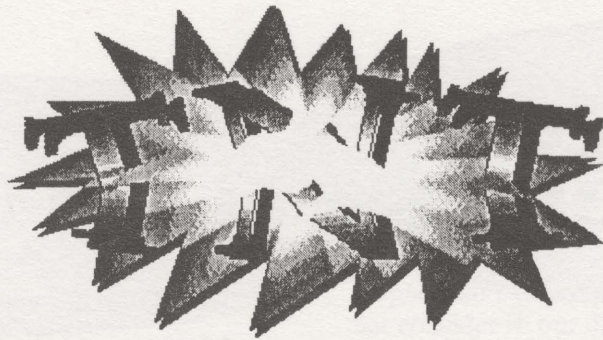


\$5.00



Spring '95

#4

TRANSSEXUAL • NEWS • TELEGRAPH
The Magazine of Transsexual Culture

Inside:

**Transgender
Self-Mutilation**

**A Brief History of
the Community Press**

**San Francisco Passes
Anti-Discrimination
Law**

The Castrated Woman

And much more!

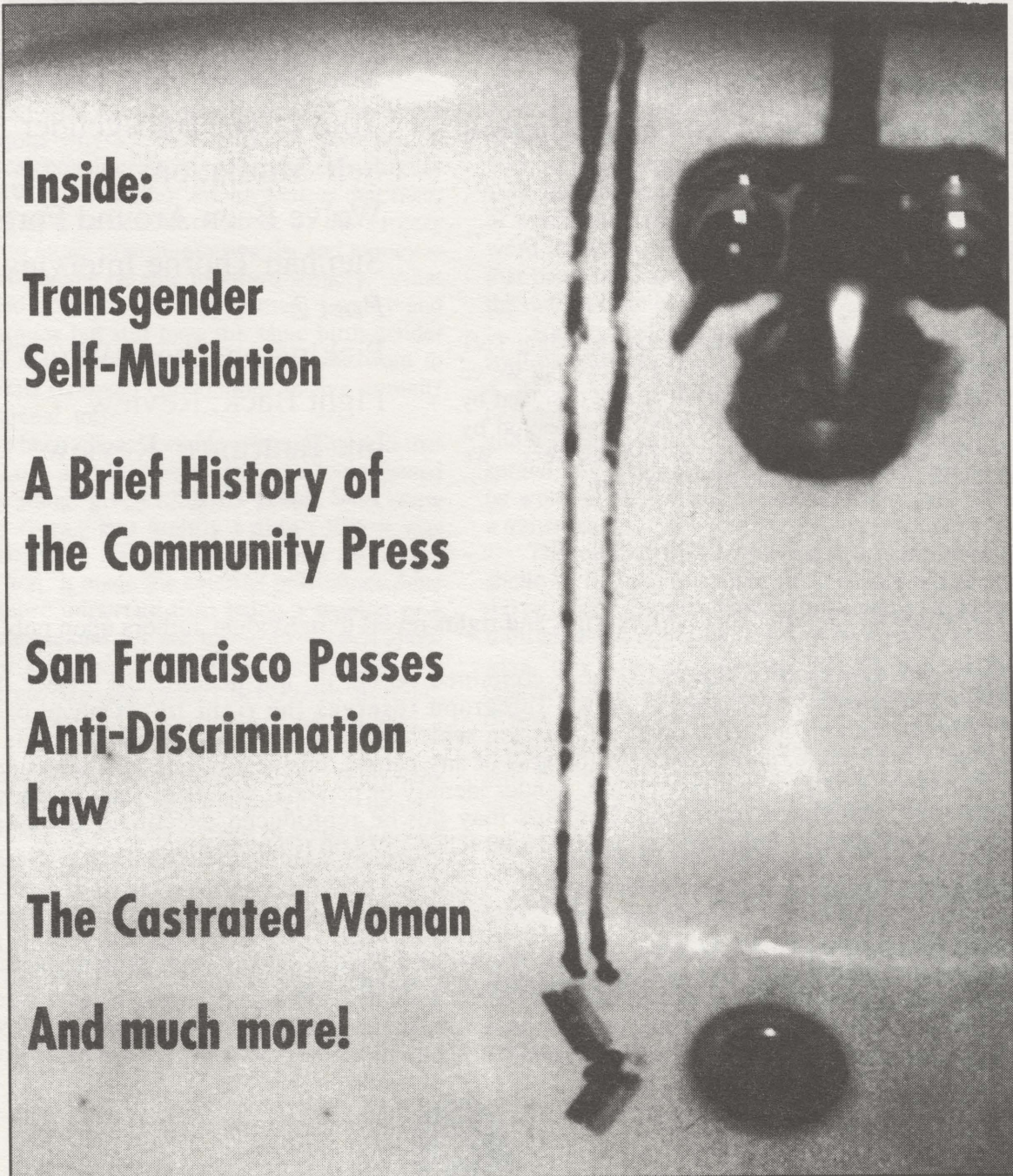


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Since Issue #2, we've been using the exploding TNT symbol you've all come to know and love but we've never given credit to its creators. It was designed by Fran Windler of Kansas City from a suggestion by DavinaAnne Gabriel, editor of *TransSisters*. We apologize for this unintentional oversight.

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Blessed be those who send us stuff to print.

We welcome your letters, articles, poems, stories and photographs. Please send them to:
TNT, 41 Sutter Street, #1124, San Francisco, CA 94104-4903
Telephone no.: 415/703-7161.

Editorials

POST -OP ELITISM

For as long as I have been a part of the transgendered community (since 1981) there has always been the subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) belief that only post-op transsexuals are "real" transsexuals while non- or pre-ops are just sad "wannabes" who'll never make the grade. The reason for this has been because sex reassignment surgery has always been given as the defining characteristic of a transsexual. Having surgery meant you were TS, not having surgery meant you weren't, and there was nothing in between.

Now it's not that simple any more. There are a number of reasons why someone may not have genital surgery: medical considerations can preclude surgery (diabetes or HIV, for example); the awareness that there is no guarantee of a successful outcome of the surgery and being able to attain orgasm afterwards; and money -- some people will **never** be able to afford surgery. What about those who undergo sex reassignment surgery and cosmetic procedures but still have the same birth-gender identities? And what about those few men who want to have their genitals removed but continue to live as men? Are they transsexual, too?

I've always been uncomfortable with this notion that surgery defined one as transsexual. It was a doctor-based notion, for one thing, given to us by people who knew nothing of our lives. But mainly I didn't like it was because it made being transsexual what you *do* rather than what you *are*. It made the external procedures done to your body more important than being a woman or a man. Being transsexual for me has always been about identity and the expression of self, not the surgery one elected to undergo. Had the surgery never been invented, I'd *still* live as a woman, because that's what I am: a transsexual.

I know this is not the accepted definition. Most nons (and no doubt more than a few transsexuals) believe being TS is nothing more than a series of steps followed in a certain order (a la Anne Bolin) rather than something you feel inside your body and mind all your life. I say a transsexual is someone with a transposed gender identity who lives full time in the gender opposite their birth gender and is willing to die in that gender regardless whether they have surgery or not because they can't live any other way -- like Billy Tipton, and the countless other unknown transsexuals of history. I'm not saying

surgery isn't important -- it's *very* important -- but I do not consider it our defining characteristic. I consider that to be identity, the overwhelming sense of self that says "woman" or "man" when the morphology of the body says otherwise.

ON BEING TRANSGENDER ED

It seems like everyone is transgendered these days. Whether it's a man who wears a dress occasionally, or a woman who occasionally thinks about being a man, more people than ever are acknowledging some transgendered feelings. On one level, that's fine. I'm always in favor of people coming to terms with heretofore hidden aspects of their psychological makeup. What bothers me about this is that being transgendered is becoming a fashion statement or pose. 'Transgender' is an elastic term loaded with social and cultural meanings, some of which are derogatory to transsexuals. Lots of times the word transgender is used as some soup-like designation that becomes a sponge to soak up transsexuals and blunt the radical edge of changing sex.

Sometimes it approaches the absurd. A sincere, well-meaning woman I once knew told me her lover was a transsexual. I was intrigued and one day finally met her lover. He was a guy. He had a day's growth of beard and was sprawled in a chair in the way that only guys can sprawl in a chair, all arms and legs, bony and hairy. But he wore an earring and a colorful neck scarf. Obviously, a transsexual.

This elasticity of definitions strikes me as being very shallow. Being a transsexual is a deeply felt emotion and drive that comes from the inside out. Being transgendered is not like putting on a pretty bracelet that says 'boy' or 'girl' as one sees fit. This is the most central aspect of our lives. It's not a pose or a statement. When and if the current fascination with transsexuals and transgendered people disappears, we'll still be here -- still having to get jobs, live and work in a world that often doesn't understand us, living our lives.

PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF SURGERY

I find public disclosure of surgery status distasteful. While many transsexuals are fairly open about whether they are pre-, post- or non-op, I tell people it's none of their business, and I do not disclose my surgery status except close friends. This has less to do with politics than personal taste and experience. I might be well known, but I'm fairly private about any number of

personal, intimate details about my life. A couple of years after leaving the job where I transitioned, my old boss and some volunteers from there and I were going to meet for lunch. All of these women had been supportive of me and I looked forward to seeing them once again.

We met at a nice Financial District restaurant -- one of those places with napkins artfully tucked into wine glasses and waiters who pulled the chairs out for you. There were hugs and smiles all around. As we sat at the table looking at menus, Jessica, who had been one of my big supporters in a very nasty political situation, beamed a smile at me. "So what about the surgery?" she asked rather loudly but with complete sincerity.

A hush fell over the table that blanketed the entire restaurant, one of those full room silences when everyone seems to lean in your direction to hear what you'll say next. In the split second between her asking and me replying, the nosy obnoxiousness of that question crystallized into fine clarity. "You know, Jessica," I replied, "that's really none of your business." This came out more snappish than I wanted, because the next thing I knew Jessica had paled and begun apologizing.

"Oh my god, you're right, I'm sorry, that was completely out of line. I'm sorry, I'm really sorry." It was at this point, before matters got completely out of hand, that S---, my ex-boss, rescued us both with a deft change of conversation and the rest of the lunch proceeded smoothly. (I have to say that when I returned home that day, there were two messages on my answering machine. Both were from Jessica. She was still apologizing. I called her back, we talked about it, and we're still friends.)

After this I became much more sensitive about the whole matter of disclosure. "Have you had genital surgery?" is generally a boorish and rude question, especially when asked in public or by people one barely knows or, worst of all, both at the same time. People have the impression you can ask transsexuals anything at all about their lives, and we'll just smile and start telling people anything and everything about ourselves. And most of the time, they'll be right.

I think the reason for this willingness for revelation comes from a desire to make ourselves liked by other people and to make them feel comfortable around us. It's an understandable emotion, but it doesn't work that way. Disclosing personal information rarely makes people more tolerant or accepting unless they are already friends. Otherwise, most people are put off by it.

I follow the same philosophy in other areas of my life as well. While I am out at work, my transsexuality is an off-limits subject. It's not relevant to my job performance, for one thing; for another, none of my co-

workers divulge their personal histories, and I don't want to follow different rules than anyone else. In my daily life, while many people know I'm transsexual, I don't bring it up for the simple reason that people don't bring up their lives with me. My transsexuality is not a subject that's open for anyone to remark upon. If nothing else, it helps preserve dignity in a world that constantly tries to strip it away from you.

COMING IN THE NEXT TNT:

REALITY CHECK -- A Not-So-Rude Re-Awakening of an Activist

*MAX VALERIO ON MARTINE
ROTHBLATT'S APARTHEID OF
SEX*

*COMMUNITY AND
TRANSSEXUALS*

DEJA VU

*PLUS A NEW FEATURE:
TNT PERSONALS!*

*And the usual reviews, criticisms,
commentary and cartoons*

*DUE OUT IN LATE JULY/EARLY
AUGUST*

TNT #5 - SUMMER

Letters

Dear Gail,

Riki Anne Wilchins' statement in her letter in issue #3 of TNT that "I don't believe it is possible for me to have any responses which are 'remnants of male physiology;' all my responses are remnants of transsexual female physiology" is not only pure unadulterated pseudo-intellectual claptrap but likewise some very serious self-serving bullshit to boot.

Riki's claim reminds me of Humpty Dumpty's statement to Alice in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* that a word "means just what I choose it to mean -- neither more nor less." Moreover, it's going to take more than just all the king's horses and all the king's men to put this cockamamie, cloud-cuckooland off-the-wall reasoning back together against once it is subjected to some honest scrutiny.

