I had a mouth full of chips and salsa at the time, and only the spirit of Emily Post kept me from spewing the well-masticated wad all over the table. What a radical thought! What a gutsy thing to say! Talk about *brutal honesty*! And what a depressing thought for any post-op who steadfastly believes she now has a real vagina: what she has now is the *appearance* of a birth-given vagina.

Of course, now this gets back to my infamous "Rolex" analogy. If you have a watch and it looks like a Rolex and everyone believes it is one -- even though it wasn't manufactured by Rolex -- well, isn't that the same as having the real thing?

Yes and no.

It is tempting to wax metaphysical/philosophical and quote Werner Erhard who said several things that apply in this case, but instead

let's cut to the chase and get it out on the table. A vagina formed *in utero* by the action of hormones is not the same as a vagina fashioned out of a penis that has been cored, sutured, and turned inside out like a glove. (The same holds true for vaginal canals formed by bowel sections.) So if we're going to classify sex by genitalia, let's keep that fact in mind.

Am I suggesting that transsexuals should not get genital surgery? Absolutely not! I believe that people should do whatever makes them comfortable with themselves as long as nobody gets hurt. There is nothing wrong with wanting, as Margaret O'Hartigan said, "to experience genital sexual pleasure without a prick getting in the way."

What I am suggesting is that there is a lot of elitism in our community regarding SRS, and there is an unspoken *pressure* to want surgery and to obtain it. People should make decisions based on their own needs and not based on peer expectations. This is especially true of weighty, irrevocable decisions such as having your genitals altered. I firmly maintain that underlying the elitism and expectations regarding SRS are the beliefs that only two genders exist and that gender is determined by genitalia. And if you insist on maintaining that sex is different from gender, please tell me how you classify them, and more importantly, tell me which box (M or F) I should check the next time I fill out a government form.



Christine Beatty

photo by David Pincus

LESBIANS WHO DATE TRANSSEXUALS

by Christine Beatty

Editor's note: This article was originally published in the Summer 1992 issue of Lesbian Contradiction and is reprinted with permission of the author.

I know what to expect when I walk into a lesbian bar and order a drink. As I sit there nursing my glass of fuzzy-water, I will probably hear the buzz of at least one conversation turning to me. I am a male-to-female transsexual. And if that isn't enough, I identify as a lesbian.

I am used to the varied reception from the lesbian community, and I am becoming at peace with it. Some of my sisters treat me as just that -- a sister. Others react with neutrality or curiosity. And some of my sisters just hate my guts. They aren't too thrilled with the gay women who accept me, either. Goddess help the lesbian hapless enough to be seen with me in public.

The women who react negatively to me, who don't accept me as any kind of woman, can be very stubborn in their thinking. It doesn't even matter to them whether or not I've had sex-change surgery. "Once a prick, always a prick" was how one lesbian separatist expressed her sentiment to me. Even though fifteen percent of genetic women are born infertile and/or have never had a period, the fact that I don't bleed monthly and can't bear children is reason enough in their eyes to exclude me from the community. Some of these women hate men so much they consider anyone born with a penis -- whether they wanted it or not -- to be "the enemy." And some of them are so vocal that they sway other members of the gay women's community. Political Correctness is still a formidable weapon which sometimes indiscriminately squashes human beings whose wants and needs are not politically motivated.

I have mostly come to accept all of this stuff. As a transsexual lesbian I have to be who I am, and I insist on taking my place in the lesbian community no matter who tries to reject me. I thank Goddess for my sisters who make me feel a part of the community. They know I have no choice of what I was born or how I feel, and they are open-minded enough to look past my chromosomes to the innate female energy that put me on this incredibly painful, difficult and treacherous path. I respect the strength of their conviction that allows them to welcome me in spite of how the less open-minded women mutter under their breaths.

All these dynamics tear me in several directions when I think of the lesbian I am currently dating. We haven't tied the knot and aren't planning on it. We date once or twice a week and have gone to bed a couple of times. No really big deal -- at least not to us. Yet I know what some of the other gay women must be saying about her.

They are calling her "bisexual" which isn't true. They are probably also saying very nasty things about her, just because she isn't prejudiced and closed-minded about me. I have so much gratitude for how she is able to relate to me as another woman. I am torn between my awe at her courage to be seen with me, and my fear of how she may be permanently ostracized by some women. Even the lesbians who aren't very PC may shy away from her, afraid of "guilt" by association or being torn apart by the mob mentality. They know that all of these women who have nothing better to do than gossip about her will tear them apart too.

This experience of being in a dating relationship with her has given me a lot of insight into the difficulties that an interracial couple must face. Prejudice, discrimination, fear and hatred are among the greatest enemies we face. Those who might be allies are afraid to face those enemies with us. They believe it is better for them to pretend they don't see us than to take a stand by us.

The gay community, especially the gay women's community, is always in danger of becoming ineffectual because of infighting. It never ceases to amaze me how one minority can

always find an even smaller minority within itself to dump on. Yet while we are spending our precious energy trying to find reasons to go off into our little cliques and hate each other, mainstream society -- especially the conservative elements -- are finding new ways to turn the clock back to the dark ages for *all of us*. Instead of

celebrating each other's sisterhood and finding solidarity, we bitterly complain about what a wonderful women's community we'd have if it weren't for . . . you fill in the blank.

In the case of my lesbian date and myself, the "blank" seems to be those awful "men in dresses" with their penises cut off (or soon to be cut off) and those traitorous bitches who pretend to be lesbians while they fuck those "former" men. It seems to me we have a Nazi-like concern for purity here. My XY chromosomes and infertility earns me the badge of the enemy no matter what I have in my heart, mind or panties. And my girlfriend is now a "bisexual" because she's fucked me a few times. This kind of fanaticism can be carried to even further extremes. When will it be decided that any female who is infertile is not a woman? What about those rare cases of women who are born with female genitalia but have XY chromosomes? When will we carry this extreme to sexual orientation? What if a woman has *ever* had heterosexual sex, does that make her a bisexual? How many exclusively lesbian encounters must she have before she is *really* a lesbian? And on and on . . .

I would love to see some dialogue, some attempt to reach an understanding of these issues within our community. One of the "typical" female traits that so attracts to femininity is compassion. I wish my sisters who so hate or fear me could begin to see my dilemma for what it (*continued on page 44*)

"As a transsexual lesbian I have to be who I am, and I insist on taking my place in the lesbian community no matter who tries to reject me."

A Rose

Is a Rose:

The Nomenclature of Sex and Oppression

by Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan

(Editor's note: The following article is a revised and condensed version of a four part series that was originally published in the 6-9 October 1980 editions of the Daily Minnesotan and is reprinted with permission of the author)

The old adage "... names can never harm me" is wrong: names deceive; names can kill; names destroy through use, abuse or through not being used. Naming is power. When I tell you who I am, I give you the power to know me. When someone else tells you who I am -- when someone else names me -- they have usurped my power.

This explains the prevalence of stereotypes in our patriarchal society. The more people one can define, the more power one has. Yet to name requires expending a certain amount of energy. Reduce complex personality to a simple physical characteristic and the process is streamlined. The stereotype is a labor-saving device similar to the screw. Stereotyping frees energy for use elsewhere -- energy that would otherwise be used to maintain oppression.

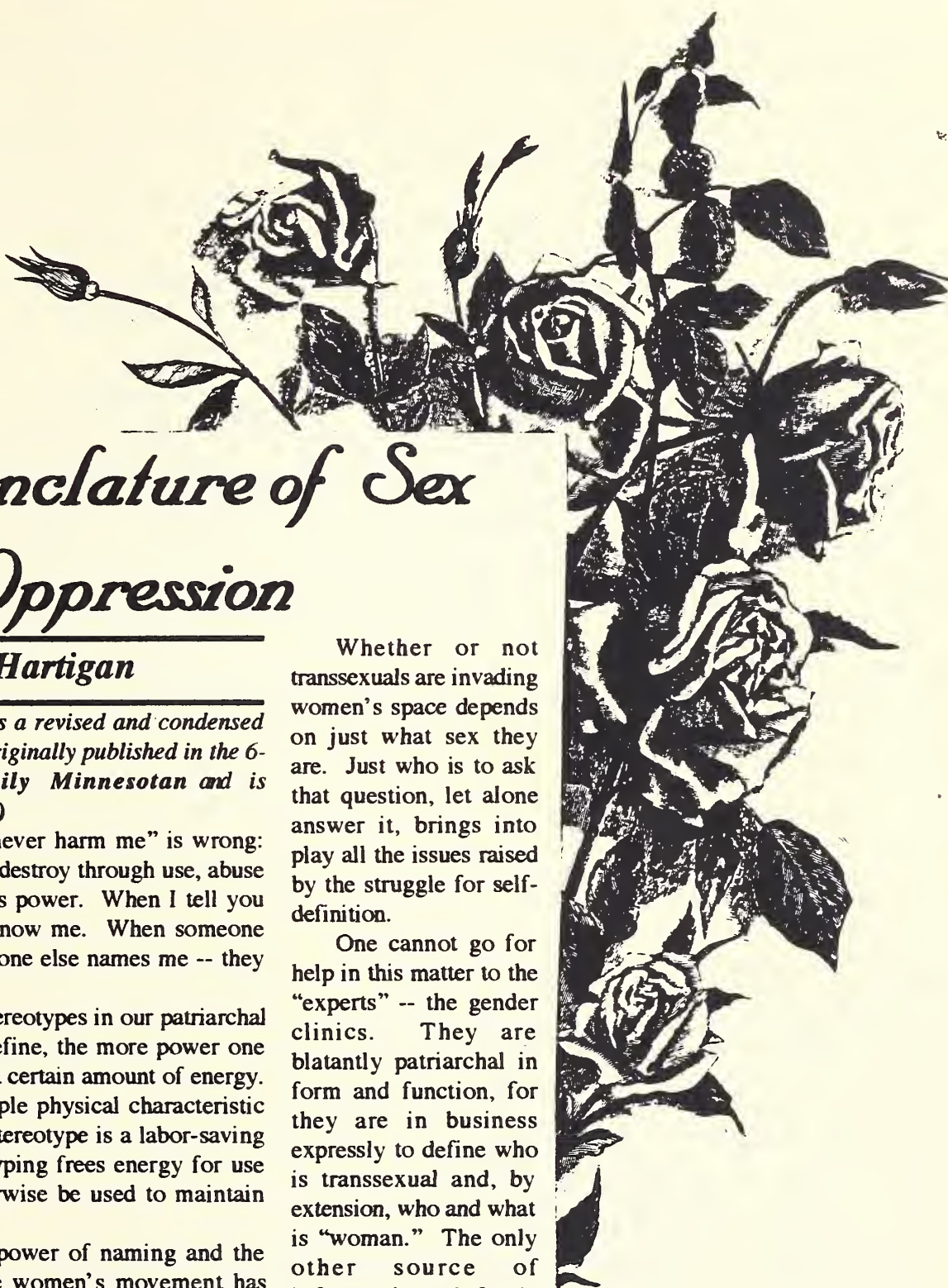
It is for these two reasons, the power of naming and the efficiency of the stereotype, that the women's movement has focused on sexual stereotyping and the need for women to define themselves. The self-defined woman regains some of her own power at the expense of the patriarchy. For women to completely regain the power to say who they are would mean the end of the patriarchy's hold over them.

