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Gender Community

New Series No. 10



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# **THE TARTAN SKIRT**

## **The Scottish Magazine for the Gender Community**

**Editor: Anne Forrester**

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**New Series No. 10**

**April 1994**

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**DRESSING - OR BEING ?**

*by Roger Peo PhD*

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A theme that I have examined from time to time is the motivation for male-to-female crossdressing. Asking the average crossdresser why he cross dresses is likely to elicit some response such as "I am exploring femininity", or "I just do this to relax". Recently this topic has come up in various newsletters from around the community and in some personal correspondence I have received. The interesting thing is that the tone of the writing has changed dramatically.

Initially there was never a reference to an erotic component and there was always the *rationale* that the crossdresser was trying to understand something about that elusive thing we label femininity. More recent writings acknowledge that there is (or was) at least a sensual component, if not a truly erotic one. The other perspective is that many crossdressers remain 'men in dresses' rather than some semblance of a woman.

Some of these writings are either by women or written for newsletters that address crossdressing within a male-female couple. What these authors seem to be saying is that there is often little behavioral or emotional shift when the man puts on women's clothing. That is, he still behaves in very masculine ways. One writer speculated that such lack of behavioral change was rooted in the male's need to continually assure himself and others that he was still masculine despite the clothing. This is based on the subconscious fear that to be feminine is to move to second class citizen status.

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Reprinted from *Renaissance News & Views*, February 1994



As I have written before, femininity is not clothing or makeup but rather a way of seeing and interacting with the world. In the last few years there have been a number of books written on the biological differences between males and females. A major focus has been on differences in brain structure from which it is inferred that males and females process information in very different ways. This, in turn, strongly affects the way they relate to the world.

If these biological differences are a strong influence on behavior, then one can speculate that it is going to be very difficult for the crossdresser to behave in feminine ways and thus explore femininity. For him to do so, he has to learn new ways of thinking. While this is certainly not impossible, it means overcoming many years of socializing together with an internal 'program' that doesn't process information the way a female brain does. So it is hard for him to understand why women behave the way they do. This makes it difficult for him to explore this alternate culture.

On the behavioral side of the discussion there have been a number of recent authors who have described the different actions of men and women as they relate to each other.

Simplistically, men behave individualistically and hierarchically while women are concerned with the whole situation and interpersonal relationships.

Thus there seem to be both biological and sociological differences between the sexes. Perhaps they are so fundamental there will never be a true comprehension by one sex of the other sex.

The situation is neither good nor bad. What I am trying to express is the idea that for a male to explore femininity, it may be more difficult than he expected. Maybe this is not



needed. Perhaps all that is required is crossdressers to enjoy whatever they do and not try to explain or understand it. (A cautionary note. This is *not* a license to ignore the effects of crossdressing on your partner).

*You may contact Dr Peo at PO Box 3445, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603, USA, or by phone at [010-1]-914-452-8405. All communications are kept confidential. ■*

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## PARTY, PARTY !

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## LOOKING LIKE A LADY

### LEARNING MAKEUP TECHNIQUES

#### 3. Painting your nails

- and taking your makeup off again

by Anne Forrester

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#### The extra touch - your nails !

After you have made up your face and put on your wig you may well want to apply some nail polish - but think about it first. If it's just to please you, then OK. However, if you are going out in public think twice. Coloured nails draw attention to the hands - and hands are the biggest give-away of all if you are trying to pass. Male hands are usually larger than female hands, nails are generally much less well kept, and the overall effect is very obviously male: you shouldn't attract any more attention to them than you can avoid. Also, you will find very few real women wearing coloured nail polish in the daytime - although parties or special evening occasions may be another matter.

There is a huge selection of colours of nail polish available, but you will be best selecting something not too vivid, and if possible that will tone with (but not necessarily match) your lipstick. However, always start with a careful manicure, soaking your hands in hot soapy water and then pushing the quills back and trimming the nails to an even length - and do make sure that your nails are clean and there is no dirt under them !

Start with a clear colourless base coat. If you are right-handed start by doing your left hand (or *vice versa*). It's easier that way and gets you into the way of it, and you

can move on to the other hand afterwards. Gently apply polish to the thumb and then, working along your hand, one at a time to all the other nails. Stroke the brush from the base of the nail to the tip, first of all in a stripe up the centre and then in stripes on either side. Be careful not to put polish either on the quick at the base of the nail nor right into either edge. Then change hands and do the other side - but be *very* careful not to smudge that first hand while you do the second one.