In making such a statement Riki is claiming that she was female before undergoing sex-change surgery, despite having a penis and testicles at the time. What Riki is attempting to do is to extend the dictum that "Biology is destiny" to likewise mean that biology is not biology. This amounts to merely changing the definition of the term "female" to suit her own purposes and is nothing more than intellectual legerdemain, pure and simple.

If Riki did not possess male physiology before undergoing surgery, then what exactly is it that distinguished her physiology from that of male physiology, despite the fact that it was identical to it in every way? Riki is attempting to distinguish between male physiology and "normal (by which she means *appropriate*) transsexual female" physiology on a totally non-physiological basis; that is, on the basis of psychological identification. However, being *female identified* does not make one *female*; having a vagina makes one female.

If Riki were female to begin with, what is it other than the fact that her physiology was male that made her transsexual? Transsexuality, *by definition*, means that our physiologies are (or were) in opposition to our psychological identities. If physiology can be described according to psychological identification, as Riki suggests, then what kind of physiology does someone who is unsure of what one is have, or what of someone who identifies as male at one time and as female at another? Does that person's physiology likewise change

from male to female simply as a result of a shift in psychological identification?

Moreover, if Riki's physiology were female to begin with, why then did she need to undergo surgery? The implications of Riki's poorly thought out reasoning are not only that sex-change surgery is merely cosmetic in nature and that transsexuals do not really change sex as a result of it, but that it is not really necessary at all for anyone to undergo.

Riki goes on to say that "it is important for me to joyfully own my own body before, as well as after surgery." If Riki were to truly joyfully own her body before and after surgery, she would freely admit to having been male before surgery and realize that that does not diminish her femaleness now, rather than engage in the intellectual dishonesty of redefining scientific terms to suit her own purpose.

What makes the lives of transsexual persons extraordinary, as Susan Stryker suggested in her article in that same issue, is that we *do* cross the boundary of sex; that is, that we *do* go from male to being female, or vice-versa. This, like travelling to the moon, is something that human beings have desired to do since time immemorial, but has only truly been possible within the twentieth century. I submit that our journeys across that previously impenetrable boundary of sex are ultimately even more profound than that of human beings who have set foot on the moon. Riki's assertion merely serves to trivialize the profundity of such an accomplishment.

And as if her claim to being female before surgery were not ridiculous enough, like Alice's adventures in Wonderland, Riki's assertions then just get "curiouser and curiouser!" Riki proceeds to claim that even though she has undergone sex change surgery that she still has a penis, but that it is now just reconfigured. Riki is free to call her vagina anything that she wants to call it; however, she had better not refer to *my* vagina as a penis, reconstructed or otherwise. I had a penis before I underwent surgery; what I now have is a *vagina*. Granted, my vagina is not exactly like that of nontranssexual women and is incontrovertibly made from the inverted skin of a penis, and is also incontrovertibly a surgically constructed vagina, but that does not make it a reconfigured penis.

If a nontranssexual woman who is born with a short vagina undergoes surgery to lengthen that vagina by use of skin graft from her thigh, her surgically lengthened vagina is not then a thigh, nor is the part of it that was constructed from the skin graft of her thigh. Neither then is my vagina still a penis even though it was made from the inverted skin of a penis.

LETTERS *cont.*

Riki is neither joyfully owning her own body both before and after surgery with either her claim to have been physiologically female before surgery or to still have a penis after surgery. Such claims are, in fact, precisely the opposite of joyfully owning one's body both before and after surgery. Rather, it is to simultaneously embellish what one was beforehand and to diminish what one has become afterward. Ultimately, this only serves to discount just how extraordinary the accomplishment of changing sex truly is. The cause of transsexual empowerment is ill served by such intellectually shallow and dishonest self-serving bullshit such as this.

**In Sisterhood,
Davina Anne Gabriel
Editor, *TransSisters***

Dear Gail,

Thanks for the additional copies of TNT. Any words of encouragement are always welcome! Getting to the point I am at today, of starting a private practice, has been a marathon project. Worse yet, I am only at the midpoint of a 40 year program.

I expect to be the only "out" transsexual physician for the foreseeable future. In the 13 years since I started medical school in 1981, I have only met one transsexual physician in person. I have heard of, or correspond with, a few others, including:

- a closeted pediatrician in the Midwest;
- a psychiatrist with an uncertain reputation;
- an emergency medicine specialist;
- two unemployed former interns (fired due to transsexual status);
- an unhappy and withdrawn rural general practitioner who avoids other TSs;
- a pathologist;
- retired physicians of various sorts who never practiced after transition.

Altogether, I estimate there are not much more than 10 transsexual physicians in North America, and perhaps a similar number overseas. This is in agreement with the physician/population ration of about 1/500 in the US and Canada, and a transsexual population of about 5000. I might have one or two colleagues "in the pipeline" for 5-10 years in the future if I am lucky. Until then I must practice alone or with non-transsexual physician allies.

Therefore I am in a somewhat different position than TNT. You have the option of not publishing articles about makeup or shopping because other publishers fill that "need" *ad nauseum*.. Since I am the first and only transsexual physician, I am expected to be all things to

all T people, clearly an impossibility. Worse yet, I am not interested in perpetuating circa 1940s style Benjaminite medical practices, for the same reason that you don't publish articles about shopping or makeup -- been there, done that, it's a dead end.

I don't know what impact the movie "Junior" will have, but it is interesting that it is coming out at this time. Mainstream society is finally contemplating the end of gender as we know it. Perhaps our time has finally come? Remember, the 21st century is transhuman!

**Love,
Joy Diane Shaffer, M.D.**

Dear Gail,

Thank you very much for your interesting and informative publication. Every word brings a greater sense of community, and thus it also brings hope to the women of our project. We look forward to future issues.

**Sandra LaFramboise, RPN
Executive Director, High Risk Project
Vancouver, BC**

(The 1994 Stonewall march in New York City was broadcast live by KPFA-FM, a listener-sponsored radio station in Berkeley, California. Leslie Feinberg's speech was inadvertently cut off, causing much anger in the bay area transgender community. The following letter and response from KPFA was forwarded to us from a reader.)

**Marci Lockwood, General Manager, KPFA-FM
Dear Marci and KPFA:**

Before I can renew my subscription to KPFA I would like an explanation for something that happened during your coverage of the Gay/Lesbian Freedom Day Parade and 25th anniversary of the Stonewall riots in New York. It happened when Leslie Feinberg, a transgendered lesbian, was about to speak. She was abruptly cut off before she could say anything, and there was no apology or even explanation for what happened from anyone at the station afterwards.

At first I tried to explain away what appeared to be blatant censorship as an unfortunate technical problem, but I finally had to admit that, deep down, I believe Feinberg was deliberately cut off because she is a transgendered lesbian.

I would like to hear your explanation for the interruption of Leslie's speech. I would also like to know your station policy and/or opinion, if any, regarding the transgendered community.

**Sincerely,
A Listener**

more LETTERS

Dear Listener:

Thanks for your letter regarding the Stonewall broadcast last June. That was not a KPFA broadcast per se; rather it was done by Pacifica National Programming. So I can't tell you why Leslie Feinberg's speech was cut off because we weren't producing the broadcast.

However, as someone who has produced many national programs for Pacifica (including the April 1993 March on Washington), I can imagine a variety of possibilities, none of which includes the possibility of censorship. Doing a live broadcast like that involves mixing many different elements - the stage, live interviews in the booth, calls from reporters at different sites. Sometimes you are presented with a really important live interview, and you either do it at that moment or you lose it. Sometimes there are problems with the feed from the stage to the booth. And sometimes the speaker on the stage starts using language that is prohibited by the FCC. I don't know which of those things was happening during the Stonewall broadcast, but I would find it very difficult to believe that a decision was made to censor Leslie.

At KPFA, we offered copies of Stone Butch Blues as premiums to subscribers during our coverage of the 1994 San Francisco Lesbian/Gay Freedom Day broadcast. KPFA has no policy that discriminates against or censors transgendered people.

I'm forwarding your letter to Pacifica National Programming. I don't know if they will answer it -- it is very likely they don't even remember what happened during the broadcast, but, again, I would be very surprised if Leslie was cut off because of censorship. That just isn't who we are or what we're about.

Sincerely,

Ginny Z. Berson

Program Director, KPFA

Dear Gail:

Thank you for your letter and back issues of *Transsexual News Telegraph*. I am glad that your publication had simply moved its mailing address and not gone out of print. I found the articles in *TNT* very interesting and am looking forward to receiving future issues. It has been very refreshing to have found *TNT* (along with *Chrysalis Quarterly* and *TransSisters*). These publications are unique in that they actually speak to the needs and issues of transsexuals (and transgendered individuals). It has been a rather strange relief to find that there are other other individuals who have been dealing with gender related issues all their life, too. My only complaint is that the time for publications

of this type and nature have been long overdue. I appreciate the time and effort that has gone into *TNT*. I do not feel that I am unique in my need for a publication like *TNT*. Please continue to produce your magazine for those of us who want and need more than beauty tips and fantasy stories.

Sincerely,

Stanley [REDACTED]

Dear Gail:

When I first hear of *TNT*, I thought it might be the house organ for Transgender Nation. So I was most pleasantly surprised to recently (and finally) encounter a professionally published, almost sleek 'zine filled with intelligent pieces ranging from art to politics, each flavored with that same Bay Area progressive positivism which, as a stifled east coast transie, I find so invigorating. What is it -- the air out there? With the exception of New Yawk, transgender insurgency back east is all too often a solitary notion, and openly showing one's transgendered face is something usually left to talk show guests. (Talk shows? Last April, I spent five of my fifteen minutes outing myself on C-SPAN while asking Tim McFeeley and Peri Jude Radevic to do something about "inclusivity" in their organizations and strategies.) Reading *TNT* only makes me want to relocate to SF that much sooner. Thanks and spansks to all of you *TNT* writers, photogs, and editors, for your thoughts, words, pix and deeds. Your screed indeed succeeds in helping this girl keep on keeping on, fighting with nons and righting some wrongs in my own piece of trans-utopian hell. Hey, if it wasn't difficult, we wouldn't be who we are, would we? Thanks!

Yours in Genderbliss,

Jessica M. Xavier

NEW ADDRESS AND E-MAIL, TOO!

We've moved! Our new address is: 41 Sutter Street, #1124, San Francisco, CA 94104-4903. We apologize to those of you who have had problems in the past with the mail; those problems should be corrected by our new location.

The phone number (415/703-7161) remains the same. When leaving a message, please speak slowly and clearly. We have not been able to return some calls because we couldn't understand the phone number or address left. We want to return your phone calls!

You can now reach us by e-mail as well. Our e-mail address is [REDACTED]@aol.com.

COMMUNITY UPDATES AND ALERTS

BRANDON TEENA UPDATE

The trial of John Lotter, one of the two men accused of murdering Brandon Teena, Lisa Lambert and Philip Devine, ended last Friday, March 3. Nissen was found guilty of 1st degree murder for Brandon Teena and guilty of 2nd degree murder of Lisa Lambert and Philip Devine. A date for sentencing has not yet been set. Jury selection in the trial of Tom Nissen, the other man accused in the murders, is scheduled to begin May 8, 1995.

FTM CONVENTION

The first national FTM convention will be held in San Francisco on the weekend of August 18-2, 1995. The location is yet to be determined. Anyone wishing to obtain more information or be on the pre-registration list should write to: FTM, 5337 College Avenue, #142, Oakland, California, 94618.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

There has been a lot of good news worldwide recently: New Delhi, India recently passed a law allowing hijras to register in the gender identity of their choice, Denmark has deleted transvestism from its official list of mental disorders, and New South Wales, Australia has introduced a law banning discrimination based on gender identity. Even South Africa has a television show where various leaders of the new government (including Nelson Mandela) are interviewed by Evita Bezuidenhout, a character played by playwright Peiter-Dirk Uys. But none have gone as far as New Zealand, which recently ruled that an MTF was legally married to a man and so entitled to a divorce. The High Court noted that "If society allows people to undergo therapy and surgery to fulfill that desire, then it ought to allow such persons to function as fully as possible in their reassigned sex, and that must include the capacity to marry."

GENDERTRASH

is the name of a very cool Canadian transsexual magazine. Issue #3 (Winter '95) just came out. It features a pretty transsexual girl on the cover, in-your-face politics, a story where all the characters are transsexual and an unabashed attraction for

transsexual women and men, one of the many unacknowledged sexual appetites of this world. Pick up a copy at your local queer bookseller or send \$6.00 to: *genderpress*, Box 500-62 Church Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M4Y 2E3.