Perhaps it is not so strange, then, that a number of women see transsexualism as a reactionary ploy on the part of the patriarchy. The male-dominated sex-reassignment clinics are viewed with mistrust as simply another attempt by men to define what women are, while the transsexuals themselves are suspected of infiltrating for fifth column purposes.

Whether or not transsexuals are invading women's space depends on just what sex they are. Just who is to ask that question, let alone answer it, brings into play all the issues raised by the struggle for self-definition.

One cannot go for help in this matter to the "experts" -- the gender clinics. They are blatantly patriarchal in form and function, for they are in business expressly to define who is transsexual and, by extension, who and what is "woman." The only other source of information left is transsexuals. Yet to seek input from them is to have seemingly already decided that transsexuals are women, for how else could they be included in the self-delineation of women?

This is the argument put forth by some feminists, put forth to support the exclusion of transsexuals from the women's community. These women argue that one has only the claim of femininity by transsexuals to surmount incontrovertible physical evidence of maleness. The fact that women don't have to prove they are female in the first place is used to caution against the acceptance of transsexuals.



I no longer rail against this stance as I once did. Two years ago when I was singled out as being male in a women's coffeehouse I seethed at the injustice of it all. Now I simply avoid all "women-only" events. The struggle of women to define themselves doesn't need to be muddied by my insistence that I am a woman. Likewise, I expect my struggle for self-definition to be honored. Do not insist that I am a man.

The truth must be faced. I am part of the patriarchy. So are you. So is everyone else. No one raised within patriarchy can ever be sure it has ceased to influence their thoughts and actions. For that reason am I concerned with the two-fold stereotyping of women.

You see, the patriarchy stereotypes women. But women also stereotype, becoming agents of the patriarchy. If transsexuals really are men, then to treat them as such is an act of resistance on the part of women. If transsexuals are women, or another possibility, simply not men, then to insist otherwise is to strengthen the patriarchy by requiring everyone to conform to established sex roles.

Our definitions of "man" and "woman" are those give us by the present society. The idea that transsexuals are simply members of one sex wishing to become another, is again, a product of patriarchal thinking, as is the argument that one can be only male or female. If the boundaries of sex roles can be expanded, why not the actual number of sexes?

In fact there are other sexes. Anyone who has been to a carnival midway sees hermaphrodites and bearded ladies and comes away with his or her stereotypes reinforced. The other sexes are called freaks. It is people like me who are pitied or laughed at in the midway.

The ancient Greeks killed at birth babies of ambiguous sex. The Chinese abort female fetuses simply because they are female. At the time the Catholic Church was debating whether women had souls or not it was forbidding the baptism of other-sexed "monstrosities" because they were considered the offspring of *succubi* and *incubi*. Within my own mother's lifetime, Freud taught that women see themselves as "deformed" males. The message is clear and it says: "not quite human."

It is a fine distinction but one which must not be overlooked if a real understanding of the patriarchy is to be reached. Women are not oppressed because they are women *but because they aren't men*. That is the same reason I am oppressed. In the patriarchy, to be any sex but male is to be subhuman.

The patriarchy has done its best to deny the legitimacy of every sex outside its own. Its success has been commensurate with the number of people it found to oppress. Hermaphrodites and sex-changelings have never been common and so long ago passed into myth, although not out of existence. Only with women has it been impossible to erase all evidence of their reality.

Since the mid-1970s, the feminist movement has grown increasingly critical of sex-changelings. Perhaps it is not so strange that feminism should be bent to the purpose of the patriarchy. Divide and conquer has long been as useful a tool for the patriarchy as has stereotyping.

Feminist theorists such as Mary Day and Janice Raymond have belabored the obvious point that transsexuals aren't female. They conclude we must be men because they've been taught there are only two sexes.

By accepting the stereotype that sex is male or female, women continue the basic sexist lie of conformity and deny that those of other sexes are oppressed. In attempting to force the sex-

changeling into a foreign role, that of male, those women do more than support the patriarchy at their own expense. They become another kind of man for us.

In addition to stereotyping and naming, a favorite weapon of the patriarchy is rape, the violent denial of an individual's integrity. Some feminists claim the ultimate rapists

are changelings, reasoning that while ordinary males are only capable of forcing themselves upon women's bodies and minds, transsexuals are actually attempting to usurp the form, identity and spirit of women. Unfortunately for this feminist argument, changelings are neither damaged males nor pseudo-females; we are human beings to whose experience neither men nor women are privy. Our lives encompass a spirituality, a mental and emotional make-up so misunderstood and distorted by outsiders that even the sexual characteristics unique to us are viewed and interpreted in terms of male and female. It is bad enough that those characteristics shared with men and/or women are defined in male and/or female terms but to then insist we limit ourselves to one or another set of traits is to ignore that trait which is ours alone: the ability to *change* sexual characteristics. My status as changeling is based on my ability to traverse the sexual spectrum. For that reason one can no more charge me with invading women's space than accuse caterpillars of raping birds by becoming butterflies. Rather, it is those individuals who would claim certain sexual characteristics as the prerogative of one sex or the other who oppress, much as the patriarchy oppresses by assigning universal emotions to the domain of masculine or feminine.

The oppression of sex-changelings, hermaphrodites and other minority sexes is denied through the myth that these people do not constitute true sexes, and those individuals who object to such denigration of their lives are denied even the legitimacy of being shunted into an ill-fitting category labelled "male" or "female." Those who rebel against mistreatment are labelled "inauthentic."

Inauthenticity or inadequacy is one of the cardinal charges levied against members of oppressed sexes who threaten rebellion. Women are trained to constantly prove their loyalty to the patriarchy by as strict as possible adherence to the patriarchal definition of "woman," primarily through proving their usefulness

"Our actions, our mere existence, furthers the liberation of women, yet just as Polish underground members betrayed Jews to the Nazis during World War II, some feminists do not hesitate to resort to the patriarchy in their efforts to eradicate us."

to men. The methods of meting out punishment are many but none so threatening as revocation of legal status. Sex-reassignment clinics insist candidates for surgery prove themselves as "women" much as society at large demands women do likewise. In the case of women the price for failure is society's denial of female status through revocation of the slight protection accorded women; transsexuals are denied their very sex.

In 1976 I was told by Norman Fisk of Stanford University's Gender Dysphoria Program that my self-identity as a transsexual was a portent of poor adjustment should I receive surgery. Surgery was reserved for the individual with a strong sense of being a woman, he added. I was instructed to dissociate myself from other transsexuals if I wished to qualify for future reconsideration.

The political ramifications of this sort of stance should be obvious. Since the patriarchy measures femaleness in terms of devotion to men, self-definition outside patriarchal guidelines is an indication that the individual places more value upon the self or the oppressed group than for the patriarchy. Fisk may have been unaware he was punishing me for my lack of loyalty to the dominant authority; the effect of his attitude, however, was just as lethal: I was refused surgery at that institution, left to exist as best I could outside the legal limits of the patriarchy. In addition, such a policy virtually guaranteed that changelings would remain politically powerless, for it raised to a terribly high price the cost of building any sense of community.

Feminists who object to sex-reassignment are correct in their assessment that it can be used to reinforce the patriarchy. Yet it is not the surgery per se that is at fault but a system that bestows surgery as the reward for conformity and forces transsexuals to hide beneath the patina of femininity.

It is too easy to criticize those in rebellion, especially those in open rebellion. Feminists indulge the luxury of fighting for a redistribution of political power while the other-sexed struggle to simply survive -- and all too often that struggle is in vain. Our actions, our mere existence, furthers the liberation of women, yet just as Polish underground members betrayed Jews to the Nazis during World War II, some feminists do not hesitate to resort to the patriarchy in their efforts to eradicate us. "I contend that the problem of transsexualism would best be served by morally mandating it out of existence," wrote Janice Raymond in *The Transsexual Empire*.

