

(CARL GARDNER)

# The 'other woman'



PREOCCUPIED as television is with women, men are getting in on the act. Julia Grant is a vivacious, dark-haired woman in her 30s.

But Julia is taxed as a man. She is forbidden by law to be a bride. For her birth certificate says 'George Roberts, male.'

The remarkable journey by which George—a Lancashire fisherman's son who always felt he was a woman trapped into a man's body—became Julia was captured on film by BBC 2, which shows it on three evenings next week under the name A Change of Sex.

DAILY MAIL -

SAT OCT 11th  
ELIZABETH COWLEY

I move on quickly to **A Change of Sex** (BBC 2, 10.55) because this repeated opener (to a series of three) should be seen as a preface to what follows on Thursday and Friday.

In 'George — the Big Decision' trawlerman's son George Roberts tells us — with low-key humour and a remarkable self-awareness — why he desperately wants to function as a woman. It is—as I said at the time, last year—a striking and moving film. See it—and enjoy it—on...

SO FAR, this year of sitting in darkened viewing rooms on your behalf has gone by without any major traumas—and not a clue about possible award-winners for 1980. Until now. **A Change of Sex—Part Two—Julia—The First Year** (BBC 2, 9.35) had me in tears.

Without any commentary—except from the (still) deep-voiced, dead-pan George/Julia—it takes us from yesterday's scene-setter through the agonising encounters with Julia's ice-cold psychiatrist. He tells her she must wait—as a woman—for at least a year before he will condone the major surgery she longs for.

**Julia — My Body.** Choice is the third and **A Change Of Sex** (BBC 2, 9.35) George/Julia gets the longed-for operation (This bit is definitely not for the squeamish.) And she plucks up the courage to visit her once-hostile family.

'Society has got to accept me as a woman now,' she says—and accept her you certainly will. Accept—and applaud this astonishing gutsy new woman and the skillful, patient, imaginative, unobtrusive young director, David Pearson, whose cameras have tracked her progress for over two years.

THE OBSERVER -

SUN OCT 12th

(JENNIFER SELWAY)

10.00-10.55 **A CHANGE OF SEX** (BBC2): Re-edited, though basically a repeat of the 'Inside Story' documentary about George Roberts, a transsexual who became Julie Grant after a sex-change operation.

9.35-10.30 **A CHANGE OF SEX** (BBC2): David Pearson's two-part follow-up to the

story of a transsexual's life-style and treatment. Julia's psychiatrist carps and niggles when Julia visits him. 'It's a medical matter, not a matter of personal choice,' he complains, '... You're not arranging this affair in a manner that suits our protocol.' Julia, impatient to become a woman, in more than name, goes off and has a breast implant.

9.50-10.45 **A CHANGE OF SEX** (BBC2): Strong men will be fainting all over the country as Julia prepares for her decisive operation. Like the Queen she never appears in the same outfit twice.

\*A Change of Sex: George—The Big Decision 10.00-10.55 BBC2 (P) This three-part documentary on the attempt of George Roberts to become a woman is running across three nights this week, starting with a repeat of the first part, shown last year. It's a difficult project to review, witness my ham-fisted attempts last year and the subsequent justified criticism I received in our correspondence columns. But on further reflection there is definitely a lot wrong with the approach adopted by producer, David Pearson. Firstly as a film it is compulsively watchable, precisely by virtue of its contrived vérité technique and a titillating, voyeuristic approach. Secondly we're all fascinated by questions of sexuality, particularly on film, simply because it's such a taboo area. But the problems arise here right from the start—in the film and in its publicity it's constantly reiterated that George's 'natural urge' is to be a woman. Where does this 'natural urge' come from? Certainly not from biology, which is undiagnosedly male. So what does it mean? Throughout the film there is a narrowly restrictive concentration on biology as defining sexuality—all the theories and debate within the gay and feminist movement in recent years about the social construction of gender goes for nothing here. The one individual, George (Julia) Roberts is both taken as representative of transsexuals and in possession of the truth about himself/herself. And as the Transsexual Action Group assure me George/Julia is not at all typical—perhaps they'll get a chance to reply, to redress the balance of this influential trio of films. (CG)

JULIA TV  
GRANT -  
PREVIEWS

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