9TH ANNUAL IFGE COMING TOGETHER, WORKING TOGETHER CONFERENCE

will be held this year from March 15-19 at the Sheraton Colony Square Hotel in Atlanta, Georgia. The largest conference of its kind in the world, this year's conference will feature a special performance of *The Opposite Sex Is Neither* by Kate Bornstein as well as over 30 workshops and seminars ranging from outreach to spirituality. To register for IFGE Atlanta Action or to obtain more information, please call 617/899-2212.

LOREN CAMERON

has a new photography exhibit beginning May 1 at 848 Community Artspace at 848 Divisadero in San Francisco. Entitled "The Body Alchemy", it is a celebration of the community. A wine reception will be held from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Monday, May 1. The cost is \$5.00. No one will be turned away for lack of funds (no chiselers, please). There will be readings at 7:30 and 8:30 p.m. by James Green, David Harrison and Susan Stryker. The show will run from May 1 through June 1 and gallery hours are every Sunday from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Loren's work has won wide praise from the transgendered community for showing us as human beings and not as freaks. His last show was wildly popular and the reception was jammed; this one should be, too. See you there!

Our Visions, Our Voices, Loren's first show (some of which was seen in TNT #3) is going to be shown again at the Richmond Art Center in Richmond, California, beginning May 10, 1995. If you missed it the first time, now's your chance to catch it. Loren's work is also part of an upcoming group exhibition entitled *Our Lives: Negotiating Male Identity* at the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art located at Two N. 2nd Street in San Jose, California. The show runs from April 14 through May 20. Information about gallery hours may be

obtained by calling 408/283-8155.)

COMMUNITY UNITED AGAINST VIOLENCE is offering self-defense classes for all of the queer community starting on March 18 and again on May 13. The training includes how not to look like a victim waiting to happen and how to avoid confrontations. The classes are available on a sliding scale between \$35 - \$55. These classes are especially appropriate now as San Francisco has been invaded by right-wing hate talk radio (KSFO 560-AM) which pours its verbal swill into the airwaves 24 hours a day. CUAV's other services include help in domestic violence situations, a Speaker's Bureau and a telephone crisis line. Volunteer training for the crisis line starts March 21. CUAV was one of the first gay/lesbian organizations to support the transgender community and we urge our readers to support them if they can. Please contact them at 777-5500 or drop by their offices at 973 Market Street, Suite 500, in San Francisco.

HERMAPHRODITES WITH ATTITUDE

is the new quarterly newsletter of The Intersex Society of North America, a peer support, educational, and activist group for intersexuals. Intersexuals are individuals born with mixed sexual anatomy. Some of us have genitals which are in between male and female; some have testes and female genitals, or ovaries and male genitals. Some of us have ovo-testes. Intersexuality is a physical condition with psychological and emotional consequences. The ISNA's purpose is to support the intersex experience: to allow individuals to develop an intersex self-identity, to campaign against the medical practice of damaging and unnecessary surgery on the genitals of intersexual infants and children, and to provide a safe place for intersexuals to meet each other. A one year subscription to *Hermaphrodites With Attitudes* is \$12 postpaid and a sample copy is \$3. Please write to: ISNA, P.O. Box 31791, San Francisco CA 94131.

LAVENDER YOUTH RECREATION AND INFORMATION CENTER

is looking for youth volunteers for the LYRIC Youth Talkline, a peer support phone line for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and questioning youth 23 and younger. People of color, transgendered people, and people under 118 are especially encouraged to

get involved. Call Anne or Olga at LYRIC (415/703-6150) by March 31st for more information if you are interested in volunteering.

4TH ANNUAL TRANSGENDER LAW AND POLICY CONFERENCE

is happening this year from Wednesday, June 14 through Sunday, June 18, at the Hilton Hotel - Southwest in Houston, Texas. Sponsored by ICTLEP (International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy). Workshops will cover the following topics: jobs, health and insurance, rights and documents. For information on prices and registration, please call Phyllis Frye at 713-██████████

VERONICA KLAUS

is a San Francisco TS singer with a new album out eponymously called "Veronica Klaus Heart & Soul Revue Live". Winner of the best Rhythm & Blues/R&B Band in the 1994 Wammies (the yearly music awards sponsored by *SF Weekly* honoring alternative music), the album is currently available only on cassettes. It is available at Medium Rare Records at 2310 Market Street, San Francisco. Call Medium Rare at 415/255-7273 for information about obtaining a copy of Veronica's album. Veronica is currently working on new material and hopes to return to the Great American Music Hall with the Heart & Soul Revue in April or May.

FULL CIRCLE OF WOMEN

is a radically different, politically incorrect exploration of what it means to be a woman will be happening again this year from March 31 through April 2, 1995 at the Essex Conference Center and Retreat at Essex, Massachusetts. The cost for the entire weekend is \$250, which includes meals and all workshops. Anyone wanting more information about the conference should call Janis Walworth at 508-██████████

NEW POLICY AT AEGIS

Aegis (American Educational Gender Information Service), which publishes *Chrysalis Quarterly* and *AEGIS News*, has announced a change to a membership organization from a non-membership organization. Membership dues of \$36 a year have been proposed. This includes a two-issue subscription of the magazine, a 10% discount on all publications sold by AEGIS, and the right to vote for AEGIS Board members.

SAN FRANCISCO PASSES GENDER IDENTITY ANTI- DISCRIMINATION LAW

On December 30, 1994, San Francisco became the fourth city in the country to pass a law prohibiting discrimination against transgendered people, the others being Minneapolis, Santa Cruz and Seattle. (One woman we know who heard the news on her radio at work shouted "Yes! Yes!" and began dancing around her office.) The entire Board of Supervisors voted for its passage, including Tom Ammiano, a gay man, and Susan Leal and Carole Migden, two lesbian women. Given the long-standing suspicion between the transgender and gay and lesbian communities, passage of this law can only help in easing the abrasiveness between the two.

This reporter has rarely been so proud to be a San Franciscan as she was on that day -- except possibly for November 8, 1994, when San Franciscans once again showed their true spirit when they rejected the sad, dangerous right-wing shift in American politics and voted solidly liberal and leftist.

The law went into effect on January 30, 1995, the beginning of the Chinese New Year year of the boar. That evening, on a mild coastal night after several days of

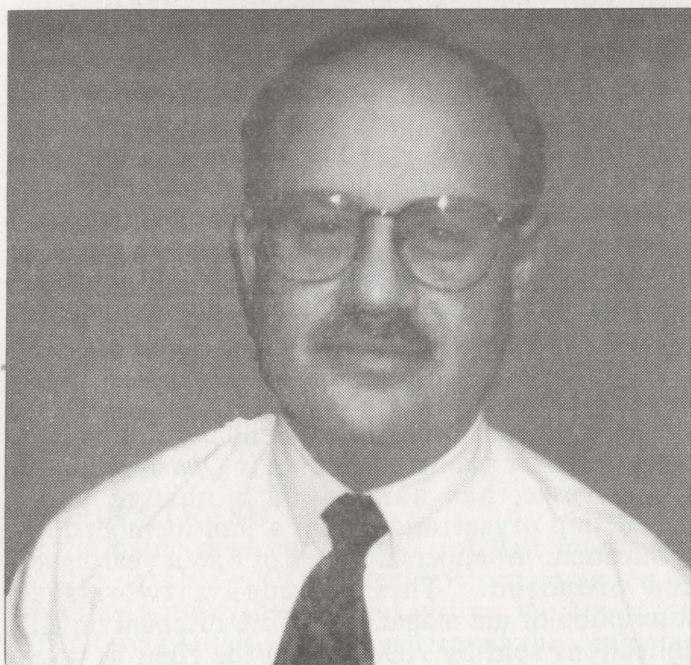
rain, a reception was held in the offices of San Francisco's Human Rights Commission celebrating the law's passage. Edwin Lee, the Director of Human Rights Commission, spoke of the law as an event that will change San Francisco for the better forever. Supervisor Terence Hallinan, the principal sponsor of the bill, said that from this day forward, transgender people in San Francisco were now a protected minority. "You can't ridicule a transgendered woman now because it's a slur. You can't throw a punch at a transsexual because it's a hate crime," he said.

"You don't always get a lot of excitement on the Board of Supervisors," Hallinan continued. "Most of the time it's pretty tame stuff -- deciding which street corners get new stop signs and the like. It's a terrific honor to be able to extend civil rights to a group that hasn't had any."

Many people worked for the passage of this law. It isn't possible to mention them all, but some names stand out and deserve to be mentioned:

•Larry Brinkin is the one person who probably did more for the passage of the law than most people realize.

Passage of the transgender anti-discrimination law was a community effort in the best sense of the term.



Larry Brinkin



Terence Hallinan

Larry took a lot of heat from people who didn't think that transgender discrimination was important enough, and he advocated for us when no one else would. Thanks should also go to his two assistants, Cynthia Goldstein and Brian Chieu;

- Tamara Ching, who organized much of the Asian, Pacific Islander and transgender people with AIDS who spoke about their discrimination;

- Jamison Green, the principal author of the final Human Rights Commission Investigation Into Discrimination Against Transgendered People. James distilled hundreds of hours of personal testimony into a readable booklet that showed the discrimination daily faced by transgendered people;

- Camille Genderella Liberty, whose clear insistence that our voices be heard and that we speak for ourselves, instead of the voices of doctors and care providers;

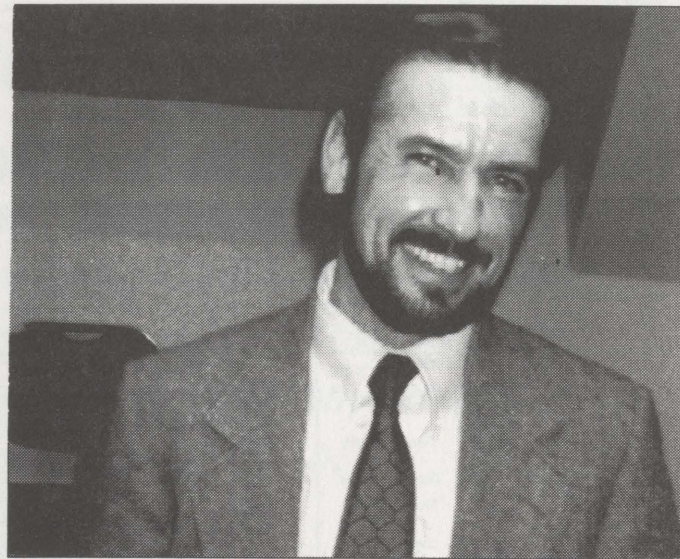
- Shelley Salieri, who worked closely with the Board of Supervisors;

- Kiki Whitlock, who chaired the Human Rights Commission Transgender Task Force that led to the anti-discrimination hearings;

- Lawrence Wong, who got Kiki Whitlock on the Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Task Force, which was instrumental in bringing transgender discrimination to the Human Rights Commission attention;

- the Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender Committee of the HRC who supported us every step of the way;

- and, perhaps most importantly, the bravery of all those who came forward with their personal testimony



Jamison Green



Kiki Whitlock

during the hearings on transgender discrimination and abuse as well as all those who worked tirelessly behind the scenes.

Robert Oakes, from Mayor Jordan's office, read a proclamation declaring January 30, 1995 Transgender Equal Rights Day in San Francisco. Jim Bolig, the president of ETVC (the largest cross-dresser and transsexual organization in the world) spoke of "how we crossdressers owe transsexuals a debt of gratitude for the passage of this law."

But perhaps Kiki Whitlock said it best: "I've never seen a community come together so quickly over an issue. Passage of this law was a community effort in the best sense of the word."

The passage of the transgender antidiscrimination law was even mentioned by *The Wall Street Journal* in an article ridiculing the City for continuing to elect public officials who believe in the principles of fairness and the good of the many instead of principles of greed and the good of the few. This viewpoint was not unexpected, since the article was written by and for people who have never been slammed up against the wall by the police for doing absolutely nothing. It is odd, though, that the *Wall Street Journal* would criticize the City for extending civil rights to a neglected minority. America has often been at the forefront of extending rights to people who have none. It makes perfect sense that San Francisco would continue this tradition. It's too bad the *Wall Street Journal* doesn't understand that, but that's what happens when all you care about is money.

