

# OUTREACH



# NEWSLETTER

## BOOK REVIEWS

*A large portion of this issue is devoted to Book Reviews. Included are several titles which we believe will be of special interest to our readership. At the end of these reviews will be found a list of titles (with their identification numbers) and prices for ordering copies from the Outreach Book Service.*

GENDER DYSPHORIA: DEVELOPMENT, RESEARCH,  
MANAGEMENT

--Edited by B. Steiner

Reviewed by A. Kane

This book is the result of 15 years clinical research with 700 individuals who presented themselves as gender dysphorics to the Clark Institute of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto, Canada. It includes information regarding the management of the dysphoria as well as the development of the subjects. Dr. Steiner and her colleagues have put together a most interesting series of chapters with several theoretical notions and much clinical data to corroborate some of the ideas related to the ideology and clinical management of the transsexual (gender dysphoric). The basis for most of the work done at the Clark Institute in this particular area of psychiatry is based on the definition of a transsexual (gender dysphoric) as defined by the 3rd edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM III). This publication became available in 1980 and serves as the basis for much of our current clinical and management attitudes regarding this segment of the paraculture. To be sure, the DSM III defines transsexual as a heterogeneous disorder of gender identity - the sense of knowing to which sex one belongs. The essential features of the disorder are stated to be "a persistent wish to be rid of one's genitals and live as a member of the other sex". It is not the purpose of this review to debate and discuss the subtleties of this definition; however, it is important to note that this reviewer does not subscribe to this narrow definition of a person with gender dys-

*cont'd on page 3*

NATURAL SELECTIONS

-- Gloria Nagy

Reviewed by H. Marshall

This very readable novel may be a first: it may be the first traditional novel (in the style of a block-buster best seller) that has, as its central character, a transsexual. And, lo and behold, the "star" of the novel is not the operation which transforms her, but the character. The physical change which takes Adam Richeleau to Eve is mentioned just briefly: of more importance to the novel is the growth of several characters. And the most important change which occurs in Adam is not the operation, but his realization that the personality which he has kept submerged must surface if he is to live a healthy, complete life. Ms. Nagy borrows a line from Goethe, "As soon as you trust yourself, you will know how to live."

This novel is not great literature, but it is a good story, quick moving, with some strong -- if at times predictable -- writing. Ms. Nagy understands her characters, and the heroine is particularly well-drawn.

Ms. Nagy describes the beautiful boy-child Adam as a child who adults sometimes mistake for a girl. As he grows into young adulthood, his old-line New Orleans family disintegrates about him. As a teen he learns that he is gender dysphoric; he then learns as much as he can about gender dysphoria. He goes to college, becomes a minister, marries and raises a son. He is not, however, happy

He doesn't actively begin to crossdress until after he marries -- when "the dark lonely place within him grew blacker."

*cont'd on page 6*

OBSERVING THE EROTIC IMAGINATION

PRESENTATIONS OF GENDER

-- both by Robert Stoller, M.D.

Reviewed by H. Marshall

[Editor's note: Robert Stoller, M.D., has been a prolific writer on gender issues during the past three decades and more. He has recently had two books published.]

Both of these books have been written from the perspective of the traditional scientific-psychoanalytic approach. That is, the author believes that situations can be observed, patterns detected, and conclusions drawn; the "experiment" can be repeated and the conclusions repeatedly reached. That is the goal: as Stoller makes clear, that may not be the actuality. Even though these books are derived from a scientific outlook, they do not read like texts. In fact, at times I was seduced into thinking that I was in conversation with Dr. Stoller.

Observing the Erotic Imagination deals only briefly with issues of gender; however, it deals with perhaps the most important aspect of our lives, identity. Stoller begins his observations by providing a short history on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-Mental Disorder (DSM I published in 1952). He states that prior to DSM I, the diagnosis "Psychopathic Personality with pathologic sexuality" was available. DSM I introduced "Sociopathic Personality Disorders -- Sexual Deviation (Specify Supplemental Term)". DSM II in 1968 defined the category as "Personality Disorders and Certain Other Non-Psychotic Mental Disorders." By this time, the deviations included transvestisms, but transsexualism was not separately identified.

DSM III, published in 1980, listed under "Psychosexual Disorders" two categories that had formerly been listed as "perversions": Gender Identity Disorders and Paraphilias. Stoller takes the term "Paraphilia" to task because it is "clean, neat, sanitized, tidy." In breaking the word into its components, "para" (the deviation) and "philia" (the area in which the individual is attracted), Stoller finds that something is missing. He wants

"to retain the term perversion just because of its nasty connotations. Perversion is a sturdy word, throbbing with assumptions, while paraphilia is a wet noodle . . . It does not contain the quality (the sense of sin, of sinning) . . . I believe the person we would call perverse finds essential."