The oppressed victimize in the same manner they themselves are oppressed, reconciling their own behavior by ascribing common traits to both their victims and their own oppressors. Patriarchal dogma, witness Freud, has held that women are deformed and therefore inadequate as human beings. Feminist theologian May Daly, too, sees us as deformed males. "Like the eunuchs of all periods of history, they gain access to women's private space and secret meetings, appearing innocuous because of their castration." Her is an example of how the trivialization of oppression engenders further abuse. Relegating changelings to the status of "eunuch," Daly stigmatizes us as mutilated while simultaneously reinforcing the patriarchal lie that but two sexes exist.

The patriarchal propensity to stereotype, restrict and exclude has been responsible for the niggardly treatment of changelings by feminists. Despite their oppression, women have been more fortunate than we -- we are fewer and less has been left us. As of now even the name "changeling" is as ephemeral as our existence, for it is but a spontaneous replacement for medical terminology.

One hopes that it conveys a sense of magic, for magic is needed if we are to survive. If language mirrors society then without a name we cannot be seen. Those individuals -- male or female -- who deny us the right to define ourselves, would deny us the very right to exist.

Women who object to changelings appropriating the labels "women," "female" and "lesbian" need to realize that we do so as a necessary step in learning who we are. The patriarchy has deprived us of an integral part of our vocabulary along with most of our past. The only way to regain our power is through borrowing names that give us enough breathing space to coin new terms to replace those taken from us. If one chooses to interpret our struggle against unspeakable oppression as but another definition of women from the outside one denies us a way station on the journey back from oblivion and has chosen to join the ranks of our oppressors. Even more, by oppressing us, women ultimately oppress themselves; liberation is possible only if it frees everyone -- women, changelings, hermaphrodites and others. It is possible only through the awareness of one for the other, respect for the individual, self, and a genuine desire on the part of us all to communicate honestly.

The beginning or end of freedom lies in the power to name ourselves -- or others.

* * *

The preceding piece was part of a four-part series of mine which appeared in the autumn of 1980 in the *Daily Minnesotan*. I've taken the liberty of smoothing some of the most awkward phrases and deleted the background material on transsexualism I included at that time as necessary for the straight, mainstream readership. Otherwise I've pretty much left the piece alone, even when it meant retaining sentiments or positions since rethought. Recently I've learned from intersexed individuals that they much prefer that term to "hermaphrodite;" while I still like the term "changeling" my research the past few years on our historical antecedents, the *Gallae*, has made it plain to me that we have not been so robbed of our past that we have to re-invent everything including our names.

It is sobering to realize that "The Nomenclature of Sex and Oppression" is nearly as pertinent today as it was when it first appeared in print nearly fourteen years ago. While "gender" has become a hot topic in the gay and lesbian media, there is still far too little tolerance for changelings in and lesbian organizations, and no concern whatsoever for the other less visible minority sexes. A feminist organization such as the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network as recently as last year restricted transsexual participation "to provide a safe space (*continued on page 44*)

BLOSSOM OF BONEHEADS

by Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan

It has become increasingly common during the past few years for white, gay male writers to appropriate transsexual and transgendered behavior and to claim it for themselves. No one, least of all these men, would seriously suggest that they or any other gay male would be pleased at the complete obliteration of their genitals, yet in their attempt to create historical antecedents for the modern gay male identity these writers co-opt behavior that is clearly transsexual in nature and subject it to a sex-change of quite another sort by mislabelling sex-changed individuals as "gender-variant males" or even, absurd as it may seem, as gay men.

These men, who wouldn't think of removing their valued male genitals and who denigrate present day transsexuals, show a curious predilection for claiming affinity with transsexuals in other cultures and times. Whether or not they are successful in their attempt to obfuscate and confuse their readers in distinguishing between the very real differences which lie between transsexuality and homosexuality depends wholly upon their readers' ability to perceive the flaws contained in their logic. Such flaws can be apparent only to those as familiar or more so than these writers upon the topics they discourse; if we would prevent the utter decimation of our own historical past we must be at least as well-armed as they and quite prepared to hold up to ridicule the ludicrous conclusions they are so eager to present.

One of the earliest attempts to claim clearly transsexual behavior for gay male identity was perpetrated by Arthur Evans in *Witchcraft and the Gay Counterculture*.¹: "In Asia Minor we find 'the Great Mother of the Gods' . . . The men castrated themselves, grew long hair, and wore the clothing of women . . ." ² Nowhere in his book does Evans identify these "male followers" as Gallae but it is clear to whom he refers. Through the course of his book Evans consistently shies further and further from any reference to castration. Instead, he progressively lessens any emphasis on transsexual behavior. The Gallae are thus reduced when he quotes Augustine's condemnation of " 'effeminate consecrated by the Great Mother' ".³ They last appear described by Evans as "men dressed in women's clothing."⁴ Sic transit Gallae.

The most ludicrous comparison of the sex-changing Gallae to gay men to date, however, is Randy Conner's *Blossom of Bone*.⁵ Conner devotes an entire chapter of his book in an effort to portray the Gallae as "gender-variant males," to use his term, and presents so many classical and early Christian accounts of them as to very nearly succeed, at least with the vast majority of his readers who are unfamiliar with the sources he cites. Conner begins by having already decided that the Gallae are "gender-

variant males" and all the evidence which he subsequently produces is geared towards that and no other possibility.

Conner resorts to one after another early Christian writer's references to the Gallae. It need hardly be said that Christians are hardly the best source to turn to for anything regarding either goddess worship or alternative sexuality; their accounts are so pejorative and biased as to raise serious questions as to their value for anything but Christian propaganda. Nonetheless, Conner mines such diatribes for all they are worth, for the derogatory accounts by writers such as Firmicus Maternus and Augustine to bolster his claim that the Gallae engaged in "homoeroticism." How human beings bereft of male genitals can be considered to

have engaged in same-sex acts with men is a conundrum Conner avoids by simply having insisted at the outset that the Gallae are men, and that therefore sexual relations with men are "homoerotic."

The non-Christian sources Conner resorts to to further his argument that the Gallae engaged in "homoeroticism" have similar

shortcomings. He cites, for example, Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*, neglecting to mention that it and other works present the Gallae within the context of satirical novels; it is as if a purportedly serious study of transsexuals resorted to Gore Vidal's *Myra Breckenridge* as an authority on the topic.

Conner plays fast and loose with the actual historical record not only by presenting fictional works as unquestionably legitimate sources but in his handling of the court case of the second century b.c.e. Galla, Genucius. "When another freed slave, Naeivus Anius, died, he left his possessions to Genucius. It is unclear but certainly conceivable that the two were intimate companions."⁶ This is sheer speculation on Conner's part; there are simply no grounds whatsoever for such a supposition concerning the relationship between the two Gallae beyond the known fact of inheritance. Conner's writing is filled, however, with similar "unclear but certainly conceivable" conceptions on his part. His imagination is loosed solely in the direction in which he wishes it to proceed; other avenues of exploration are closed.

Nowhere is Conner's unwillingness to explore other possibilities concerning the identity of the Gallae as evident as in his further discourse on Genucius. Citing the appeal that reversed the court decision that Genucius was the rightful heir of Anius' property, Conner relates: "In Rome, only men and women could inherit property, and Genucius, having 'voluntarily mutilated himself' in order to become a 'gallus of the Great Mother,' had forfeited his claim to any inheritance because he could now be counted 'neither male or female, *neque virorum neque mulierum*.'" While such a decision might support a thesis that the Gallae were

"Gay men who usurp our societal recognition illustrate a willingness on their part to trade our survival for their own, our acceptance for theirs and claim our history as theirs. If they are so desirous of the history of the Gallae and of transsexuals there is an easy enough remedy; let them resort to the potsherd, the blade or the surgeon's knife, and join us."

considered a "third sex" it completely contradicts Conner's claim that they were males. Conner ignores this ramification, however, just as he ignores every similar reference to the Gallae which does not lend itself to his premise that they were gay men. Conner skirts dangerously close to the precipice on which his entire proposal would collapse yet avoids ever risking a peek over the edge.

"Their gender variance also cause the *galli* to be labelled *gallae*, with the feminine ending *-æ*."⁷ Conner eschews exploring further references to the Gallae in the feminine gender, nor is that so surprising, to do so would open a can of worms he is not about to confront.

As one of the most celebrated of Classical poets, the Roman, Gaius Valerius Catallus, consistently used feminine word forms to describe the transformed Gallae, carefully conveying and maintaining the sense of female self of his subject. Elmer Truesdell Merrill, Professor of Latin at Wesleyan University, wrote of Catallus' Poem 63 over a hundred years ago: "Adjectives descriptive of a feminine beauty are employed to accord with the change of gender . . . vv. 12 *Gallae*, 15 *executae*, 34 *rapidaie Gallae* . . . 11 *adorta*, *tremebunda*, 31 *furibunda*, 32 *comitata*, etc."⁸ How odd, then, that Conner refers to Catallus but once, and then only in reference to the meter the poet used in his poem on the Gallae. Surely the most famous account of a Gallae deserves better treatment than it does at the hands of Conner? Little wonder, though: Catallus' respect for a Gallae's sense of self far exceeds that exhibited by Conner for either the Gallae or modern-day transsexuals.

Time and again Conner speaks of transsexuals in the same breath as he mentions gay and bisexual men, a practice with which I imagine every transsexual who has undergone transformation would take issue with. Male-to-female transsexuals are uniformly adamant in claiming themselves to be women and not men. Conner's abrogation of modern-day transsexuals' right to define themselves is just as evident in his treatment of the Gallae. His transsexuals are men because he believes them to be men despite our protestations to the contrary; his "galli" are men because he wishes them to be so.