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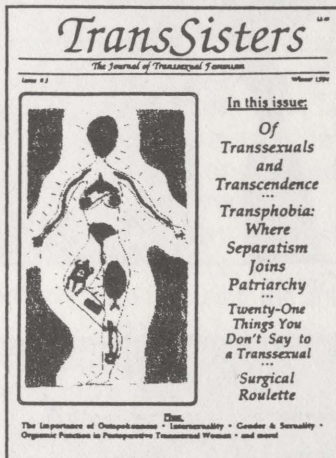
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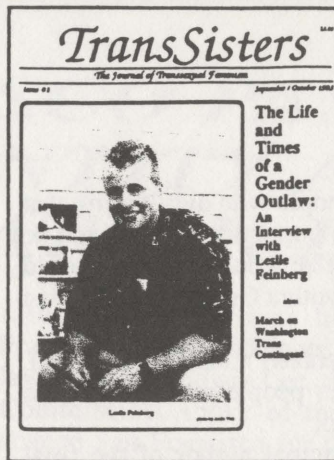
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--Belinda Doree, Notes from the Underground

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Over and Out in Academe: *Transgender Studies Come of Age*

by Susan Stryker

A lot of nontranssexual professional academics are beginning to catch on to what we transsexuals have known for a long time: transsexuality encompasses a fascinating, complex set of phenomena that pose some radical questions about the way sexuality, gender, and identity are instituted and maintained. It has much to teach us about the body and technology, the cultural processes through which individuals become intelligible to one another as persons, and construction of reality itself. We've learned transsexuality's lessons the hard way, figuring out how to evade the cultural assumptions that work to prevent us from embodying and performing ourselves the way we need to, and to exploit other assumptions that work in our favor. The nons have generally learned about the issues from books about us written by other nons, and have only recently begun turning to our own accounts and interpretations of what we've been up to. Over the last few years, however, a whole new body of interdisciplinary scholarship in the humanities, arts, and social sciences has emerged that has helped shift the concept of transsexuality out of the realm of psychopathology. The disease model no longer holds undisputed sway among most people who study transsexuality (apart from the medical/psychotherapeutic professionals with a personal stake in the management and regulation of transsexual lives).

Increasingly, the us/them dichotomy is not a useful way of distinguishing between professional academics and transsexuals. A growing number of us who are openly transsexual work as scholars, university professors, writers, and theorists of gender and sexuality. There is nothing new about transsexual academics. We've been around since the early days of transsexuality—one of the essays in Richard Green and John Money's *Transsexualism and Sex Reassignment* (1968) uses the case of a MTF engineering professor who wanted to continue her career post-transitionally to discuss the process of changing name and sex designations on school records and other personal identification papers. What seems to be changing is that more of us are out as transsexuals, and more of us are working on transsexuality as part of our professional

specialization. No longer are we simply transsexuals working in academe. We are part of the process of changing how the sex/gender system is understood not only because we act out in-your-face transsexual visibility on a day-by-day basis among members of the intellectual elite, but because we ourselves have the privilege of actively helping to shape the cultural discourses on sexuality and gender. Just as many Westerners have learned to turn to indigenous voices rather than Euro-American ethnographers and anthropologists when trying to understand non-Western cultures, and just as gays and lesbians are presumed to have greater insight into homosexuality than straight psychiatrists, transsexuals are beginning to be seen as the authorities on transsexuality.

Two recent international academic conferences illustrate the changing position of transsexuals and

Management posted signs asking conference participants to only use the restrooms in their portion of the hotel. No one did.

transsexuality in the academy. "In Queery, In Theory, In Deed: The Sixth North American Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Studies Conference" drew about 3,000 people to the University of Iowa, November 17-20, 1994. One

of the liveliest controversies at the conference had to do with how to draw the line between butch lesbian identities and female-to-male transsexuals. Dozens of papers dealt with various aspects of queer gender, but even more important than the academic work that was presented was the fact that many transsexual academics from around the world were finally able meet and talk with each other face-to-face. Many of us knew a few other transpeople working on topics related to our own studies, but all of us met people we'd never even heard of before. As a result, we organized the Transgender Academic Network, an electronic mailing list intended to keep members up-to-date on work going on in the field of transgender studies (see sidebar).

The conference had its negative aspects as well, however. During the closing plenary session, someone from the floor asked why the title of the conference did not include the word "transgender." Rather than answer the question, one of the panelists started talking about the need for multiracial diversity. After a round of hissing and booing, someone else from the floor asked that one

of the conference organizers please address the transgender question. One of the organizers did, saying that it had been hard enough to get a gay/lesbian/bisexual studies conference approved by a conservative university administration, and they didn't want to jeopardize the whole event by using the word "transgender." The organizer's answer prompted a barrage of protest. An FTM got up and spoke eloquently about how transgender inclusion was necessary for queer politics, and how lesbian and gay studies that didn't address variable constructions of gender simply reproduced dominant cultural norms of proper masculinity and femininity.

TRANSGENDER ACADEMIC NETWORK

The Transgender Academic Network was initiated by several individuals who attended the Queer Conference at the University of Iowa in November, 1994. Its purpose is to advance the state of transgender studies, both within the academy and without. Participation is open to anyone seriously interested in the study of transgenderism, whether or not they identify as transgendered, and whether or not they hold academic degrees. Regardless of self-identification, educational level, or professional status, however, we ask that you respect the intent and purpose of the group. It is designed as an informational resource for transgendered people and others involved in transgender studies. It is neither a support group for individuals beginning to question their gender identity, nor a place for the nontransgendered to assume that they have an understanding of transgenderism superior that of transgendered people themselves.

If you are interested in joining, please send your name, mailing address, email address, phone number, fax, institutional affiliation (if any), research interests, and a description of any works in progress to one of the addresses listed below. Most of the information will be available electronically. A paper copy of the newsletter will be mailed twice yearly.

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What was equally inspiring, however, was the number of nontranssexuals who rose to speak on behalf of transgender inclusion. Many of those who did so were young Asian dykes, suggesting that transgenderism is beginning to be seen as an axis of difference within the queer community that must be taken into consideration when working against other sorts of assumed privileges. As a result of that plenary session, the planning committee for the next conference will include transgendered members.

More recently, on February 24-26, 1995, the Center for Sex Research at California State University at Northridge hosted "The First International Conference on Gender, Cross-Dressing, and Sex Issues: A Dialogue Between the Professions and Those in the Community." As the title of the event suggests, the organizers had little sense that the transgender community and the professionals who study it might possibly intersect. Still, the conference productively broke down these artificial barriers on several fronts—though not necessarily in ways intended by the organizers. For example, the management of the convention hotel posted signs on restroom doors, asking participants in the conference to please use only the restrooms in that portion of the hotel where our conference was being held. Rather than challenge this blatantly transphobic act, the organizers agreed (not that it stopped most transgendered people from relieving their bowels and bladders where ever it suited them to do so). As a result, many nontransgendered professionals found themselves side-by-side at the urinals, stalls, and make-up mirrors with people they were much more accustomed to seeing in a clinical setting.

The Northridge conference did signal that nontranssexual professionals who are interested in us increasingly recognize that they need to talk with us, and not simply about us—even if many nons still don't have a clue how to do so without arrogance and condescension. Everybody there at least paid lip service to the idea that a "new paradigm" was needed to account for the complexities of sex and gender in the late 20th century, and that looking at transgender phenomena was a good way to start articulating that paradigm. Members of committee responsible for revising the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association's Standards of Care for the treatment of transsexuals listened respectfully to transgendered people's concerns and dissatisfactions. Several nons spoke up during sessions to counter some of the most offensively pathologizing statements made by other nons about us.

continued on page 21

THE CASTRATED WOMAN

BY RIKI ANN WILCHINS

Ed. Note: "Transsexual" is the author's preferred spelling of the word.

In *The Female Eunuch*, outlining the means by which authentic, dynamic female individuals are spiritually and psychologically castrated, Germaine Greer wrote: "the chief element in this process is... the suppression and deflection of Energy. The Girl struggles to reconcile her schooling along masculine lines with her feminine conditioning until Puberty resolves the ambiguity and anchors her safely in the feminine posture, if it works. When it doesn't she is given further conditioning as a corrective...".

A transsexual woman goes through a similar process, the chief element also being the suppression and deflection of energy. She struggles to reconcile her enforced schooling along masculine lines with her female gender identity. Ultimately transition, hormones, surgery, and the closet resolve the ambiguity and anchor her at last within a feminine posture acceptable to the nonocracy. If this doesn't work, she is given further conditioning in form of public humiliation, harassment, ostracism and actual assault as a corrective. Within this process, an authentic and dynamic child is transformed into a spiritually and psychologically debilitated and often defenseless transsexual adult.

The nonocracy often invents us as castrated males, a surgical scalpel having removed our manhood. Actually it is our womanhood that is removed, and with it our self-esteem, our joy in being part of the human community and our dignity as women. The nonocracy uses a scalpel subtler and sharper than steel. Its edges are composed of prejudice, harassment, public humiliation, ostracism. Everywhere we are encouraged participate in our own castration: to cut ourselves off from our identity, to assimilate, to be quiet, tame, docile, conforming, noncentric in thought, word and deed, ashamed of our selves, our sisters and our experience. What is amputated, in fact, is our identity as women.

The way this scalpel is wielded is all too familiar to most transsexual women. Harassed prior to transition for being too feminine as men, we are harassed afterward for being too feminine as women (wearing "too much" makeup, "trying too hard", etc.). Or we are harassed after transition for being "too masculine" and "male-like". We

are described by our doctors and by nontranssexuals as "successful" to the extent we can "blend in" with them: in other words, pass and go into the woodwork. We are employable to the degree we don't upset the noncentric appercart by being "noticeably transsexual". We receive romantic attention from prospective non partners to the degree that we approximate non women as well. We are complimented by those who say "I never would have guessed" or "you look just like a real woman"; they, it turn, intend to compliment us. Everywhere our power and simple dignity is taken from us.

The nonarchy applies further corrective to those who challenge its gender hierarchy in less subtle ways as well. We are disowned by our families. We have our children taken from us by the courts. We are fired from our jobs, turned out from homes and apartments. The punishment of the transsexual woman who is radical enough to claim her identity in the nonocracy is pervasive and overwhelming.

Within transsexual circles things are often not much better. Filled with shame and self-loathing, we confer status upon those of us who most look most nontranssexual. In our shame, many of us retire to the closet, sometimes for a lifetime. For those transsexual women who refuse to assimilate and go into the closet, further "corrective" conditioning can come from intrusive strangers, threatened males, angry feminists or even other closeted transsexuals. The woman with Childhood Chromosomal-Sex Disorder, in which physical sex and gender are in disagreement, [*the author's own term for childhood transsexuality*] who is strident, assertive and angry about the deflection and emasculation of her energy can also expect further conditioning among the professionals from whom she must seek treatment: i.e., surgeons strangely reluctant to operate, and shrinks correspondingly eager to label and diagnose.

Mary Wollstonecraft (fortuitously the author of *Frankenstein*) wrote in 1792, "Genteel women are, literally speaking, slaves to their bodies... Taught from their infancy that beauty is woman's scepter, the mind shapes itself to the body, and roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison." This rings eerily true for transsexuals, doubly imprisoned by our obsession with our looks, as well as by non-transsexuals' fixation on our bodies and what is, was, or will be in our pants.

Not only do we become slaves to our bodies, we may

Harassed for being too feminine as men, we are now harassed for being too feminine as women.



become captive to the search for nontranssexual appearance. Transition can start out with having our hair cut, dyed and permed, our nails done, our teeth capped, our legs waxed. We begin electrolysis for our beards and body hair and taking estrogen to correct our hormones. Later we have breast implants to augment hormones that have been asked to do their work too late, and then

perhaps surgery. From there, we go on to nose jobs, and Adam's-apple shaves. It may continue to having voices surgically altered to cut off the lower range, facial surgery to reduce strong bone structure, additional labial surgery too improve our vaginal "cosmetic appearance", and other procedures.

Some of our changes are psychological and behavioral. Doggedly altering the way we talk, gesture and move, we study nons for hints on what is "proper". We give up sports and exercise for fear we will appear muscular or masculine and we sometimes cultivate an atrophied, and therefore "feminine" physique. We learn to subdue our more florid emotions, since these are "masculine", and in particular to curb or suppress our anger. Fearing to be labeled "dominating" we try to project a more docile and submissive demeanor.

None of this is necessarily wrong. Some of this is the legitimate result of years of not being allowed to care for our appearance or act in ways that were natural for us. Much is an effort to turn back the clock on years of testosterone poisoning and social conditioning which has changed, perhaps even distorted or disfigured, our bodies, our minds and our emotions.

No one wants to be in the position of judging what another transsexual woman should or shouldn't do to feel comfortable with herself. Certainly I don't, for much of the above describes my own transition.