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## REACHING INTIMACY: A MALE SURROGATE'S PERSPECTIVE

--by J. de Haan

Reviewed by A. Kago

Once in a while we receive review copies of books that are interesting and that also have value to the crossdresser/transsexual/androgynous paraculture. REACHING INTIMACY is such a volume. This is a sensitive portrayal by a male sex surrogate and the types of professional experiences he has had in helping female clients understand their individual problems and work toward a viable strategy for a coping, understanding, and ultimately solving it.

A sex surrogate is a person who has gone through the required hours of training and internship and who works with a licensed therapist. They establish an intimate relationship within a specific framework. The goal is to improve the quality of life for each client by helping her or him develop an improved self-image and gain increased self-confidence.

The author, who has been a trained sex surrogate for over ten years, eloquently explores the intricate issues of sexual intimacy that women experience. Many of the clients who are referred to Mr. de Haan have had sexually unfulfilled experiences and are seeking a positive approach in which to resolve their dilemmas. de Haan takes his clients on a journey of self-discovery. They learn about their bodies and also about the male body, and they shed ingrained embarrassment and concealment of their physical selves and come instead to find self-respect and comfort with their natural sensuality.

Through special exercises the author exposes his clients to techniques of how to concentrate on achieving desired sensual pleasure. Working closely with a therapist the sexual surrogate also helps identify self-destructive behaviors that many women are conditioned to engage in. He guides his clients through the maze of self-knowledge in such a way that the total experience is linked to the creation of a healthy, satisfying, and joyous sexual life.

Often we hear from various segments of this paraculture about the wish to achieve intimacy with a sexual partner in ways that are mutually satisfying and enjoyable. REACHING INTIMACY is an open door toward exploring one's potential for reaching intimacy. It is not a

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phoria syndrome. Apart from this basic terminology difference, I have found that this book offers the greatest number of clinical cases on record (over 700) of individuals who would like to have sex reassignment surgery. It provides a wealth of clinical data so that a helping professional can get reasonably good ideas about the nature and subtlety of the individuals who present as transsexuals.

Chapters 2 through 6 in this work focus on early influences in gender identity development. There are descriptions of individuals whose subjective sense of gender identity was in contradiction to their biologic sense at a very early age. The thrust of this section of the book is to review what is known about the factors that influence this subjective sense in 'human intersexes'. In another chapter, one author deals with biologic perspectives on the problems of transsexualism. This would include broad and recent work on the H-Y antigen. The remaining chapters of this section are concerned with crossgender-identified children; one author provides an overview of the literature, another provides a summary of clinical experience with crossgender-identified children and their families and presents an etiological formulation that tries to take into account both constitutional and psychodynamic variables.

Three chapters contain a number of empirical and theoretical issues relevant to adults with gender identity "disorders". For instance, one author points out that crossdressing in males has generally been evaluated with regard to feminine gender identity. However, the author points out that crossdressing is also practiced among others such as rapists, sadists, and masochists, and that these individuals have not traditionally been considered to have gender identity disorders. Yet in adulthood, a percentage of these individuals who present childhood crossgender behavior patterns display at least one behavioral phenotype that is similar to that of the transsexual. In the final analysis, the author suggests that crossdressing has many meanings including some that previously have not been systematically considered in the sexology literature.

In a later chapter another author presents a battery of self-administered questionnaire scales which are designed for the objective classification of adult male patients into four diagnostic categories. These correspond roughly to diagnostic groups that were identified as "nuclear transvestites", "marginal transvestites", "fetishistic transsexuals", and "nuclear transsexuals". The authors of this chapter briefly describe the use of psycho-physiological measurement as an

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## PRESENTATIONS OF GENDER...

The sin of which Stoller writes is the "desire to hurt, harm, be cruel to, degrade, humiliate someone (including . . . the desire to harm oneself.) In the case of perversion, the person to be harmed is one's sex object. He further states that perversion is the erotic form of hatred, and that it may be either acted out or a dream. Its origin is in childhood trauma, and its goal is to convert that trauma to an adult triumph.

But what is involved here? What trauma? Stoller believes that cross-dressing becomes habitual, becomes a "fantasy of revenge" for a boy who has "some special uneasiness of gender development in the first two or three years of life." This boy will later "need the perversion [cross-dressing] structure in order to preserve identity."

Stoller then says that the cross-dresser is preserving his identity against a repeat of the childhood humiliation, but in so doing, he preserves, too, the trauma of the event. In this, "we seem to take a risk in approaching the old danger. When I am like a female, dressed in her clothes and appearing to be like her, have I nonetheless escaped the danger? Am I still a male, or did the women succeed in ruining me?"