Gay male writers who appropriate transsexual personae for their own do more than risk giving credence to the old stereotype of gays as men who wish to be women; they rend us invisible by labelling our lives and our predecessors as something we are not to further their agenda of creating historical antecedents for the modern gay male identity. Such writers are transparent in their biases: they don't like transsexualism or transsexuals in the present-day; they write transsexual behavior out of history by appropriating it as "gay male: or "gender-variant male" behavior.

The tendency for nontranssexual individuals to claim for themselves transsexual status or privilege through false

representation is not uncommon. Such "transsexual impersonators" are seen in India, where untransformed men assume the clothing of women and attempt to pass themselves off upon an unsuspecting populace, performing ritual reserved for hijra to obtain monetary recompense under false pretenses.⁹ When a gay male such as Conner refers to the Gallae as "our spiritual ancestors"¹⁰ he is engaging in cultural piracy no different than that resorted to by imposters passing themselves off as hijra. With every co-optation of transsexual behavior by a gay male writer we face a concomitant loss in the public's perception of us as drastically different from the mundane. Recognition of historical and cross-cultural spiritual roles for transsexual individuals is weakened by gay men confusing the life-threatening passage we've undergone with a merely alternative sexual orientation.

The response by hijra towards such inroads upon their unique spiritual role should serve as a guide for our own reaction towards gay male attempts to usurp our past and our present. The reaction of the hijra towards impostors, upon discovery, is both swift and violent, and justified by the hijra as necessary in order to preserve their special social status. We dare do no less ere we find ourselves appropriated out of existence, indistinguishable in the public's mind from gay males. While we currently have no role as transsexual in society, there is the social acceptance of us as different which acknowledges surgery as an appropriate path for us to take. We risk losing that social acceptance, and the surgery upon which it

depends, if we lose our identity.

Gay men who usurp our societal recognition illustrate a willingness on their part to trade our survival for their own, our acceptance for theirs and claim our history as theirs. If they are so desirous of the history of the Gallae and of transsexuals there is an easy enough remedy: let them resort to the potsherd, the blade or the surgeon's knife, and join us. That they don't do so is the best argument of all that they know all too well just how different we are from the rest of humanity, and from them as well.

In service of the Mater Deum Magna Idaea.



Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan
photo by Petranella Ytsma

Footnotes:

¹ Evans, Arthur, *Witchcraft and the Gay Counterculture*. Boston: Fag Rag Books, 1978, p. 22.

² Ibid, p. 22.

³ Ibid, p. 25.

⁴ Ibid, p. 67.

⁵ Conner, Randy P., *Blossom of Bone*. San Francisco: Harper, 1993, pp. 98-131.

⁶ Ibid, p. 111.

⁷ Ibid, p. 101.

⁸ *Catallus*, edited by Elmer Truesdell Merrill. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1893; reprinted 1951, p. 121.

⁹ Nanda, Serena. *Neither Man Nor Woman -- the Hijras of India*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1990, p. 11.

¹⁰ Conner, Randy P., *Blossom of Bone*, p. 304.

¹¹ Nanda, Serena, *Neither Man Nor Woman*, pp. 11, 44.

Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan is an Archigalla presently residing in Portland, Oregon. She is the author of numerous articles on transsexuality and changing sex which have been published in a variety of publications. She successfully sued the state of Minnesota in the 1970s to pay for her final reconstructive surgery and was instrumental in defeating a bill subsequently introduced in the Minnesota legislature that would have prohibited such funding. She has conducted several presentations on the Gallae, the most recent being at the third annual New Woman Conference.

Fool's Paradox: An Interview with Kate Bornstein (continued from page 23)

wear dresses and I've got a boyfriend. So now they're saying, "Sure, Kate, you're a lesbian! Yea, tell us another one!" [laughs] **Davina:** A review of *Virtually Yours* said that you "create a space in which assumptions are challenged and realities become unhinged." What are some of the assumptions and realities that are you intending to challenge and to unhide that you haven't examined in your previous two plays?

Kate: I guess I would like people walking out of there questioning "How much of the relationship that I'm in is creating my identity, and how much of my identity is creating the relationship? How much am I an active participant consensually, trading love and power in this relationship, and how much am I acting on what's expected of me and the identity of my lover?" These are things that I hope to bring up with this show.

Kate & Ally (& Diane & Valerie & Greta) (continued from page 31)

closing "lecture" has been deleted.

Frankly I thought the show was brilliant. The issues Kate addresses are heavy for a society that is hell-bent on seeing things in black and white, as either/or, gay/straight, male/female. That she manages to convey thoughts and concepts which are so simple and yet so revolutionary in such a palatable, fun and entertaining way is nothing less than remarkable.

Virtually Yours is going to put Kate Bornstein over the top, so see it now while it's only \$12.

Justin Bond is a performance artist and writer living in the San Francisco Bay area. He played the part of Herculine Barbin in the original production of Hidden: A Gender.

Lesbians Who Date Transsexuals (continued from page 38)

is. Maybe they could begin to expand their definition of female to include those like me. Maybe they could someday see the validity of my lesbian identity. And just maybe, by finding some way to see me as another kind of woman, they could also invite my girlfriend back into the lesbian community.

Christine Beatty is an author, musician and corporate computer drone who lives in San Francisco. Christine's latest books, Misery Loves Company, is a collection of short stories and poetry based on her experience as a transsexual and former prostitute and drug addict. She is currently assembling with her lover Rynata a "modern metal" rock band called Glamazon.

A Rose Is a Rose: The Nomenclature of Sex and Oppression (continued from page 41)

for women" and hypocritically proclaims "all bigotry is our enemy" while a bisexual transsexual kid like Filisa Vistima is driven to suicide because of intolerance. Perhaps the greatest change in my opinions since writing the above piece, last year I abandoned my long-held stance of avoiding "women-only" events as a result of Filisa's suicide and Davina Anne Gabriel's brave act of resistance in attending the 1992 Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. After attending SBWN meetings closed to transsexuals at which I was instructed to absent myself from the premises, I filed a discrimination complaint with the City of Seattle's Human Rights Department on January 14 of this year. In a letter postmarked March 16, members of the SBWN sent me the following:

"We have taken note of your disagreement with the SBWN policy of excluding transsexual / transgender women from the Monday night meetings. This letter is to let you know of a new policy, decided January 30, 1994 and February 27, 1994. It states:

"Transsexual / transgender women are eligible for attendance and membership in SBWN if they have been living full-time as a woman for at least one year.

Transsexual / transgender women with less than one year of full-time cross-living are encouraged to participate in mixed gender bisexual activities such as BiNet meetings, mixed social events and related current activities'."

In light of the fact that the City of Seattle Human Rights Ordinance which specifically protects transsexuals says nothing about discrimination being dependent upon time lived as a woman the "new" SBWN policy is clearly still not in accord with the letter and spirit of the law. Some folks seem to have to learn the hard way. But that's okay.

They'll learn.

Subscribe to Transsexual News Telegraph



**Published
for the
Transgendered
Communities**

**The Magazine
That Will Never
Contain Articles
About Shopping
or Makeup**

Subscription Form

- Enclosed is \$4.00 for a sample issue of *Transsexual News Telegraph*.
- Enclosed is \$15.00 for the next four issues of *Transsexual News Telegraph*.
- Enclosed is \$30.00 for the next eight issues of *Transsexual News Telegraph*.
- I am an inmate or institutionalized. Please send me *Transsexual News Telegraph*.

Name of institution _____

Inmate number _____

Name (as it should appear on the envelope) _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

Please Make Checks or Money Orders Payable to Anne Ogborn

**Mail to: T.N.T.; Suite # 288; 584 Castro Street;
San Francisco, California 94114-2588**

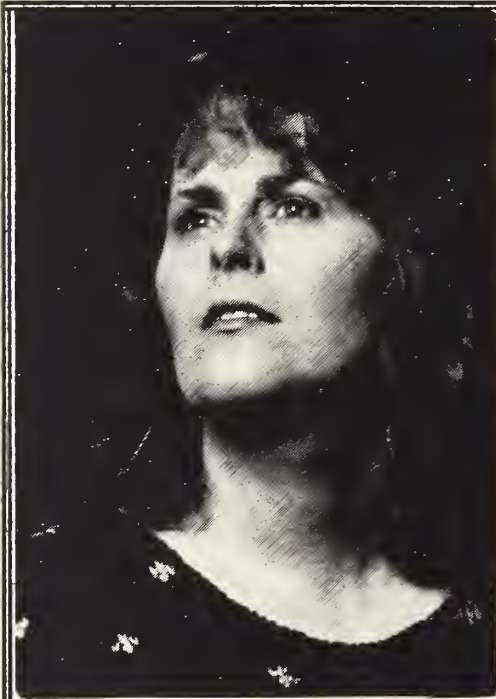
Introducing Diana Green

Beginning with this issue, *TransSisters: the Journal of Transsexual Feminism* is pleased to add Diana Green as the newest member of its staff. Diana will join the *TransSisters* staff as its first Staff Cartoonist.

Diana is a five years postoperative transsexual bisexual woman. It took her most of her forty years on the planet to understand and accept *all* of that, and several more years to be truly *proud* of it all. She now lives and enjoys her life in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

She is currently recovering from a long-term emotionally abusive relationship, and is being treated for Attention Deficit Disorder. While pretending to be a boy, she was married for seven years to a truly fine, classy woman.

Her rather spotty and occasionally sordid past includes time logged as an altar boy, a server worker, a KFC cook, a bartender, a



Diana Green
photo by Pauline Johnson

plaster caster, a foundry worker, a retail salesgirl and an art-film theater manager. She has, at various times, studied accounting, film making and film theory, animation, Egyptian mythology, business law and commercial art. During her commercial art education, she had the pleasure and the honor of apprenticing under Reed Waller, creator/artist of *Omaha, the Cat Dancer*.