On the other hand, it would be less than honest to ignore that for some of us this process of progressive alteration becomes the original "slippery slope", where once one begins the only possible outcome is an endless and accelerating descent. We no longer know what is enough, or where or how to stop. We make some changes to look more feminine, to feel more comfortable, or perhaps to be less obviously read and therefore less often harassed. But if our goal is to be finally as non-transsexual as possible, because after all non-transsexual women define what is female, then where and how do we draw the line? Where do we say, at last, "Enough, it's finished"?

And so we continue changing and altering our selves, never satisfied and never complete. Until one day, we wake to find ourselves lost within the now unfamiliar landscape of our own bodies, like nomads in some strange and foreign desert, surrounded by unknown landmarks and inhabited by those whose alien features and distant ways we no longer recognize: our castration is complete.

Riki Ann Wilchins is a bisexual or lesbian, transgender or transsexual, man or woman living in New York City or Greenwich Village. She can be reached via e-mail at [redacted]@pipline.com

YOU ALWAYS HURT THE ONE YOU LOVE: TRANSGENDER SELF -MUTILATION

By Christine Beatty and Hannah Blackwell

Transgendered people hurt themselves every day, either in a suicide attempt or some other cry for help. The lives we lead can be difficult and sometimes overwhelming. If we don't have a lot of self-assurance and/or a strong support system, we can fall prey to the doubts and rejection we often encounter. Sex hormone therapy can produce vicious mood swings and depressions, especially when beginning or ending treatment. Our lives can start to feel hopeless, and happiness may seem an unattainable goal. That's when the danger looms.

We hurt ourselves in a number of ways. We retreat, isolating ourselves, which makes us even lonelier. We neglect our physical and mental health, thinking that if we aren't happy then it doesn't matter. We abuse alcohol and drugs, seeking that quick fix for our feelings, only to damage ourselves and even risk death. And, like the authors of this article, we take sharp objects to our bodies, trying for some kind of escape.

HANNAH'S STORY

My name is Hannah. I'm twenty three and I've tried to end my life four times. The last time was a little more than five years ago on Thursday, August 24th, 1989 at 2:30 in the afternoon, to be exact. I remember that date so well because that was the day I cut off my left hand with a radial arm saw. I was tired of the constant uphill battle of trying to justify my feelings. I was tired of trying to live with society's programming that told me unmistakably, "I was MALE, and MEN do not like other men, and most certainly do not like to dress in women's clothes. Whether at school or at home this is what I heard, "my feelings didn't count". I was supposed to be a man and ignore my feelings, because everybody else knew what was best for me. There appeared to be no one around who cared or who said it's okay to feel different. I was lonely and I was hurting.

The attempt came after a two week vacation in Athens, Greece. I came home to my adopted parents at about 11:00 p.m. and by 1:00 a.m. I had already consumed 200 Tylenol, 200 Advil, and 20 sleeping pills, washing it all down with 2 liters of Sprite. I lay down to die, only to wake up vomiting a few hours later. My

parents assumed it must have been the airline food, and I didn't bother correcting their assumption. I didn't care.

I spent the next morning sick. All I knew was that I was still here and I was still in pain. I kept dwelling on other ways to do the job. I considered running a car into an overpass or asphyxiating myself in the garage. When I was younger I had tried using a razor, but I couldn't cut the artery. That's when I thought of the saw. The saw would take care of that.

I remember laying on my bed and looking at the clock. It read 2:25 p.m. If I was to do anything it would have to be soon, before anyone came home. Dangling one foot off the bed, I knew if I touched the floor I would go down and use the saw. I touched the floor.

I assumed that after I engaged the saw with my wrist I would die. That would be all there was to it. But I was wrong. I opened my eyes. *Damn!* I was not dead. I jerked what remained of my limb from the blade. I could not feel my hand as I once did. It hung by

a portion of skin, freer than it was ever meant to be. Screaming in horror at what I'd done, I grabbed my wrist and hobbled to the garage door opener. Hesitating, not wanting to let go of my wrist, I hurriedly pushed the button. Making my way outside, the next door neighbor heard my cries and met me.

"Oh, my God!" he exclaimed. "Try to sit down." He ran past me to find a phone. By the time he came back there were three other neighbors there. You experience a sobering of the mind when you have your hand wrapped in a towel and hear things like:

"Here, hold his wrist and hand while I check on the ambulance."

"Is this the hand?"

"No, it's over here."

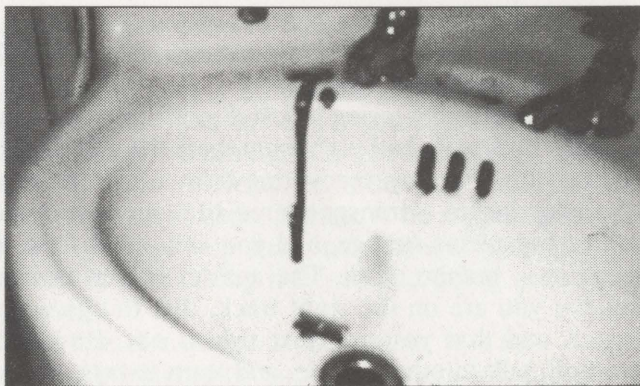
I started realizing what I had done. I never wanted to hurt my body — I just didn't want to live anymore.

After sixteen hours of surgery, two years of physical therapy, and a medical bill well over \$250,000, I have the hand I was born with... minus the strength, minus the fine motor coordination, minus some feeling, and a scar that makes it look like a railroad track from coast to coast. I consider myself one of the lucky ones. I still have both of my hands.

***"Hold his wrist and
hand while I check on
the ambulance."***

"Is this the hand?"

"No, it's over here."



I think about how things could have been different. The would-haves, the could-haves. How I would not have chosen to grow up the way I did: middle child of a mother of three who had problems with men, booze, who was a religious fanatic one week and a chemically-imbalanced psychotic the next (I'm not sure those aren't the same thing), crying for days on end. Poor me ran away at 14, severed parental rights at 16, and finally got kicked out of my adopted parents' house at 18 because I couldn't be the son they always wanted. Sprinkle in a few suicide attempts for good measure. But what good does that do? I only come back to reality: this is the way it is, this is who I am, and there's no changing the past.

CHRISTINE'S STORY

The year I turned 28 might have been the last year of my life. It was 1986, and everything was topsyturvy. First, I had begun to cross-live full time. The hormones had already had quite an effect on my body and mind at that point, and not only was I unable to pass as a "normal" guy anymore, I didn't want to. I was finishing my second year of college. I had no more money to cover tuition and expenses and no employment prospects. Since I was unwilling to masquerade as a man any longer and because transition was so expensive, I decided to become a full-time prostitute. Not only was the money good, my tricks were often respectful and they made me feel like a beautiful, desirable woman. (Between that and the employment discrimination we face, it's no wonder that so many transgendered women opt for the sex industry.) Of course hooking does have plenty of downsides (such as illegality and having sex with people you don't want) which eventually got to me.

I was rejected in varying degrees by my family and "friends" who suddenly no longer wanted me in their lives. This cold reception added to a growing pile of self-

doubt. Because of all these problems, because of things I was told when I was growing up, because of cues, both subtle and blatant, from society at large, I began to wonder if I was doing the right thing. So I went to a counselor to get some therapy to handle all the aforementioned stuff, to deal with my feelings of not fitting in. Unfortunately she was not very sympathetic to my issues. She was a radical feminist lesbian who asked *HOW COULD I KNOW HOW A WOMAN FEELS* and who made me cry from her challenges almost every time I went to see her.

This kind of stuff can wear you down, especially if you are smoking pot daily, drinking daily, shooting heroin several times a week and smoking Angel Dust once or twice a month. It is NOT a regimen for mental stability. I had a great excuse for my drug-saturated condition: escape from the aforementioned aforementioned. I'd been doing softer, recreational drugs since my late teens, so as my life filled with doubt and despair it seemed that increasing both my scope and level of consumption of mind-altering substances was the natural thing to do.

By fall of '86 I was miserable and scared. I felt trapped and hopeless. While I was very pretty, I was also somewhat of an obvious former male and I had to work my ass off just to maintain my looks. My electrolysis wasn't complete, and I had to wax (ouch!) my chest and legs at least once a month. People still ridiculed me on a regular basis. I had no job outside of whoring, and no real prospects for employment. So after a year of taking hormones and living as a woman, I concluded that I was a failure as a transsexual. My low self-esteem told me that I was a hopeless case, that I had no choice but to regress to living as a man again. So I did.

Though part of me *knew* I was cheating myself, I had another reason for quitting: my lover. She had mixed feelings about it, but I believed that, deep down, she really wanted a husband. Since I was the one that got us clocked everywhere, my decision seemed appropriate.

Desperate to get myself in the job market, I enrolled in a computer vocational school with a good placement record. With my long hair shorn off and a mustache grown over my lip, I found people taking me seriously again. I was no longer the object of ridicule. Going to school was easier, because I wasn't self-conscious about my no-longer-obvious transgendered state.

Part of me hated myself for being a coward, for

I consider myself one of the lucky ones. I still have both my hands.

selling out, for denying what I knew was inside of me because it was “easier” to just be a guy. And I never quit getting high. I managed to taper my drug use down to the point where it didn’t interfere with my classes, but I still got loaded, partly out of habit, partly out of the need to suppress the self-loathing I felt.

I needed to talk to someone, but didn’t know who. Certainly not my family. I didn’t have a therapist at that point, and the waiting list to get another was over a month long. The person I loved and trusted most, my lover Nola, was a transsexual, and I knew she would feel partly responsible for me quitting living as a woman. I didn’t want to burden her with my despair, so I kept it to myself.

It began to eat at me. As my disillusionment and feelings of failure grew, I began to want to escape. Not necessarily to die, but just to get away.

Not surprisingly, it wasn’t long after this that I smoked Angel Dust again -- the ultimate escape drug. It always brought total oblivion. But let’s not forget the chemical psychosis and the potential for violence-filled blackout states. Oh, no, we can’t forget *that*!.

I never will forget it, because during my chemical frenzy, I took a *sword* and cut off the fingertips of my left hand between the first and second knuckle. I was barely cognizant of doing it. The police brought me into hospital under arrest for terrifying my neighbors with the sword, charging me with “aggravated assault.” (I couldn’t believe it! Me?! I’m barely capable of assaulting a cockroach!) My memory is very sketchy of the whole episode because I was in and out of a blackout state until surgery almost 15 hours later. It took 4 days for the chemical psychosis to wear off completely. The surgical team decided *not* to try to reimplant my fingers because of two previous trips to the Psychiatric Emergency ward for PCP-related problems. I didn’t discover that they could have restored my fingers until after I had been transferred to jail, where I had bigger problems than figuring out how to sue the doctors. Welcome to hard times, Baby!

Now, eight years later, I can joke about it, although it took a long time to be able to do that. I had been a pretty fair guitar player up until my radical manicure. Learning to play left handed has been intensely frustrating, but is finally becoming rewarding. More importantly, I have been off drugs most of that time. It took four and a half years of total abstinence, but I am now able to drink like

a reasonable person and the dope-monster is merely a (bad) memory. I am fortunate.

I was not really trying to kill myself. I was just trying to wake up from a bad nightmare, both the PCP blackout and my life. In a way, recovering from a PCP trip is a lot like adapting to a transgendered life: it’s disorienting, everything seems strange, and you feel awful from time to time — maybe often. The answer is that you must believe you are on the right track, that things will get better, and that you can just ride it out. Be good to yourself, talk to other people, and learn to trust yourself. It’s very simple, but it’s never easy.

CONCLUSION

Self-mutilation can take many forms. Sometimes, as in Christine’s case, it may be seen as a cry for help. Other transsexuals, desperate for surgery, try to perform their own penectomies and/or castrations. (To anyone contemplating unsafe genital alteration, the authors implore you not to try it. You are already a woman! A penis does NOT make you a man. We know you are impatient, but you could kill yourself, or at the very least, prevent yourself from ever getting proper SRS.) Finally,

some transgender self-mutilations are a direct attempt at suicide, as in Hannah’s case.

All human beings have moments of extreme despair, but it seems that transsexuals have more than the

average person. During such times it is important to have someone you can talk to, someone you really trust. It is important to develop a support network, to cultivate that trust before a crisis hits. If you are not comfortable with people you can rely on in times of despair, you won’t turn to anyone when you really need someone.