While the balance of the book does not pertain entirely to this paraculture, it does contain chapters on "Transvestism in Women" and "Functions of Obscenity." There are also chapters on homosexuality (both male and female), including a cross-cultural comparison of males.

While Stoller has many strong insights, and, in general, admits to both his own and his science's shortcomings, this reviewer feels that he overlooks one factor that could be a determinant, and which can lead to other determinants for cross-dressing and cross-gender behavior. Namely, "what is it like on the other side? I'm curious." And then, "I like the way I look, how people treat me, the way I feel." For some, gender is not a pathological subject, but an optional lifestyle.

Presentations of Gender has, as its core, a discussion (with illustrative cases) of the families of boys with "marked femininity". Stoller has delved into the roles that mothers and fathers play in the gender development of children. He has also delved into the childhood and early family life of the parents of the feminine boys. His major conclusion is that 1) fathers who are either physically and/or emotionally absent from the specific father-son relationship, and 2) mothers who prolong the symbiotic mother-son state too long both contribute to the

development of, and reinforcement of, the a feminized male. A significant finding of Stoller's for this reviewer was that a large percentage of the mothers in these cases had, in their childhoods, exhibited strong crossgender behavior of their own, and many had, in fact, wished that they had been born males.

The combination of absent father and all-too-present mother leads to a state where there is absence of an oedipal situation. For the very feminine boy

"His mother, not his father, is the model for his gender identification, and she is not the object of his erotism. He wants to be like her rather than to have her (Greenson, 1968). His father, all too absent, is neither rival nor model. The boy is deprived of the needed conflict."

Stoller includes chapters on two feminized male native Americans, and a cross-cultural approach to the development of masculinity. He also reviews some biologic effects on the development of gender identity.

He briefly parallels the development of masculine females with what he has found with feminine males. Not surprisingly, girls who are not close to their mothers, or who do not form close attachments to their mothers, and who become "buddies" with their fathers suffer from later gender confusion.

It is Stoller's belief that gender development occurs within the first year of life. For example, in the case of boys, "once the femininity begins to appear, somewhere around one or two years" the mother is pleased to see it, at the same time "denying it is strange behavior."

One of the chapters in Presentations of Gender is titled "Near Miss: 'Sex Change' Treatment." This reviewer, while not in agreement with some of Stoller's conclusions, strongly feels that he has done many of us in the paraculture and in the helping professions a great service by listing in one table, many of the moral/ethical/medical/psychiatric/theoretical/practical issues in pro and con format regarding 'sex change' surgery. If you haven't thought about the "other side of the coin", Stoller certainly presents the opportunity to do so. He is outspoken regarding the contemporary use of 'sex change' surgery to resolve an issue that might best be treated in another manner. However, he makes that statement against the following backdrop:

"Though gender disorder rarely remits with psychotherapy, some

## THE LANGUAGE OF CLOTHES

--by Alison Lurie

Reviewed by A. Kane

'For thousands of years human beings have communicated with one another first, in the language of dress. Long before one is near enough to talk with you on the streets or in a meeting or at a party, you announce your sex, age, and class to me, through what you are wearing. Very possibly, you give me important information (or misinformation) as to your occupation, origin, personality, opinions, tastes, sexual desires and current mood. One may not be able to put what one observes into words, but one can register the information unconsciously; and you can simultaneously do the same for another. By the time we meet and converse we have already spoken to each other in an older and more universal tongue."

Thus begins the first chapter of a rather interesting book about clothing styles. The author takes four different perspectives in looking at clothes through the years. These include historical, sociological, psychological and anthropological aspects. Further, she demonstrates how color, fabric, and cut are not only whims of designers or manufacturers, but in fact constitutes a vocabulary and grammar as precise and full of subconscious intent as any verbal language.

For the crossdresser/androgynous/transsexual paraculture this book offers an alternative perspective with regard to the use of clothes as props to indicate something about alter-ego. In her chapter on male and female, Ms. Lurie suggests that clothes that simultaneously conceal and reveal, and invite us to imagine what lies beneath, are traditionally erotic in their effect. While the average naked human body is not very exciting as most visitors to nudist camps soon discover. The author states that sex typing in dress begins at birth with the assignment of pale/pink layettes, toys bedding, and furniture to girl babies and pale/blue ones to boy babies. Pink in this culture is associated with sentiment; blue with service. The implication is that the little girl's future concern is with the life of the affections, while the boy's is with earning a living. As they grow older, light blue becomes a popular color for girl's clothes; after all, women must work as well as weep. But pink is rare on boys: the emotional life is never quite manly as evidenced by the kind of clothes. In another statement in this chapter, Ms. Lurie talks about male clothing as always being thought and designed to suggest physical and/or social dominance. the qualities that

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alternative to verbal methods in the assessment of those erotic anomalies that usually accompany gender disturbance.