Now comes the hardest part of all. Waiting for it to dry. You can try gently blowing on your nails, or even immerse your hands in a bowl of cold water, but **don't** be tempted to hold them in front of a fire or in a blast of hot air. It will only cause the polish to wrinkle.

Next, apply a layer of coloured polish, in the same way as the base coat, being careful not to go right to the sides of the nail. (Leaving the edges unpainted makes the nail look slimmer than it really is). Now make doubly sure that the polish has thoroughly dried before taking the next step (and although it may be touch-dry it will usually take 20-30 minutes before it has begun to harden). Finally, put on a layer of top-coat, using the same technique as before. This will seal in the coloured polish and prevent too much chipping - or at least, delay the inevitable.

The main requirements for this exercise are 1) good eyesight, 2) great care, 3) patience and 4) yet more - and more - patience. **Don't rush it, or you will mess it.**

#### Getting it all off again

Sooner or later we come to what I call 'Pumpkin time': the time when Cinderella (you) has to return to the ashes of everyday life. So what about getting all that makeup off and leaving no trace for any suspicious spouse or workmates to discover ? Well, what you need to have ready for this sad transfiguration is some eye makeup remover, a bottle of

cleansing cream, some cotton wool balls, soap, paper and ordinary towels, and lots of hot water. Now don't go overboard with this: an inexpensive cleansing cream such as Boots' Cleansing Lotion - or even baby lotion - is more than adequate (although be careful that the baby lotion is not perfumed, as this is too easily detected). However, you may well find that eye makeup remover pads are better than the bottled stuff. They are certainly less messy !

First, make sure that everything is readily to hand. There is nothing more frustrating than having your eyes full of soap and not being able to find your towel. Start with the eye makeup. Apart from the various cleansers, make sure that the paper towels are sitting on top of your ordinary towel, and that both are readily to hand. Using remover pads - or alternatively a piece of dampened cotton wool and a bottle of remover fluid - carefully wipe off the mascara with gentle upwards strokes along the upper eye lashes and downwards strokes over the lower lashes. Eye makeup removers are oil-based and so even waterproof mascara should come off easily. Next wipe carefully over your eyelids and around the sockets until you can see no traces of makeup left, and finally wipe carefully over your eyebrows to remove the liner. One final - and important - point about your eyes. Do be sure to use only good quality eye makeup remover. Your eyes are one of your most important possessions. They re-focus some 100,000 times a day, and if you damage them your eyesight can be an irretrievable loss. Whatever else you do, don't economise by buying cheap materials for cleaning around them.

Your next move is to dampen a cotton wool ball or two and use it to dab cleanser all over your face. Wipe carefully, replacing the cotton wool as necessary, and you will find that nearly all the makeup comes off easily. Finally, using the same cotton ball/cleanser routine wipe firmly around your mouth to remove all traces of lipstick and lip liner. When you think that you have got as much off as possible wash your face well with plenty of soap and hot water,

rinsing it all off several times. Don't forget to reach around your neck and below your ears - wherever you applied makeup. Now wipe your face in a couple of paper towels. Not only does this save embarrassing marks on the household linen, it also lets you see if there are any makeup stains - meaning that you have not done a sufficiently thorough job and need to go back for a few more rinses with soap and water. Finally, dry your face on an ordinary towel and examine yourself closely in the mirror. Look especially for any remaining traces of mascara, eyeshadow or lipstick and if necessary go back again and remove them.

Nail varnish comes off quite easily with any of a number of nail polish removers. As with the eyes, you may find special remover pads more effective (and less trouble to hide) than bottles of the stuff. Apply the pads - or cotton wool soaked in remover - and let the fluid work for a minute or two before wiping it - and the varnish - off with clean cotton wool and then washing your hands. Be very careful to go right into the base of your nails, however, around the quick, as colouration does tend to cling in these corners. One final word of warning. Most nail polish removers are based on acetone which, while it dissolves the varnish also dries out your skin and nails. Too much or too frequent use of it will not do your hands or nails any good, so be careful to wash it all off as quickly as possible, and after you have dried your hands rub in a good hand cream. (*NB.* Nail polish remover will also dissolve most paints and varnishes, so make sure you don't spill any on the dressing table !).