Christine, for instance, made a big mistake by not rejecting her transphobic counselor from the outset and requesting somebody more appropriate. If she had a therapist she felt she could confide in, perhaps her situation would not have gotten as out of hand as it did. Hannah also had no support system in place. She couldn’t afford to continue seeing her therapist, and there were no support groups available at the time. As therapists are often priced out of the range of many transgendered people, a support group is usually the more likely place for a transsexual to find others to talk to and trust. Support groups, even if they are informal,

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Academia cont. from p. 15

are a good way to network with your peers. They provide a place to air your concerns and doubts. Even more importantly, in such a group you will likely hear from others who had similar experiences and who have already worked through them. A good group can provide solutions to your problems, or at the very least, provide you with a sense of hope. If there is no support group in your area you can help start one. There is nothing more empowering than taking the lead and doing something for yourself.

If there is a message to this article, it is this: Don't keep your problems to yourself. There are plenty of people, transgendered and non-transgendered, who really do care and who will listen compassionately and offer whatever advice and support they can. Your mission, should you decide to accept it, is to find these people and develop bonds with them early on. For the authors, it was feelings of isolation and loneliness that drove us to self-mutilation. If you can bring yourself to look around and see how many helpful, caring people that are out there, you can prevent such a tragedy in your life.

Christine Beatty is a local writer and musician who currently performs in the rock band Glamazon.

Hannah Blackwell is a representational sculptor living in Kansas City.

Transsexuals people presented by far the most innovative work at the conference in legal studies, the arts, literary analysis, and anthropology. And once again, as in Iowa, transsexual academics and activists had a chance to come together and further consolidate the growing professional networks that have emerged among us over the last few years. These networks are an important part of the community building process, and work to further the development of cogent, intellectually sound interpretations of transgender experience that do not rely on ideas of sickness, dysfunction, abnormality, or deviance.

In the next few years, scholarly work on transsexuality by transgendered academics and sympathetic nons will become increasingly common. How this will translate into meaningful gains for our community remains to be seen. One thing is certain, though—we are becoming increasingly able to define the meaning of our own lives. This cannot help but advance the cause of transgender liberation.

Susan Stryker is the author of A Critical Gender: Transsexuality in Theory and Practice, forthcoming from Oxford University Press in 1997.

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WE'VE BEEN AROUND FOR AWHILE: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY PRESS

by Hermaphrodyke

Bob Davis is a musician, teacher, performer, and music director for theater groups. He is also a longtime collector of transgender books, newsletters and magazines. His collection of material covers all of the major magazines on transsexual/ transgendered/ queer culture starting from 1950's, and includes books, tabloids, magazines, newsletters, photographs, records by drag show artists, sheet music, memorabilia and artwork. Besides this, he also has an extensive collection of the glossy pornographic magazines (including some of the very first issues of *Female Mimics*). The interconnected of this material was truly astonishing, as all of it was about being trans -- not gay, not straight, not lesbian. Trans. One entire room in Bob's house is devoted solely to these treasures. This room also contains paintings by Doris Fish and Miss Kitty Litter, two extremely popular drag queens of the gay/lesbian community.

"My history is similar to a lot of histories I've heard," Bob says when asked about himself and how he began collecting. "I started cross-dressing in puberty but didn't do much about it. I started cross-dressing more regularly when I moved to California in 1971 and began collecting the magazines 5 or 6 years later. I've always been involved in printing and editing since I was in high school; you might even say that printer's ink is in my blood." When asked if he would describe himself as a gay cross-dresser, Bob replies, "Gay is not quite the right word. Queer is better."

There are five main categories in Bob's printed material: pornography, magazines about performers, newsletters about crossdressing, transsexual material, and FTM material. Although there are no magazines or newsletters about FTMs until Lou Sullivan's *FTM*, it is almost impossible, when looking at this material, not to come across the FTM presence. Bob has a first edition of *But For The Grace*, an autobiography of Robert Allen, an English FTM published in 1954.

Some of the more fascinating items of his collection are the playbills from various drag/transgender clubs around the world, including Le Carousel and Elle and Lui, Paris drag queen and king clubs from the early 1970s. Many transsexuals who look

down on drag shows forget that for a long time they were the only avenue available for many transsexuals to live with their identity intact.

"Look at this one," Bob says with evident pride. He displays a playbill carefully bound between two pieces of cardboard. "It's from Club Flamingo, which was open in Los Angeles in the 1940's. Someone put a lot of effort into preserving this. It obviously meant a lot to them."

Bob is very knowledgeable about the history of the community press. "The first magazine that aspired to a national level was Virginia Prince's *Transvestia*. I have issue #2 from March, 1960. There wasn't much after that until *Drag* started. That was the first publication that was out with a capital O-U-T. It was published right after Stonewall in 1969 by Queen's Liberation Front in New York City. Queens was started in 1969 by Lee Brewster and was the drag queen/transgendered voice. It was very influential, especially in keeping middle class gays from completely taking over the movement from

*These magazines aren't
what people say about us.
This is what we say to
each other.*



Some of the material from Bob's collection.

the very beginning.”

“What I liked about *Drag* was its inclusiveness,” he says, opening up an issue. “Lee was an out and out drag queen while two of the other important people involved in the magazine were Bebe Scarpi, a transsexual, and Vicki West, a heterosexual transvestite, although I’ve since heard she’s become involved with men. I believe this was everyone’s orientation back then. There’s an interview with Lee in the Winter ‘95 issue of *Tapestry* #70. The first 20 issues or so were great but from ‘76 on it went downhill.”

If nothing else, *Drag* magazine shows that the controversy over transgender inclusion in Stonewall 25 in 1994 is nothing more than the continuation of a controversy that has been present from the very beginning of the gay and lesbian movement. “I was in the second or third gay pride parade in New York,” says Bob, “and even then there was a big fight over including drag queens and transgendered people.”

These magazines are often looked down on. They shouldn’t be. They’re a historical record of the transgender community and are part of the paper trail we’ve left behind.

“Take these, for example,” Bob says, pointing to a foot-high collection of newsletters. “The difference between newsletters and pornography is that pornography was done by people outside the community to make money off the community. Whatever those publishers thought they could sell they sold. They don’t have the same kind of commitment. But these newsletters weren’t produced by someone to make money. They aren’t what people say about us. This is what we say to each other. It’s much more powerful, but also more ephemeral.”

Bob has newsletters going back to 1954, the oldest ones being *TVIS Educational Services* and *TVIC Journal*. These were newsletters published for members of private cross-dressing clubs. The oldest one is *TVIC Journal*, begun by a husband and wife in 1954. “I only have them from issue #75 and the last one I have is #118 published in 1983. It’s an amazing publication. For one thing, I don’t know of *any* publication in the gender community that has been around for 118 issues. For another, it’s still in existence on the east coast.”

At the same time that *Transvestia* began publishing, Charles “Cathy” Slavik began Empathy Press in Seattle. Empathy’s newsletters go back just as far Virginia’s *Transvestia*. “There was a tremendous, bitter rivalry between Virginia in southern California and Cathy in Seattle. I

don’t know what the fight was about except personality. They said terrible, nasty things about each other that almost approached violence, in my view. Ultimately, I would have to say that Virginia won, since Virginia is now considered some kind of sainted person by most people and Cathy is just seen as a merchant.”

You can see the same kind of struggle shaping up between Kymberleigh Richards [editor and publisher of *Cross-Talk*] and Merissa Sherrill Lynn [of *IFGE* and *Tapestry*]. There always seems to be a power struggle going on, and now was no different from then.

I asked Bob what he thought about the many stages transgendered individuals go through in finding their own identity. “I have my own theory about all that,” he began. “When we’re teenagers, we realize we’re not heterosexual girls and boys and we’re not like the kids you’re told about in health class. But that’s as far as it goes. No one gives you a road map. You have to figure most of it out on your own. So you start asking, ‘What am I like? At first people go toward the most visible, which is drag. Then you begin to see there are more distinctions: transvestite, transsexual, drag king -- and you start narrowing it down. It’s like the Eskimo having 14 different words for snow. We may have 17 different names for cross-gender. I don’t think that’s bad, either. I think it’s good for everyone to define themselves. It’s only when people become turf-proud and start looking down on others that I part company. I don’t care for that

continued on next page



Dolly looks at more of Bob's collection.

at all.”

It was exciting to see we have a much longer printed history than one might suspect and that it encompasses more than just porn. Much of our culture is a reaction to what we have had to do and must do to survive in the nontrans, nonqueer world in which we live, while much of our view of ourselves has been shaped by people who explain our lives in their terms and not ours.

I asked Bob which magazines he would rank in order of importance. “*Transvestia* is important, certainly, as the first attempt to be respectable on a national level, but I would have to put *Drag* magazine as the most important, mainly for its inclusiveness and political content. *LadyLike* by JoAnn Roberts was certainly important in terms of being the first magazine to take advantage of desktop publishing.”

“I never thought I would see what is happening now with the community press,” Bob continues. “It’s just amazing to me. Magazines like *TNT*, *Chrysalis Quarterly*, and *TransSisters* are head and shoulders above anything else that’s gone before in terms of

*It’s like the Eskimo having
14 different words for snow.
We have 17 different names
for cross-gender.*

seriousness of content. I think *Tapestry* wanted to move in this direction but didn’t know how to until these other magazines showed them the way. Now people are actually starting to talk about real things.”

“For a long time all you ever read in *Tapestry* was coming out story after coming out story. It was almost all the entire magazine consisted of -- that and the ‘My-Trip-To-Colorado-For-Surgery’ story. I’m sure it was important for someone to talk about dressing up in mommy’s clothes, but did you have to print 50 of them?”

It seems that every month society discovers yet again its own fascination with gender, transsexuals drag, cross-dressing for the first time. But it’s nothing new, according to Bob. “I’ve done some historical research and discovered that female impersonators were a mainstay of the minstrel shows of the 19th century. In fact, in the Emerson minstrel shows, which played ‘way back in San Francisco from 1870 to 1886, every program had at least one section devoted to female impersonation or gender-switching roles during its entire 16 year run. It was always an MTF and played two ways, either funny or serious: you either looked like your aunt or were beautiful and ‘passed’.”

While society’s interest in transsexuals and transgendered people might be nothing new, what is new is that we are speaking with our own voices and telling our experience in our own words. Bob Davis’s collection is visible proof that we not only have a history, but a future.

Bob Davis is in discussion with JoAnn Roberts for LadyLike to reprint materials from his collection.

Hermaphrodyke is a bay area writer and photographer. Her article on transsexual pornography will appear in an upcoming issue of TNT.



Bob Davis in front of a self-portrait of Doris Fish (on the left) and Miss Abood and a small self-portrait of Miss Kitty Litter.


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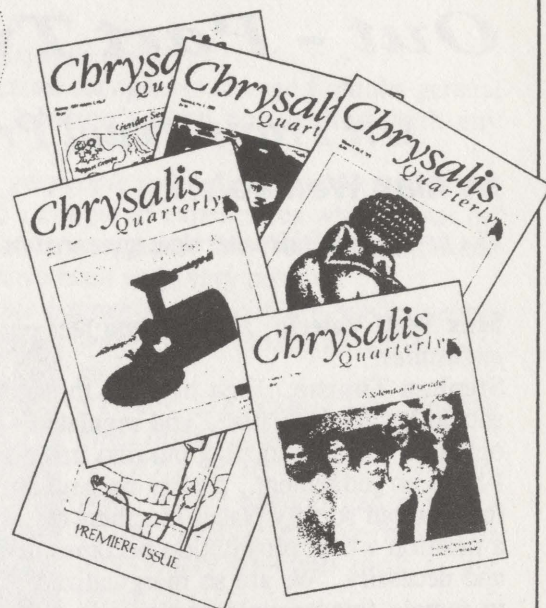
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Sergeant Stephan Thorne Speaks Out - Part Two

On Transsexual Prostitutes and Being in the Public Eye

by Max Wolf Valerio

The first part of this interview appeared in TNT #3.

--Editor

Max Wolf Valerio: *How do you feel about transsexual prostitutes?*

Stephan Thorne: First of all, I think that prostitution should be decriminalized and regulated. That's my first opinion. Then, branching out into transsexual prostitutes I have no judgement. I carry no negative judgement. I feel that our society places members of our community in a position where prostitution becomes more of an option and necessity. We are so marginalized. I feel that male to female transsexuals particularly turn to prostitution because so many of them have greater difficulty in passing, so they have no legal protection in employment and housing. They can be and often are fired from jobs where they are tax paying citizens earning a living, taking care of themselves. Then, they find themselves put out where they are unemployable, so what are they going to do to make a living? They turn to prostitution in order to survive. It's a survival mechanism. I certainly can't condemn people for doing what they have to do to survive.