Her passions include *good* comic books, violent or surrealistic 1940s cartoons, science-fiction and fantasy, the art of Alfonse Mucha, Maxfield Parrish, Georgia O'Keefe and Trina Robbins, buffaloes, pussycats and her guitar. Despite everything, or possibly because of it, she remains an incurable romantic and happily so.

Her writing, illustrations and comics work have appeared in *Animania, The Madison Edge, Feminist Voices* and *Gay Comics*.

Announcing

A very special VideoTape

Dr. Eugene A. Schrang, M.D., S.C. Speaking on Male-to-Female Sex Reassignment Surgery

Dr. Schrang is a noted plastic surgeon who practices in Neenah, Wisconsin. He offers a wide variety of reasonably-priced surgical procedures to transsexual persons. In February, 1993, he spoke on male-to-female sex reassignment surgery at an AEGIS seminar in Atlanta. With his kind permission, we are selling a VHS videotape of his presentation.

The tape is an in-depth discussion, with slides, of male-to-female SRS as Dr. Schrang does it.

The cost is only \$24.95 plus \$3 S&H.

Approx. 90 minutes, VHS only.



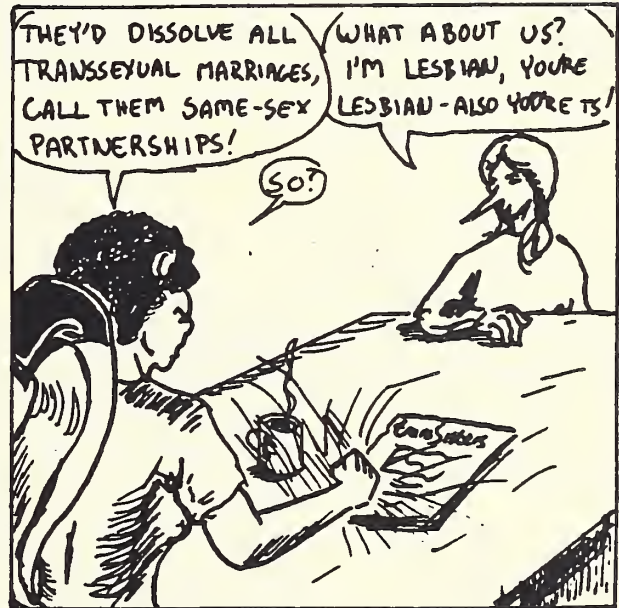
Yes! I want to purchase the videotape of Dr. Schrang's presentation.
I'm enclosing check or money order for \$24.95 + \$3 S&H.

Ship to:

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____

© 1993 by AEGIS
The American Educational Gender Information Service, Inc.
A 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation.

Always a Way Around It . . . by Diana Green



She Walks, She Talks, She Crawls On Her Belly Like a Reptile

by C. Cailin Thompson

Editor's note: The following article was originally published in the Spring 1993 issue of Fireweed and is reprinted with permission of the author.

A date. Can you imagine what it would be like to go on a date? To go on a date and only have to worry about what you were going to talk about, or do or even if you're going to like each other?

The other day a friend of mine taped a talk show on TV for me. The subject of the day was transsexual lesbians. I saw it of course. I was disappointed and frustrated. No one learns anything. It's always the same and no one learns anything.

"How could you bring a child into this world knowing what you are?" the audience asked.

"What did they do with . . . it?"

"God this and God that."

There was no talk at all about the most important and obvious issue:

How does a lesbian trannie deal with the lesbian community and how does that community deal with her? What does it matter where my or anyone else's penis was or where it went? At least it's not in my head.

I am on a date. I'm waiting by the entrance of the theatre wondering if you're going to show. Wondering if I should give you a hug and a little kiss or be bold and touch your lips with my lips and lay my hand on you hip or perhaps very gently on your belly, briefly, and then pull away. Teasing. Flirting. Sexing.

Five minutes before the beginning you arrive, distant and guarded. I choose to greet you with a smile, a "hi!" and boldly I touch your elbow.



I have problems with the term "transsexual." It seems too clinical, and besides, transsexual implies a transition which may have been quite applicable when I was changing my sex but it doesn't represent who and what I am now. Of course, "sex change" isn't so great. I've heard "she's (or sometimes 'he's'!) just a fucking sex change" a little too often, thank you very much. There's "gender dysphoric," but then I'd have to try and find out what "dysphoric" means. Pretty clinical too. How about "transie" or "trannie?" Has a nice street ring to it. If you really want to see steam come out of my ears you should watch me listen to someone who seems to know what they are talking about refer to transsexuals as "transvestites." I'm not trying to

knock the obvious joys of transvestism, but it ain't the same thing. "Gender reassignment," once again, is too clinical, is usually used with the suffix "surgery" and is a little awkward when used in verbal reference to someone. As is "gender transformation." How about "Transformer?" . . . No.

I really like "woman." That's what people who know me call me.

Years ago, an acquaintance of mine was telling me about a gathering of women, a conference I think, that she had been attending. She spoke at this gathering, and in front of hundreds of women, she talked about a part of her life history. She told them that she was and had always been a woman but that up to a certain point she had to live those years in a male body, as a male, a man: As you might be able to imagine, the reaction from the crowd was mixed. She did get a tremendous amount of support from many of the women there. This was brave thing for her to do. The thing is that this friend of mine said to me that it was at this moment, exposing herself in front of all those people, that she finally felt herself to be complete. She was trying to tell me something at the time and I didn't fully understand what she

meant. But I do now. What she said was that, to find strength, a sense of self and a sense of the elusive completeness, you have to, in the end, tell the world who you are. It's a very liberating experience.

* * *

I saw someone the other day. We recognized each other instantly, those around were none the wiser. Guarded and open, we slowed to a stop as we reached each other.

"Hi, how're you doing?" I said.

"Pretty good," she said.

"You look good."

"Thanks."

pause

"See ya later."

"Ya take care."

To look good, to pass, means everything and it means survival. It means you can walk down the street and not get rocks or words thrown at you or someone's fist in your mouth.

* * *

I came out about four years ago. In some ways it was very easy for me. I had already taken a big step in allowing myself to determine how I was going to lead my life. Sometimes other people find the way that I lead my life argumentative.

You wouldn't believe how many people said (unless you happen to be one of them), "So why'd you bother?" when they found out that I am a dyke. I get this from friends, I get this from strangers, I get this from other dykes, and unbelievably, I get this from other transsexuals. My lesbian mentor's reaction was, "Well, of course you'd be a lesbian, it only makes sense."

Doesn't everyone out there understand that gender and sexuality aren't the same thing?

* * *

There is a look that I often get from people, especially new people. I can feel their gaze penetrate my soul and I get this exposed, naked feeling. When I get this look I know that they either know or they're trying to figure out what exactly they're looking at. I usually take this as a sign that maybe it's time to deal with the "gender issue."

Sometimes I think I can tell how people are seeing me by the way they look at me. I start noticing patterns. Everyone has issues whether expressed or not.

Often women I get involved with have problems with the idea of having a relationship with a woman who hasn't had the experience of being a woman all her life. I have a pat answer that I sometimes use: "I've been a woman all my life, but I just happen to have had to spend a major part of it in another body,"

the same body, but a male body. There is truth in this, of course, but it is also true that I did not grow up with the experiences of most women, just as I didn't grow up with the experiences of most men. But then, who has?

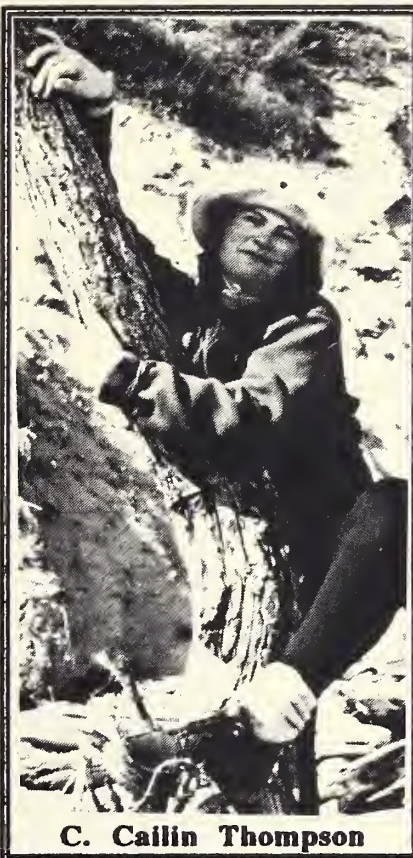
* * *

I am a child and I am alone. I'm alone in the living room and no one else is in the apartment. I have one light on and I have the music loud and I dance and I dance and no one knows. I look in the mirror and I see myself, I see a girl, my name is Cailin. It feels so delicious I want to cry just thinking about it and I am free.

* * *

I have met (maybe encountered is a better word) men, straight men who have wanted to fuck my brains out until they figured out that I had been "surgically altered." I have met dykes who saw me as a woman, then after a while decided that I really wasn't a woman and then, in some cases, decided that I was a woman again. I sit around watching this tennis match waiting to see where the ball's going to end up landing.

* * *



C. Cailin Thompson

When I first told my grandparents (whom I love and who have been absolutely supportive) about my gender dysphoric feelings, my grandfather asked me if this meant that I was gay. Worriedly, I might add. My answer was, "Well . . . no, but then, well . . . yes . . . but maybe not in the way that you might think."

* * *

Strap-on dildos. How many of you lesbians (and others, I would suppose) out there have and use strap on dildos? What do you think this means gender-wise, sex-wise, any-wise? Now, how many of you out there DON'T have and use strap-on dildos and what does that mean? I don't mean those of you that don't have them because you never thought of using them or don't know where to get them. I mean those of you who refuse to use them.