Clinical issues are the subject of the last third of the book. Here the reviewer believes the authors have done a great service for the helping professional. In one chapter there is a good discussion of the clinical management of gender dysphoric patients. In another chapter there is a good analysis of the partners of transsexuals through the use of the clinical vignette. Another contributor discusses the process by which an individual moves into the social status of the opposite biologic sex. It is argued here that sex reassignment surgery is only one among many components in this process, and is not necessarily the most important of these. This contributor claims that a general failure to take the rehabilitative impact of the non-surgical components of gender reorientation into account has distorted the interpretation of surgical outcome studies and has, overall, tended to mislead research on the clinical management of transsexuals.

Finally, the editor, with her 14 years of clinical experience in this field, concludes this impressive study with her observations and suggestions for followup in other studies; these are well within the interest of helping professionals who work with this client base.

GENDER DYSPHORIA, without doubt, is a major contribution in the 1980s toward better understanding of the nature of gender dysphoria, sex reassignment, and clinical management of these clients. It is a must reference, for all helping professionals who work with this client population. I recommend it most highly.

## REACHING INTIMACY

primer for reaching intimacy, but rather is like a road map which indicates key mileposts along the road to pleasurable sexual and sensual lifestyles. The reviewer is struck by the ease of language and communication by Mr. de Haan in explaining his work. He does this while at the same time not giving offense to the reader. This is a highly-recommended book for those who want to learn more about the nature of intimacy in relationships. REACHING INTIMACY is truly a warm and instructive book for both men and women who have reached out for love and have received sex in return.

## PRESENTATIONS OF GENDER...

patients find themselves and in doing so become aware that 'sex change' will not suit their gender identity."

What percentage is "some"? How big is the sampling? What is "finding oneself"? Does it include happiness? Relief? Comfort? How can we define healing for the person, perhaps not gender dysphoric, who wishes a change in anatomy? Is "sex change" surgery cosmetic? Or is it therapeutic? How does breast augmentation for a "healthy" male differ from breast augmentation for a "healthy" female from a social, ethical, medical, and therapeutic perspective? How does breast reduction surgery for a "healthy" female wanting the body of a male differ from breast reduction surgery for a "healthy" woman who wants to have "shapelier, more attractive" breasts?

Much has been said in the past that there has been little follow-up on "sex change" surgery. Stoller continues that we know all too little about how the post-surgical person feels months or years after the surgery. He feels that many have had illusions regarding what the surgery could have done for them, and what it did achieve for them. If this is the case, then perhaps it is the counselors, therapists, and analysts who have failed. Did the professionals require that their clients seek the knowledge of others who have preceded the pre-operational clients in surgery?

These were some of the questions that Stoller's book created in this reviewer. He is likely to evoke as many from other readers.

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## LANGUAGE OF CLOTHES

make a man attractive are size and muscular strength, hence the style of clothes that men in this culture are traditionally seen in. Female costume was and is designed to suggest a 'successful maternity'. It emphasizes rounded contours and rich, soft materials and tends to center interest on the breasts, stomach, and hips. Energy, strength, and health were regarded as attractive, and they were expressed through bright bold colors and full-cut gowns with strong sweeping curves that often accommodate and flatter pregnant women.

The book is filled with many such interesting and cogent observations about clothing styles from the perspectives mentioned earlier. Its value to the reviewer is that it provides a window toward better understanding of the nature and practicality in a cross-dresser's choice of wardrobe and purpose in choosing such. This book is recommended for those who would like a better perspective on the nature of clothing as a linguistic communication medium.

## NATURAL SELECTIONS

He began to fight himself: "On the nights that he lost, it ended in his study with one of Robin's [his wife] stolen dresses, his face painted, lost in his fantasy picture show ... smiling and happy on his way to ballet class."

Once Adam decides that there is only one solution for him -- that of changing his anatomy to match his emotions, his mind, his hopes -- he moves with dispatch. But rather than solving his problems, a new problem arises: "She [Eve] was alone in a way that even on the darkest day as Adam she had never imagined possible. She lived without the grace of history, a stranger to everyone and to herself."

Eventually Eve finds happiness, but not without first going through several ordeals regarding her ex-wife, her career, and a former friend and political advisor of her father's. As in a mystery, many loose ends are resolved in a whirlwind finale.

Unlike some novels that feature transsexuals (such as Hugh Selby's "Last Exit to Brooklyn"), this book has a happy ending; it has a great deal of goodness in its characters (there are evil characters as well). Transsexualism in this novel is treated no differently than any other disease by some of those closest to Adam/Eve: in fact, Eve underestimates the capability of her friends and family to support her. As Eve's aunt states in the book's ending, "Think about her (Eve) as a woman with a birth defect that medical science was able to remove



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