MWV: *How did you come to join the police force to begin with?*

ST: I was a boy who wanted to play cops and robbers (laughs). I was very idealistic. I became a police officer to help people. In addition to that, I don't do well in jobs where I'm in an office or indoors all the time, so it



Sgt Stephan Thorne

offered me the opportunity to be outdoors, to be mobile. I'm drawn to excitement and to being heroic, with integrity.

MWV: *What was the general reaction from the women's community at that time?*

ST: I took a lot of criticism from women in the community for becoming a cop, as if I was becoming a traitor. I have always disagreed with that and always thought that I could conduct myself with integrity as a police officer. If you have some problem where you require police intervention and assistance, who would you rather have come to your door? Would you rather have someone sensitive to your issues and experienced with your issues and living the same or a very similar life to the one that you have lived, or would you rather have a stranger come who does not understand and has possibly hostile feelings to you?

MWV: *I agree with your position. It's better to have people on the police force who are more likely to be on our side. So you have had previous experience with being considered a traitor to the lesbian community? (laughs)*

ST: Yes.

MWV: *That was probably good training ground for transition. You did something that was unpopular in the lesbian community. Now, what is your job currently with the police force?*

ST: I am a Sergeant, which means that I'm a first level supervisor. I work in the patrol bureau in uniform on the swing shift at Ingleside station. I'm in the field, I have a uniform and generally I have a car. I'm mobile. Since we're short staffed, there are times I have to respond to calls for service as officers do because I'm a uniformed body out there on the street. But my primary duties involve supervising the officers who respond to those calls, authorizing arrests, authorizing different charges, reviewing reports, and dealing with personnel issues.

MWV: *So you are out in the field a lot, making arrests and so forth.*

ST: Yes. I don't make many arrests now compared to when I was an officer, but on occasion I do.

MWV: *It definitely sounds like an a lot more exciting job than most people have.*

ST: It's definitely not a neutral job. Some jobs are just neutral. Police work is not neutral. It's definitely a charged profession and one assumes a unique and rather

strong identity when you become a cop. They make t.v. shows and movies about it all the time.

MWV: *(Laughs)* It's almost an archetype.

ST: Yes.

MWV: *Now how do you feel about enforcing the law against transsexual prostitutes?*

ST: It's a theoretical question for me because where I work I'm not confronted with it.

MWV: *That's not your department. Is that a separate department?*

ST: It's not that it's a separate department. It's just that at the location where I work, transsexual prostitutes aren't there. Yes. I'm not confronted with that. I feel the same way about enforcing the laws against transsexual prostitutes as I do about enforcing the laws against any prostitutes, period. I'm not entirely comfortable with it as I said before. Prostitution should be decriminalized and regulated as a health issue. The sex workers themselves should be in control of the industry, in control of the money. They should pay appropriate taxes and have to undergo appropriate health screening, I think it should be regulated. So I don't want to avoid answering the question... I'm not comfortable with enforcing these laws, but there have been circumstances where I have had to enforce the law against prostitution. It's my job and if I'm ordered to do it, I will do it. But I do it sensitively.

MWV: *Could you elucidate that "sensitively" a little?*

ST: You don't have to be abusive or unkind in your treatment of people and I try not to be unkind or abusive in my treatment of anyone. I approach my work and people in circumstances where I am able with respect. I don't disrespect people. That's what I mean by how I handle the matter if I am confronted with that situation.

MWV: *Is there a number for transgendered people to call in case they do have a problem with the police?*

ST: A good way and a way is to go through the HRC (Human Rights Commission). If you have problems, bring them to the Human Rights Commission. Then the HRC can come to the Police Department, who can come to me.

MWV: *So if a transgendered person feels mistreated by the police, they should go to the HRC.*

ST: Right.

MWV: *Do you think that the decision to make your transition public was the right one and why?*

ST: Yes. It was the right decision

MWV: *What has the reaction been of the general public*

as far as you can perceive?

ST: There's been no change. No change from the general public to me. I haven't been confronted with any ugliness.

MWV: *Do you get people recognizing you on the street?*

ST: I have had a couple of experiences where I was off duty and somebody recognized me from television and both instances have been very, very positive.

MWV: *I had this happen to me with my movie, people were very positive, complete strangers.*

ST: Yes, like "Didn't I see you the other night?" "Yeah, that was me." "GOOD FOR YOU!" Very positive... I haven't had anybody either attack me verbally or physically or even look at me badly.

MWV: *That's great. What has the reaction generally from the women officers on the police force?*

ST: Well, so far it's been very positive.

MWV: *Were they shocked? (laughs)*

ST: Yes. Pretty much I think everybody was shocked.

MWV: *People don't expect anybody to do something like this. (laughs)*

ST: They don't. So they expressed to me that they were shocked or very surprised. Most of them have expressed support, calling me at home just checking in, seeing if I'm OK. They told me that if I ever need anything or someone to talk with to call them. Basically they've been marvelous. A lot of the women that I've been dealing with, not all of them, but a lot of them, are lesbian police officers. I did have concerns before coming out about what would happen with my interactions not so much with lesbian police officers, but with lesbians in general and the lesbian community. My experience with lesbians in San Francisco has been very, very positive. My experience with the lesbian community at large has been again very positive. Some of the women have to struggle with it, but they are my friends, they love me and they say, "Well, we'll struggle with this and continue to love you." Others who I don't know... It's more with lesbians expressing things to lesbians I've been involved with. With criticism and questions about "what does this make them". They are relating to me as a man, then they are going to lose their lesbian credentials.

MWV: *They get their "lesbian card" yanked. (laughs)*

ST: They get their lesbian card yanked, yeah. So there's

When lesbians relate to me as a man, they worry they're going to get their lesbian card yanked.

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Sgt. Thorne *continued*

been some of that going on.

MWV: *(laughs)* Yeah, this is a problem no doubt. Did the women police officers react differently from the men?

ST: I would say perhaps slightly, but not significantly different. Maybe that has to do with the people I work with. First of all, I have great respect for the officers I work with at Ingleside. Some of the men have made wonderful statements and gestures of support as have some of the women; the women are maybe a little more willing to ask questions and talk with me but even that difference is tempered. It's not really lopsided, it's really very close. I think it speaks well for the men and women that I work with.

MWV: *Have there been any real negative reactions from people?*

ST: Not to me.

MWV: *What do you attribute the relative lack of negative responses to? Do you think that it has to do with you coming right out with it and being honest, forthright?*

ST: I think that's part of it. I think it's coming right out with it, being honest. I think it speaks well of my past conduct in the department and the fact that I am a respected member of the department. I think it's also because the Chief and my Captain came right out in support of me. I think the existence of Prop L and the protective language in the civil service rules and regulations that prevents discrimination with respect to gender identity is also a factor. It took effect January 1st for all city and county employees and applicants.

MWV: *To be protected on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation?*

ST: Race, sex, religion, creed all of those things. It's now included in that. It's another one of those things where it's not ok to be really out there with negativity and judgment. I also respect everyone's right to their opinion and I've said that from the beginning. I know that some of the people in the department have negative opinions about me and what I am, but there is an understanding that they need to keep those opinions to themselves.

MWV: *Probably making room for people to have their negative feelings helps.*

ST: Yes. It's not like everyone has to like me or what I am or what I am doing. I understand that not everyone will. But it's a matter of mutual respect. I respect you and we have to work together, we're here to perform a function. Let's do that and we'll have our own individual

lives. I'm not asking them to become transsexuals.

MWV: *Right. One of the big issues for people when they begin their transition is getting people to use the right pronoun and the new name. Have you had any problems with that on your job or with the other officers?*

ST: I have not had any problems with it. I think one of the reasons I haven't had any problems with it is how I'm handling it. When I came out on the job, I had a plan

about how to handle that and to identify issues that people would have about it. Those were the bathroom, locker room, pronouns and name. In regards to the pronoun issue, I have expressed to people that I am a transsexual. I have had the first initial surgery, and am

in the process of legally changing my name. I have done that on my driver's license and my social security card, so my name is now legally changed. It is now appropriate for people to call me by that new name. I chose my new name. I changed it minimally from what it was before. I did that for myself as well as other people in my life because it's much easier instead of having a completely different name to call me by. You know the abbreviated form of Stephan and Stephanie is the same. It's Steph.

MWV: *Right.*

ST: People in the past have also called me by my rank. That's an appropriate thing in the police department -- calling me "Sergeant" or "Sarge". I've said to them that they've known me for years as Stephanie, as a female and I don't expect them to immediately change how they perceive me or how they refer to me. I know that the transition time is going to be the most difficult for all of us. I am not offended by being called "her" or "she" or "Stephanie", although I prefer now to be referred to by male pronouns and my new name. As I present more and more male and as those changes become more pronounced, I think it will be easier for people to refer to me with male pronouns and a male name. So I have put out a very calm comfortable image or idea. It does not upset me either way.

MWV: *Sounds like you're handling it well. When you're out there being a police officer are you now being perceived more as a male or as a female officer or do you not always know?*

ST: I don't always know.

MWV: *I wonder if there is any difference between how people are reacting to you as a male police officer as compared to being a female police officer or maybe it's*

Not everyone has to like me or what I am. But they have to respect me. I'm not asking them to become transsexuals.

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premature?

ST: I think it's premature. There will definitely be differences in male versus female as a cop. For one thing, just looking back on when I first started in the business, I was in Palo Alto and a woman called for the police. I was working midnights. When you do that you work as a single person unit. So I responded. She opened the door and looked at me and said "Oh no, I want the real police!"

MWV: *That's horrible!*

ST: In her mind, as a woman officer, I was not the "real" police. I called my supervisor and told him what happened. He backed me one hundred percent. He said, "You are the police. You are our representative in dealing with her, so if she does not want to talk to you, she does not want to talk with us, so you can go, 10-8 back in service." That was in 1980.

MWV: *I'm sure there is still a lot of that out there.*

ST: I sense it.

MWV: *Do you sense a bit of a change now that people are starting to perceive you as male?*

ST: I sense that it will be different. Because I know that people have responded to me differently as a woman officer, and I used it to my advantage, often in talking suspects into handcuffs, talking them into the car...

MWV: *Interesting. Maybe they were a little more sympathetic with you when you were a woman cop?*

ST: There's not the same kind of competition. You know male on male energy can be very competitive.

MWV: *So is there anything you'd like to say? A special message for the readers of TNT?*

ST: I encourage other transgendered people to follow their hearts, to do this for themselves, if it's the right thing. To do the steps and make the discovery for themselves. Once I established that this is what I was, I was afraid, very afraid of coming out and what would happen to me, what would happen in my life after coming out. And not one of my fears have been realized.

MWV: *That's great.*

ST: I wish to stand as an example that we can successfully do this and lead happy fulfilling lives, much happier and much more fulfilling than before.

If you feel the Police Department has violated your civil rights or brutalized you because you are transgendered or because of your gender expression, call the Human Rights Commission at 554-4000. Never be afraid to speak out for your rights.

Max Wolf Valerio recently landed a book contract with publisher William Morrow. His book will deconstruct his sex change and subsequent induction into the pillaging male horde.

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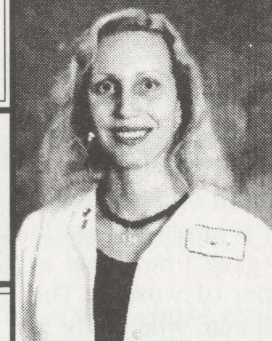
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PICKING ON THOSE WHO CAN'T FIGHT BACK: SON OF THE CIRCUS by John Irving

reviewed by Anne Ogborn

We remember some works of literature not for their literary qualities, but for the immensity of their wickedness. There is a special place in hell for the writers of *The Transsexual Empire*, *The Protocols of The Elders of Zion*, and *Mein Kampf*. John Irving's latest, *A Son Of The Circus*, would be in this circle if it was memorable. It's not. A discussion of the literary merits of *A Son Of The Circus* is difficult without focusing on its appallingly transphobic content. To do so would be like saying *Mein Kampf* is rambling and poorly edited without mentioning its anti-Semitism.

A Son Of The Circus is a bad piece of literature. It shares with *Garp* a penchant for attacks on groups too powerless to fight back. Among its targets are dwarves, transsexuals, sexually abused children, Indian customs officials, Indian waiters, intersexed people, Parsis, sex workers, the differently abled, Indian police, sexually aggressive women, Islamic women, Hijras, FTMs, people with AIDS, butch women... Well, I quit keeping the list at that point.

A Son Of The Circus is in the same style as *The World According To Garp*. Unusual, but not incredible, things happen to and around the characters. Any one of them alone might seem realistic, but they appear here tightly crammed together, like bad murals or bad model railroads.