I recently had a talk with a friend of mine who is a great proponent of strap-ons. We both figured that of all the people we know using them, each one must have a different attitude about it. For instance, take your basic butch. What does wearing a dildo for sex or otherwise do to her own sense of womanhood? Especially in a society that says, "You're a butch"; "Hey! You look just like a guy!"; "Why don't you just get a fucking sex change and be done with it?!"

Well, as one friend put it, "Because I wouldn't be able to

have sex with lesbians for ONE thing!"

I think there must be all kinds of gender intrigue happening around this subject. I think of JoAnn Loulan, who with great practicality mentions the fact that using a strap-on dildo frees the hands to do all kinds of other stuff. Susie Sexpert really likes them too. Mind you, JoAnn Loulan and Susie Sexpert are both femmes and I'm sure don't have the same kind of issues that our previously mentioned butch would have. Wouldn't you have hated to be a dedicated femme back in the early seventies, just dying to get out of those Grebs and that plaid shirt and into some black patent heels and a tight leather dress?

My point here is that transsexuals aren't the only ones who have to deal with their gender identity and a world that likes to put a lid on how it's expressed. I really do believe that we all have our own fluctuating masculine and feminine selves beyond what our sex is. In my earlier years at this game I think that I tried to block out any masculine energy in myself. This was obviously a reaction to having to block out any feminine energy in my teens and early twenties. Maybe I should have looked into seeing a physicist instead of a therapist.

I can think of many embarrassing situations, like the time in grade ten when I wore a Russian men's dance shirt my mom had given me (very feminine) to school. I thought it would be okay because, after all, it was a man's shirt. When I got to school and started getting the "looks," I realized that maybe it wasn't such a great idea to wear it after all. At this point all I cared about was being able to make it through the day in one piece, hopefully with some dignity intact.

I am pleased to say that I now act and wear anything I damn well please and encourage others to do likewise.

Postscript, February 21, 1993:

It's been a year and a half since I wrote the article you presumably just read for *Quota* magazine.

I was in the process of discovering that the lesbian community isn't the warm cocoon that I wanted it to be. Some of my best friends are lesbians (no, really, honest!) but I also feel disassociated from the group. I don't mind. I'm living my life as always and have moved on to new challenges.

One thing that I'd like to comment on is the apparent ban on transsexuals at the Michigan Women's Music Festival, which seemed to bring what was an unofficial policy into an official one.

If you can pass, you'll probably get through. If you don't pass and can't get through then you're being discriminated against because of your appearance. Oh, the bitter irony!

There will probably be more transsexuals there now than ever since there's nothing a transsexual loves more than a really good passing challenge and nothing that trannies hate more than a bunch of fools telling them that they can't

do something or be somewhere. We are a determined bunch, don't you know!

The other thing to consider is that there are probably a fair number of female- to-male transsexuals doing the Michigan thing. It's good to keep in mind that you don't have to have surgery or take hormones to be a transsexual. It's all about how you feel. So what does that say, I wonder? As one woman said to me, "You'd be better off wearing a beard than a dress to Michigan."

So the gender circus continues on, and it's a wonderful show.
For a long time C. Cailin Thompson lived in this world as a boy, a man. Now, in ever changing proportions, she is living the last and most productive and expansive part of her life a girl, a woman. She also believes that she can do anything. She is a resident of Toronto, Ontario.

My Summer Vacation (continued from page 35)

of, what I can learn and teach from, however, has less to do with the particulars of gender diversity than about how best to integrate my particular uniqueness into a complex and increasingly tolerant society.

Renee Chinquapin lives and works in Berkeley, California. She welcomes in her counseling practice individuals and couples wishing to explore ways of transforming the obstacles in the way of full and joyous lives. She also does telephone counseling for clients living in the San Francisco Bay Area.



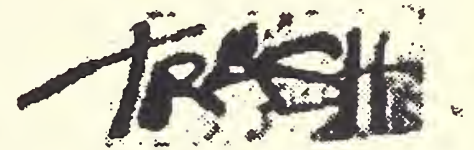
Renee Chinquapin

photo by Davina Anne Gabriel

Guide on the Inner Voyage

Renee Chinquapin
M.A., Psych. (510) 842-2101

gender



Ordering information

| description | quantity | amount |
|--|----------|--------|
| <i>gendertrash</i> | | |
| gendertrash (issue #1) \$2. ⁵⁰ | | |
| gendertrash (issue #2) \$4 ⁰⁰ | | |
| gendertrash (next issue) \$4 ⁰⁰ | | |
| Total - gendertrash | | |
| buttons (1/\$2 3/\$5 50/\$50) | | |
| I'd rather be dead than genetic | | |
| Gender Outlaw | | |
| Gender Queer | | |
| TransDyke | | |
| TransFag | | |
| Transsexual Hooker | | |
| The Empire Strikes Back | | |
| Transsexuals get AIDS too | | |
| Transgender Fury | | |
| Transsexuals For Animal Liberation | | |
| I love Transsexuals | | |
| TS lives under TS control Now! | | |
| Theory mutilates/Surgery Liberates | | |
| Only a Transsexual could love you | | |
| Gender Liberation | | |
| Gender Oriented | | |
| Employment Equity for Transsexuals | | |
| Woman-Born Transsexual | | |
| gendertrash | | |
| Pissed Off Transsexuals United | | |
| I have big feet - so what? | | |
| s/h \$1 (for button orders less than \$10) | | |
| Total of buttons | | |
| donations to <i>genderpress</i> (always welcome) | | |
| Total Amount | | |

Name _____
 Address _____
 State _____ Zip _____

Please send order (payable to *genderpress*) to:
genderpress, Box 500-62, 552 Church St., Toronto, Ont. Canada M4Y 2E3



"gendertrash is a hand-grenade disguised as a magazine... Be warned, those who are easily offended should stay clear; there is little concern here for the sensibilities of the prim and proper. The most refreshing, invigorating periodical to hit the scene in recent memory" - *Belinda Doree, Notes From the Underground*

The Grande Alliance

by Kristine Wyonna Holt

In June of 1994, the Stonewall 25 event will be held in New York City. This is a celebration by the Gay community commemorating the Stonewall Riots of 1969, during which the drag queens (in particular) who frequented the Stonewall Inn violently opposed the police harassment which they had repeatedly been subjected to. This series of clashes is considered to be the "opening salvo" in the battle for lesbian and gay civil rights in the United States. In light of the history of the celebration, it seems curious that the transgendered have been excluded from the festivities by the event organizers.

This has become a cause of great concern for some within our community. For these few, the feeling is that the lesbigay movement is ignoring its roots; that we, the minority within the minority, are being discriminated against. There are grumbings from our more vocal members, and suggestions that a counterdemonstration, ala ACT-UP, is needed. My voice in the fray calls for different action. I firmly believe that forcing our participation in any gay rights demonstration would do more harm than good. Indeed, I can see no good whatsoever coming of such action. The cause for transgendered civil rights would be set back immeasurably.

Primarily, we have to ask ourselves why we should want to become aligned with the lesbigay movement. This is an issue which has the potential to split us asunder. Not all members of the transgendered community consider themselves to be gay. In fact, the percentage of transgendered individuals declaring themselves to be lesbian or gay puts them in a decided minority. This is quite alright, as an individual orientation of "lifestyle." But it's a separate issue from gender identity. By aligning ourselves with the lesbigay movement, we send a message to the community at large that is totally opposite to what most of us are all about. Now, I'm not advocating a reactionary anti-gay stance, such as that taken by one or another CD groups. But consider your own personal search for self-acceptance, your own coming out experiences, and remember the questions that came to mind.

I'll share with you one of my own experiences. When I first announced my transsexuality to family and friends, I was asked if it had anything to do with sexual orientation: "Do you want to be a woman because you like men?" I found the truth to be a reversal of that: "I like men because I'm a woman." Understand, this comes from a person who had dated women throughout her teens and young adulthood, had married and fathered children, etc. But it illustrates that my sexual change has little to do with

affectional orientation; "Once a heterosexual, always a heterosexual," even if the object of that heterosexual desire changes.

I don't believe I'm alone in this. I'm not aware of any formal studies done, but anecdotal information I've received from scores of transsexuals going through the transition tells me I am not in the minority. There are exceptions of course, and these exceptional individuals are to be valued. But I think that it's important to keep one truth firmly in front of us: gender orientation has nothing to do with affectional (sexual) orientation.

The lesbigay movement is all about guaranteed civil rights for those individuals with minority (homosexual) affectional / sexual orientations. They struggle and question their identities like us; they too "come out" and seek the company of kindred spirits. Many of them, like many of us, have suffered discrimination in all areas of their lives. So they lobby and march and fight through the courts. These are the things that have to be done to overcome prejudice and discrimination, and to secure civil protection. But, unlike us, the source of their discrimination, the focus of their struggle, is the fact of their minority homosexual orientation.

So doesn't it seem a bit schizophrenic for us to march down the street in the midst of their demonstrations, waving a banner that proclaims "and WE vote!?" We want the world, through the efforts of our educational foundations, to understand that our nature is one of gender identity, *not* sexual orientation. Then we try to force our way into a movement whose sole reason for existence is sexual orientation, screaming "me too!" The dichotomy cannot be lost on the public.

What does this confusion cost us? Plenty! If I tell you one thing, then do another, what does that breed? Distrust, fear and hatred. Oh yes, we need to secure our civil rights, make no doubt about that. But attempting to do that by attaching ourselves onto a group whose agenda has nothing to do with ours is counterproductive. There are those exceptional few who do address sexual issues along with their gender issues. But for us, as a *gender* community, to address our *gender rights* issues and co-mingle them with the issues of the homosexual rights movement is not in our best interest.

The leaders of the lesbigay movement recognize this truth. They are clearly focused on their purpose, that being the securing of civil rights protection for those who embrace a sexual orientation at odds with the majority of their fellows. Period. There is no desire, nor should there be, to have this purpose confused with side issues and splinter groups that sap the strength of the main thrust. That's exactly what the transgender movement represents to the lesbigay movement -- a source of

"We want the world, through the efforts of our educational foundations, to understand that our nature is one of gender identity, not sexual orientation. Then we try to force our way into a movement whose sole reason for existence is sexual orientation, screaming 'me too!'."

confusion to the community at large, an aberration that needs to be explained. And for what purpose? Including us is not in their best interests. (Co-existence is desirable, however, due to the similar outcomes of our agendas. Support given, when it can be afforded, is always helpful. But it's imperative that the main efforts of each group should remain separate and distinct.)

So where do we find ourselves, if we cut loose of our hold to the "big" group? We are so few, and there's so much to do! Fear not -- we *do* have allies out there. We can seek affiliation with a much larger movement: one which has an established agenda to fight discrimination based on gender, that has national (or even international) organizations, advocates, lobbyists, educators. If you haven't guessed by now, I refer to the women's rights ("feminist") movement.

Stop to think for a moment what the feminist movement stands for. Women have had to endure discrimination for countless ages, not because of the specific things they do, or whom they make love to, or any other individual difference. It has been solely because of the sex, the gender, that they are. Surely, many arguments have been made legitimizing such discrimination, but they have always been peripheral to the fact that women are discriminated against because they are women. Simply that.

I had a roommate at one time, a professional woman, who was successful at her career, and not surprisingly, considered herself a feminist. She stated the situation quite baldly: "To climb that corporate ladder, a woman has to suppress or shed so much of her femininity." In other words, it's a man's world, and in order to fit in, you have to be like a man. In such an environment, what becomes of the male who completely denies and repudiates his masculinity? Or even one who just expresses that strong feminine streak in him occasionally?

Look at the discrimination that many of transgendered, particularly transsexual, individuals face. Is it because they are incompetent in their jobs, because they have been insubordinate, immoral or an embarrassment to those around them? These are some of the excuses that have been given. But all too often, these "reasons" never became obvious to the discriminator until after the transsexual individual revealed her transsexuality (or had it revealed). No, the real reason is because the transsexual person's gender makes those folks with less secure sexual identities uncomfortable. (Think, too, of how much self-aggrandizement and power reaching is a sublimation of sexual urges). And that brings to mind a popular maxim of the women's movement: "A man of quality is not threatened by a woman of equality."

So now we look then at the question we faced with the lesbigay movement: will they have us? I can give only a tentative answer, based upon my experiences. That answer is "yes." (Obviously, or else there would be no focus for this article!)

My transition has been beset with numerous difficulties, most of them the direct result of small-minded thinking on the part of officials and managers who should have a more global view of things. In response, I have acted to counter these attitudes (relatively successfully) in ways involving administrative appeals, community education, local politics and court action. Persistence, courage and faith have been indispensable. But those things alone would never have been enough. I have necessarily had to rely on the assistance of virtually everyone I've come into contact with, to educate me, to "open doors" for me, etc. -- or to just steer clear. *Everyone* plays a role. ("If you're not part of the solution . . .")

In this struggle for transgendered civil rights, I have met no women's rights activists who have distanced themselves from my cause. In fact, I have found my greatest support there. It has been expressed to me on many occasions that our goals are identical. I have been extended invitations to many women's support, activist, and service groups. Granted, I have little experience with the militant, in-your-face "womyn" activists. But then, I haven't sought assistance from such peripheral groups. Those who've been of greatest help are the mainstream feminists who work behind the scenes: those who pursue the quiet court cases, the EEO/AA officers, the courthouse clerks, the community service organizers. Each person, with a positive attitude fostered by the feminist ideology, affects some little change, with accumulates. Each recognizes that "no one can be free until we are all free," and that that includes the transgendered individual, too. *These* women are our natural allies.

In conclusion, I would urge every transgendered individual, and everybody else who has dealings with the transgendered community, to look closely at the nature of our struggle. Look at what would be in our best interests, and at what already exists out there as a vehicle for change. See what our similarities are with the gay community, and give them our support, whenever possible and appropriate. But recognize that we share even more similarities with the women's rights movement, and expend our multitude of talents and energies there. That, indeed, would be a Grande Alliance.

Kristine Wyonna Holt's professional background is in governmental and social services. However, as a result of her termination from work due to her transition, she has turned her talents and energies toward securing civil protections for the transsexual/transgendered community. Acting as her own researcher and attorney, she has brought about several precedent rulings in the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania and the State Executive Office. She divides her time between her hometown of Oil City, Pennsylvania and her boyfriend's home in Ashtabula, Ohio.



Kristine Wyonna Holt

Revise ICTLEP, Not the HBIGDA Standards of Care

by Brenda Thomas

I have just finished reading a most distressing paper, one adopted by the International Conference on Transgendered Law and Employment Policy (ICTLEP), and which they "shall use their best efforts to disseminate" to all involved in the medical treatment of transsexualism. These items don't directly concern me as I am not inclined to be transsexual. They do however indirectly concern me because what I am seeing is a total disregard for the normally accepted Standards of Care that have been established by Dr. Harry Benjamin and adopted by the medical profession for many years.

For those of you who are not familiar with the Standards of Care, these are the guidelines that have been accepted by the medical community in the treatment of transsexualism, defined as Gender Dysphoria in the DSM III-R. These are standards that have been adopted to insure that those who are diagnosed as gender dysphoric receive the maximum amount of care to best assure that hormonal and surgical sex reassignment is not done on an elective basis and to ensure that the maximum amount of counseling is given to those individuals to best assure their easy transitions into the life style of their new sex.

All of the reading that I have done on the Standards of Care indicate that they are set in place to assure that all defaults are in place to assure that the involved medical professionals are competent, that all medical professionals have demonstrated experience in their fields, and that all necessary counseling has taken place.

Now I read that "Transsexualism is an ancient and persistent part of human experience and is not in itself a medical illness or mental disorder." Hence, the desire to eliminate transsexualism per se as a mental disorder from the upcoming DSM IV, because many, if not most, of the patients the doctors see for gender medical services (hormones, surgery) do not require any psychological services. PARDON ME! Would someone please show me ONE person who presents himself or herself for hormonal or surgical procedure who does not require psychological services? These are people who are going to undergo a complete psychological change in their personality; if that doesn't require some sort of psychological services then I do not know what does. I do not know of a reputable doctor who will administer hormones without extensive blood tests and psychological evaluations to ensure that all standards are being met.

"Would someone please show me ONE person who presents himself or herself for hormonal or surgical procedure who does not require psychological services?"

What we are seeing here from ICTLEP is hormonal and sexual surgery ON DEMAND! The basis for these findings are presented because: "The Health Standards of Care were developed in the wake of widespread dissatisfaction by many in the Harry Benjamin Standards of Care." In other words, those who desire surgery, but are denied after extensive testing, are dissatisfied with the process and still wish to pursue a process that could be detrimental to their own well being.

Upon examination of the people on the board of ICTLEP, I see four attorneys and one CPA. (How would these same attorneys feel if the American Medical Association took it upon themselves to redefine the "Ethics Code" of the American Bar Association?) Is something or someone missing here? Where are the doctors, psychologists, social workers, therapists and sex counselors or marriage counselors? Could you imagine the chaos that would take place in the medical professions if everyone could walk into a doctor's office, self-diagnose and request treatment on demand? What hypocrisy. Oh, the ICTLEP has seen fit to protect themselves and the doctors by including in its written material an "Informed Consent and Waiver of Liability." Now isn't that comforting? I have heard from informed sources that these "Informed consent and waiver of liability" forms are totally worthless pieces of paper anyway. Not being one versed in the law, I have no comment on the validity of such forms.

Reading further through their paper, I find certain definitions, one being **GENDER**, which is defined as: "the characteristics of a continuum of role types from male to female, with such characteristics including behaviors and *sexual anatomy* and being labelled 'masculine' and 'feminine' as the polar extremes." In the next line they define **TRANSSEXUALISM - TRANSGENDERISM** as "the condition of wanting to change one's gender to match one's sex." Are we performing a brain operation here or what? I thought we had already defined sex as sexual anatomy, that means either male or female as evidence by one's genitalia. They further state "Transsexuals do not really change their sex - they are born with that." If one removes, changes or alters one's genitalia (which determines one's anatomical sex) is that not changing one's sex? These people are advocating that SEX is in the brain and not in the body. What has happened to all of the teaching, educating and fighting that the "gender community" has done over the years trying to convince the general populace that sex is biological and gender is psychological, or that sex is between your legs and gender is

between your ears? Are we now to change canoes in the middle of the rapids?

Don't get me wrong. I am all in favor of primary transsexuals getting all the help, both psychological and surgical, that they can to better make their anatomical sex congruent with their psychological gender. But I am also adamantly opposed to secondary transsexuals being able to schedule surgical sex reassignment on demand.

Let's all settle down and go back to the basics. I have known too many people who have had surgery thinking it was the be-all-and-end-all, only to find themselves some of the most depressed people on the face of this Earth. How many secondary transsexual suicides are there each year? How many secondary transsexuals are there in long term, extensive therapy because they have found that surgery did not answer their crying need for expression? Now having found that surgery non-reversible, they are looking for ways to just cope.