The plot revolves around the attempt to capture a serial killer. Read as a murder mystery, *A Son Of The Circus* is no mystery. The trail of clues is too sparse to follow, and the killer is revealed too early. Suffice it to say that the villain of the piece is a transsexual woman (Promila Dogar) who, (gasp!) turns out to be a serial killer of women. The dwarves are all cute when they're not being pitiful. Not content with the stereotype of the dwarf who strikes someone on the knee, his dwarf strikes a whole crowd on their knees. The non-westernized Indians are all charming rustics who spend their days dancing about in dhotis and cholis and are childlike clowns. The only even slightly independent women in the book are the transsexual serial killer (scheming), the child prostitute (also scheming), and Nancy, who

alternates between violence and passively following her boyfriends and husband. The murder mystery is hardly the only hackneyed plot device in Mr. Irving's novel. Surely there is some less cliched way for the transsexual serial killer to find her next victim than to sneak into a bordello dressed as a man.

All of these faults pale, however, when compared to the amateurish way he handles character development. He spends many pages developing a major character, then suddenly dismisses them or has them doing something out of character. Mrs. Dogar is arguably the single character he spends the most time analyzing. After she is arrested she disappears. But not cleanly - instead we are flatly told that she is killed in prison years later. Rebellious hippy Nancy marries and suddenly becomes a submissive Indian wife. He matches the style of each character's development to that character's place in the social order. The mainstream men characters are developed sympathetically, using everyday language and portraying them as mostly acting from rational impulses. The mainstream western women and children only react, like passive blanks. Dr. Daruwalla's wife and children are mere passive tools of the doctor. Marginalized characters, on the other hand, are portrayed as creatures whose acts are mostly explained by their internal processes. Most notable is Mrs. Dogar, whose every act seems an expression of her relationship to penises.

The main character, Dr. Daruwalla, is a charming nebbish who divides his time between orthopedic medicine and writing screenplays for Hindi movies. Irving uses his usual device of inserting an educated and urbane protagonist (Daruwalla) in a world of improbable events. Not

surprisingly, he reacts to Irving's usual slapstick world by becoming disoriented and alienated. It may be a universal truth that too comfortable people lose their ability to cope with change, but Irving doesn't illuminate that truth.

If Irving misses his stated thesis, then does he have one at all? Sadly, he does, and it's not pretty. The real theses of the work are, that Mr. Irving has a penis, that Mr. Irving may do as he wishes with his penis to people

***The dwarves are all cute when
they're not being pitiful.
The non-westernized Indians
are all charming rustics and
childlike clowns.***

without penises, and that only trouble can come from such people getting penises. Every time anyone who isn't a "real man" has a penis or acts independently (which seem to be the same thing to Mr. Irving) disaster strikes. The dildo symbolizes Nancy's involvement with a drug dealer. When Nancy strikes the autoriksha driver with the dildo, a dead body appears and the police come. The hijras (no penises) beat up the missionary (effeminate and gay). The missionary (not a real man) turns out to be fanatical buffoon. After awhile it becomes very predictable and tiring.

The work deals with penises, sexuality, gender relations, and homosexuality. Sadly, Mr. Irving has apparently not come to terms either with his bisexuality or his castration anxiety, and his lack of insight damages the work. For example, in a scene where Dr. Daruwalla becomes a Christian, he convinces himself that he is to lose his arm because he has been an unbeliever. Irving sees the Hijras as symbols of what happens to men who aren't sufficiently masculine. I found myself having a great deal of difficulty believing the inanity of Dr. Daruwalla's religious conversion. One night Mrs. Dogar mistakes the sleeping Dr. Daruwalla for another character, and sucks his toe as foreplay. Soon discovering her mistake, she leaves. When the doctor awakes, he sees his bruised and reddened toe and believes it to be a sign from God, resembling the stigmata of St. Francis, who as a corpse did not decompose, but who has lost an arm and a toe. But far from being calmed or gladdened by this sign, he becomes convinced that God will take his arm. I find both his reaction and his fear unbelievable and inconsistent with Daruwalla's character.

A novel is what it is - so many thousand words of fiction. That a novel needs an author's notes is surely a sign that the work is unable to stand on its own merits. John Irving, in his Author's Notes, says that his novel "isn't about India." I disagree. It is about India, and about transsexuals, and about dwarves. And it is racist and transphobic. Irving also says he doesn't know India. He forgot to add transsexuals, hijras, or many other subjects in the book, either. His knowledge of hijras is confined to a quick reading of Serena Nanda's *Neither Man Nor Woman*. His knowledge of India is slight. Strangely, after he sullies the work with these author's notes, he doesn't follow through. Irving explicitly states that the work is about an Indian for whom India will always be a foreign country. This theme is only treated in any serious way at the end of the book.

Does the novel actually do damage? I know at least one person read Irving's transphobic portrayal of Hijras as truth because they said they did. In an unsigned

review of *A Son Of The Circus* in *The Economist*, which contains the line, "Here, for instance, is his weird account of the weird *hijras*..." Clearly, the reviewer believes not only that Mr. Irving's account is weird, a statement I concur with, but his subject [Hijras] is weird. Had the reviewer instead written, "Here, for instance, is his weird account of the weird blood drinking *Catholics*..." the Catholic population would be up in arms. But the hijras have no such political power.

I don't know how an author of Mr. Irving's standing produced such a piece of schlock. Irving thanks three assistants for their help over four years. He says that the manuscript was originally thousands of pages. Perhaps the work simply got out of control, as large, complex projects sometimes do. Or perhaps it was only Dharma.

Anne Ogborn is currently planning on returning to India in April. She has a contract for a book about the hijras.



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INK TANTRUMS

Reviewed by Katherine Collins

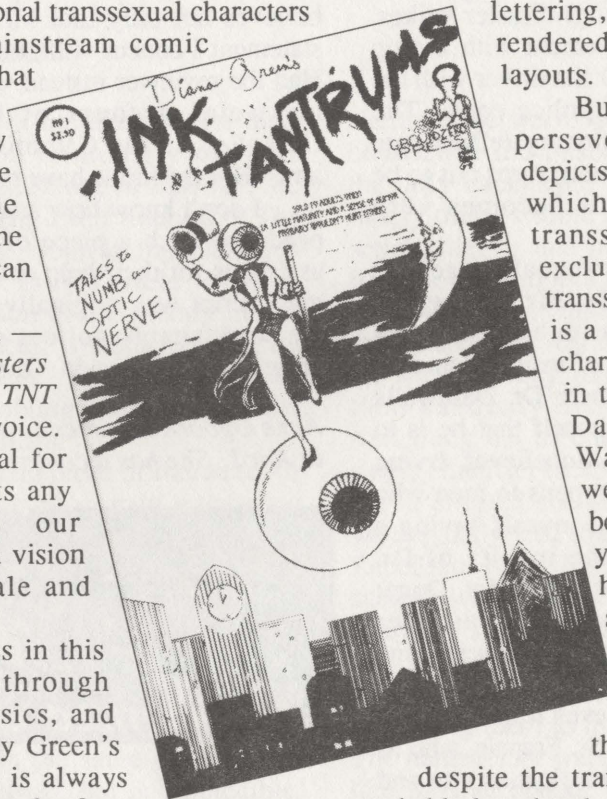
Although the very occasional transsexual characters have begun to appear in mainstream comic books, I think it is certain that Diana Green's *Ink Tantrums* is the first comic book specifically by, for, and about the transgendered. Given the proliferation of cartooning in the lesbian and gay media, one can only say "it's about time".

And, fortunately, Green — whose strips appear in *TransSisters* magazine, and in this issue of *TNT* — is a clear and fascinating voice. She is too much of an original for one to say that she represents any "typical" viewpoint in our community, but she presents a vision that is distinctly both female and transsexual.

The stories and vignettes in this eclectic collection range through politics, the erotic, metaphysics, and social satire, yet are unified by Green's finely-shaded sensibility. She is always good-humoured, and never too far from laughter; but she is also emotionally sensitive, and occasionally angry. Her writing captures the reader and pulls her along, with a calm and poetic vision.

That her work is so captivating is a double accomplishment, because it must be said, as gently as possible, that Green's drawing is alarmingly bad, at least by any usual standard of cartooning. A first glance at this book might be a reader's last, as the art does not invite one into the narrative. In a medium which relies as much on visual presentation as on words, the art here almost obscures the storytelling, rather than bringing it alive.

Finally, the reader is forced to abandon any habitual artistic judgement, and decide to be glad that the pictures are telling her anything at all. And in fact, Green's page layout and visual language are very effective and graceful. She has a talent for choosing the right details, which quickly and simply delineate both setting and character. As a writer, she knows the comics medium well. It is only the drawings themselves, and the



*Sly, unobtrusive humor
that hovers like a smile in
the back your mind*

lettering, which would benefit from being rendered by another artist, from Green's layouts.

But a daunted reader's determined perseverance will be rewarded. Green depicts a well-realised alternative reality which matter-of-factly includes transsexuals. Her central (but not exclusive) invention is the world of the transsexual, Athena, and her friends. This is a place of anthropomorphic animal characters — not in the Disney style, but in the new tradition of Omaha the Cat Dancer, and the work of Martin Wagner, where animal heads are wedded to perfectly normal human bodies. Athena herself is a beautiful young (transsexual) woman whose head and tail happen to reveal that she is a skunk. (Well, aren't we all, on some days?)

I find it gratifying and engaging that not everything in this comic is about transsexualism, despite the transsexual lead character. Actually, probably less than half of the book even mentions gender issues. Just like the rest of us, transsexual or not, Athena goes through her days dealing with all of life's challenges, with not enough time to constantly be aware of her TS past. The first story (after the fantastically surreal intro piece), is any woman's story, about being accosted on the street by an obnoxiously aggressive male.

As well, the major erotic story in the issue just happens to feature a transsexual character (Athena) — once again, it is any woman's story. Stylistically, it is a skillful depiction, without words, of physical pleasure. Unfortunately, I also find it possibly

the blandest story in the book. It is a bit pointless — so she has a nice time masturbating; what else is new?

On the other hand, "A Real Gem" (which features a non-animal, not apparently transsexual woman) is rich, captivating, hallucinogenic, and eerily beautiful in mood. I cannot recall the last time I was so drawn into a writer's dream vision — perhaps it was some time back in the halcyon days of the LSD-soaked underground comics.

The woman encounters a man with a large gem for a head, and she shrinks, to climb inside the gem, losing herself in the mirrored, prismatic wilderness. She encounters another gem-headed individual, and finally bursts out of her jewelled prison, to find a star sapphire lying at her feet. It becomes embedded in her forehead, and she becomes enlightened, all-seeing, and all-knowing. The story makes no logical sense, but is haunting and lures with its hints of secret wisdom.

I'm sorry to say that the longest Athena story, "Bye-Bye Bars", starts out with promise and ends with a torpid muddle (not to mention a full page of didacticism). Our heroine accompanies her friend to a bar, which is delightfully depicted with all manner of different animal types, reminiscent of the famous "cantina" scene in Star Wars. There, Athena encounters verbal abuse from hostile "genetic" woman. But the story peters out, loses its narrative mainspring so that there is no plot at all, and ends with Athena giving us some rather leaden moralising about tolerance.

But even through the occasional disappointments, Green displays what I think is a specifically transgendered insight, on the mutability of reality. The assumption that things are not what they appear to be permeates this book, with its ever-shifting fantasy worlds. There is also a backbone of acquired strength in these stories, and a gentle forbearance. Her anger salts what would be otherwise too sweet a brew, and the sly, unobtrusive humour hovers like a smile in the back of your mind as you read this comic book. Although in her prologue she lists some recommended comic books, which one could assume are among her influences, Diana Green has entirely her own identity as a writer and visionary.

When I see a stage play which is badly produced, I stop watching the performance, and do what I call "listening to the script": I hear the words, and imagine them delivered differently. Green's clumsy art delivers a deficient rendering of her amazing dreams; and so I suggest that readers "listen to the script" and discover that her writing is brilliant. The experience of Diana Green's imagination is enlightening. Don't miss it.

Diana Green's Ink Tantrums (Issue #1) is published by Ground Zero Press and is available for \$3.50 (including postage) from: Diana Green, 1132 S. 8th Katherine Collins is a comic book writer and artist (Neil the Horse), and a former print and broadcast journalist. Like everyone else, she is now finishing her book about her transition, and is trying to earn money to buy more clothes.

IN YOUR FACE!

THE JOURNAL OF RECORD OF TRANSEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER ACTIVISM

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Diana Green is a cartoonist living in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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