As I stated earlier, I am not a transsexual nor am I inclined in that direction. So being an outsider looking in, so to speak, I decided to ask others who are transsexuals if I was off base in my thinking. Surprise, surprise! They feel the same way that I do. While they are in favor of making it somewhat easier for those who need surgery or whatever manner of medical services they may need, they are not in favor of surgery on demand. They are strong proponents of the real life test process endorsed by the Benjamin Standards of Care. They are in favor of the standards that are in place at this time. What they do wish is easier access to the medical services, access to the professionals involved to include; attorneys, endocrinologists, therapists, psychologists, and all related services. They also are in favor of support from their insurance companies and their employers. They would also like to see some sort of national fund established for assistance of transsexuals in transition. It seems like so many of them are in a state of near poverty. Realizing how hard it is to transition and to keep one's employment intact, makes it easy to see why they are in such a state.

So, I would strongly urge the ICTLEP to move away from trying to establish standards of care for a profession to which they do not belong, and to move in a direction for standards of care in a profession to which they do belong and to help bring the necessary changes to the forefront to assist those who are in need of assistance. With so many legal minds at work in this area it should be a relatively simple task to set the wheels in motion, and to give the help where help is really needed. I urge all of you to talk with those who have been through the process to see where the help is needed. More can be learned from history than from trying to predict the future.

My purpose in this letter is not to undermine the work of the ICTLEP, but to point out the other directions that are possible for

them to travel. I am a proponent of those primary transsexuals receiving whatever help is necessary in achieving their ultimate goal. What I am against is "secondary" transsexuals having the access to surgery on demand without the proper care, counseling and real life test required by the standards of care now in place. I have heard too many horror stories from people who have jumped into transsexualism with the help of so-called "helping professionals" who have no idea of what they speak. Just read some of the stories of the people who have gone to Mexico to get their "surgery on demand!" Where does this leave these wonderful people? I see all the time too many people who say, "If I could only have a sex-change, what fun life would be, what few cares and obligations I would have." Well do I have news for them: the cares and obligations do not go away, and the fun, well, you make your own fun. Too many people think that changing their sex is

the ultimate solution, the start they never had. This is true for the primary transsexual, but for the secondary transsexual it is just the beginning of a horrible new existence that has solved nothing, yet has created a multitude of new problems.

Brenda Thomas is the editor of The Femme Mirror, a board member and past president of Tau-Chi chapter of Tri-Ess, the founder of Heterosexual Crossdressers Anonymous, a twice past recipient of the Tau-Chi Leadership Award and of the Tau-Chi chapter Community Service Award. She invites any rebuttals to this article to be directed to her at: Brenda Thomas; Apartment # 334; 6804 East Highway 6 South; Houston, Texas 77083.



Brenda Thomas

Call for Papers

Empathy is an interdisciplinary journal for persons working to end oppression on the basis of sexual identities. Published twice per year, *Empathy* is edited by James T. Sears, Ph. D., author of *Growing Up Gay In the South; Race, Gender and Journeys of the Spirit* (1991: Harrington Park Press).

Empathy is committed to including articles by and about transgendered persons in every issue. We are looking for intelligently written articles which meet our basic goal -- the ability to function in society without oppression, no matter what one's sexual or gender identity.

For guidelines, please contact Dr. James Sears, Editor & Publisher: P.O. Box 29250 or Dallas Denny, Acquisitions Editor; P.O. Box 33724; Decatur, Georgia 30033.

Get Submissive!

TransSisters welcomes submissions of original articles, interviews, reviews, position statements, press releases, editorials, research reports, fiction, poetry, artwork or photography dealing with issues of transsexuality and feminism. Submissions dealing with controversial issues or taking controversial stances (short of character assassination) including erotica are especially encouraged. Although the primary focus of *TransSisters* is on issues of concern to male-to-female transsexuals, material related to female-to-male concerns will also be considered for publication. Material that has been published elsewhere is also acceptable, but please indicate where it has been previously published if it has been.

All submissions are subject to editing by the Domineditrix. Please enclose a brief biographical summary (two or three sentences) with your submission. Submissions written under pseudonyms are acceptable.

TransSisters reserves the right to reprint all submissions. All other rights revert to the individual authors after publication. *TransSisters* also reserves the right to refuse publication of any submissions which do not meet our editorial or aesthetic standards or which are contrary to our goals and purposes.

Manuscripts should be double-spaced or neatly hand written. Please number your pages and put your name and the

title of the work at the top of every page. Please submit your work

on 3.5 floppy disks in either Macintosh or DOS ASCII formats if at all possible.

Artwork must be camera ready. Please enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope if you want your manuscript, disk or artwork returned.

Contributors are also welcome and encouraged to submit photographs (preferably black & white) of themselves along with their submissions, but please indicate the name of the photographer if you do so so that we can give proper photo credit. Negatives are also acceptable in lieu of prints, and will be returned if you provide a s.a.s.e.

The deadline for submissions of all sorts is six weeks prior to publication of the next issue. Those dates are as follows: Winter: November 20; Spring: February 18; Summer: May 20; Autumn: August 20.

Contributors receive a free copy of the issue in which their work appears. Please address all submissions to: *TransSisters*; Davina Anne Gabriel, editor; 4004 Troost Avenue; Kansas City, Missouri 64110. Submissions can also be sent by fax to (816)753-7816, but you must call first, as there must be someone here to receive your fax.

TransSisters Advertising Rates

| Description | Horizontal | Vertical | Price |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------|
| Double page centerfold | (16" x 9.5")..... | | \$70.00 |
| Back cover | | (7.5" x 10")..... | \$60.00 |
| Inside back cover full page | | (7.5" x 10")..... | \$50.00 |
| Inside back cover half page | (7.5" x 5")..... | (3.5" x 10")..... | \$30.00 |
| Inside back cover quarter page | (7.5" x 2.5") | (3.5" x 5")..... | \$20.00 |
| Full page | | (7.5" x 9.5")..... | \$45.00 |
| Half page | (7.5" x 4.75")..... | (3.5" x 9.5")..... | \$25.00 |
| Quarter page | (7.5" x 2.375")..... | (3.5" x 4.75")..... | \$15.00 |
| Eighth page | (3.5" x 2.375")..... | | \$10.00 |

All Ads Must Be Prepaid and Camera Ready

Deadlines:

Winter: November 31; Spring: February 28; Summer: May 31; Autumn: August 31

Please Make All Checks Payable to Davina Anne Gabriel (U.S. funds only)

TransSisters reserves the right to refuse publication of any advertisement which it considers to be in poor taste, deceptive or contrary to its goals and purposes.

Subscribe to

Chrysalis Quarterly

The intelligent, theme-oriented gender magazine for consumers and caregivers*

* ... and experience a splendor of gender!



© 1993 by AEGIS
The American Educational Gender Information Service, Inc.
A 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation.

Yes! I want to join AEGIS and experience a Splendor of Gender!
I'm sending \$36 for four exciting, feature-packed issues of Chrysalis Quarterly.

Ship to:

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____

- Start me with the current exciting issue!
 Start me with the next wonderful issue!

Send your check or money order for \$36 (\$46 outside the US)
to CQ, P.O. Box 33724, Decatur, GA 30033-0724

Announcing

Brand New!

Identity Management in Transsexualism

A Practical Guide to Managing Identity on Paper

by Dallas Denny

Now, at last, there is a resource for transgendered persons who are changing their names and identities. This is the only comprehensive guide to managing identity change for the transsexual person. Denny shares her personal experience in modifying the paper trail we all leave behind us. She gives solid advice and explicit directions where possible. An extra bonus is the Transgender Identity Card. Just add your photo and personal data. Equally useful for FTM and MTF persons.

Yes! I want to purchase Dallas Denny's **Identity Management in Transsexualism**.
I'm enclosing check or money order for \$15.00 + \$3 S&H.

Ship to:

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____

This advertisement © 1994 by AEGIS
The American Educational Gender Information Service, Inc.
A 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation.

AEGIS
P.O. Box 33724
Decatur, GA 30033-0724

Shining Woman Tarot



Shining Woman Tarot is a sacred divination pack, awakening in the reader a sense of spiritual power and beauty. It is the result of decades of work with the Tarot, myth, dreams and the spiritual realities of the imagination. Its roots are in traditional Tarot, but it is also a radical departure.

The images, painted by the author herself, are drawn from many cultures and traditions, ranging over six continents and tens of thousands of years. The names and symbolism of the major and minor Arcana have been amended to reflect this -- the four suits are Trees, Rivers, Birds and Stones, while the Court cards are now Place, Knower, Gift and Speaker.

Unique in its linking of the Tarot to tribal and prehistoric art, *Shining Woman Tarot* opens up many new possibilities for the use of the Tarot today, and provides a valuable tool for personal development.

Rachel Pollack has worked with the Tarot for over twenty years and has written many books on the subject, including *Seventy-Eight Degrees of Wisdom* and *The New Tarot*. Her work has received wide praise for its innovative and sensitive approach to the Tarot.

"This work is about bringing the sacred into daily life. It calls attention to the awe surrounding us. Its lack of sexism is appreciated -- and the art grows on you. The *Shining Woman* tarot is a tool worth having." -- Melissa Ellen Penn, *Green Egg*

Published by The Aquarian Press, an Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers; Hammersmith, London. Copyright 1992 by Rachel Pollack.

Misery Loves Company Christine Beatty



"Christine Beatty writes with the authority of one who has not only lived but mastered her material." -- *Danielle Willis*

"They say a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Well, this book could get you into trouble for the rest of your life. What are you waiting for?" -- *Pat Califia*

"... good family values." -- *Alex Bennett* speaking of the author in a 1992 KITS radio interview. (I think he was joking.)

available for
\$8.50 per copy
(postpaid) from:

Glamazon Press
P.O. Box 423602
San Francisco,
California 94142