#### **And finally...**

So there we are. It is all very easy really, but the only key to success with makeup is practice - and then more practice. Remember the main rule - "less is better than more" - and you won't go far wrong. Now go and enjoy yourself ! ☺



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## THE MORE THINGS CHANGE...\*

by Dina Amberle

What do David Bowie and Richard Nixon have in common? And how does anything about those two disparate personalities relate to us as crossdressers?

The answer is that both of those men are famous for changing their public images. Bowie burst on the scene as a gender-bending, orange-haired space oddity who transformed himself into a white Anglo soul singer, later a film star, and now as an elegant elder statesman of rock still working on the cutting edges. Nixon transformed himself from the commie-baiter of the Cold War '50s to become the first American President to really open up relations with the Communist Soviets and Chinese. Along the way he turned himself from a has-been in '62 to President in '68; later disgraced through the Watergate scandal, now regaining respect through his writings and mastery of foreign affairs.

So how does that relate to us as crossdressers? Well, change is what it's all about. But how much do we really change when we cross dress?

There are some who ascribe to the theory that we don't necessarily change at all because if we are truly transgendered we shouldn't need the clothing and outward appearances to get in touch with our feminine selves. However, I feel that most of us do need the visible, tactile changes brought on by makeup and women's clothing to make us feel feminine.

\*Reprinted from *Renaissance News*, November 1993

Is there a point in the transformation process when you notice the change from masculinity to femininity? I'm sure each of us has a different 'turning point' when we move from our male selves to our feminine *alter egos*. It may be at some point in the process of applying the makeup, or affixing the wig, or putting on either the undergarments or the outerwear. We all notice the visible change in our appearance along the way. But when do you start to feel the change on the inside, in your attitude, movements, or mindset?

It is an interesting concept to try to judge how much we change when we cross-dress. Other than the visible surface changes of appearance and clothing it is often hard to discern femininity in ourselves or others. Conversational topics are still male-oriented for the most part, except when discussing fashions or shopping for our *femme* selves. And unfortunately, most of us don't get a chance to know each other in our male guises to allow us to make a sound judgment on the degree of change between the 'guys' and the 'girlfriends' we've come to know.

Femininity seems to be a subtle change within each of us, mostly internalized, but lurking within each of us even if we're talking sports, or discussing home repairs, or commiserating about our male careers. Perhaps we can all be thankful that we aren't all trying to impersonate the breathless femininity of Marilyn Monroe or Betty Boop just because we're dressed for the part.

Change can also be an evolutionary process not simply a one-shot transformation. Refer back to Messrs. Bowie and Nixon. With both those gentlemen change was a dynamic, ongoing process. Are any of us stuck in a rut with our cross dressing? Have you changed your personal style as you grew into your feminine *persona*? The challenging feature of cross-dressing is that we can be constantly striving for improvement, secure in the knowledge that genetics will always provide us with the insurmountable barrier to

perfection. We may only be able to chip away at that barrier but the challenge is to keep improving, keep working on our outer images as we find out more about our inner femininity.

The thing to remember is that 'change' is what it is all about in this lifestyle. But 'change' in the sense of growth or development is important in both halves of our lives. Don't exchange one rut for another rut, with the only difference being the presence of high heels in the latter. Most great people and institutions incorporate change to keep themselves in the forefront. We all have made the surface change to femininity, but the deeper changes are what will make us more complete - and more interesting - women. ■

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## UNIFORM GAMES\*

by Selena Ann Shepard

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It may not be common knowledge, but I've known since I was ten years old that ice hockey and transvestism are as closely linked as Laurel and Hardy, Paris and the Eiffel Tower, the nineteenth century and Queen Victoria. Growing up in suburban Walnut Creek, California, in the early '60s I passionately engaged in puck play and panty play - deriving a joy that I never could get from hitting baseballs or wearing blue jeans. Needless to say, neither proclivity was "in" at the time.

While some of the boys I knew participated in the Big Three sports, only a handful of us took up hockey. Since there were few frozen lakes close by we had to be awake at 6.00 am on Saturday mornings to find skating time at the local indoor rink (a converted barn). As to fooling around with womens clothes, I was unaware of any other boy who found it pleasurable (though I was never brazen enough to take a survey of my fellow Scout Troop members).

It first dawned on me after a hard-played hockey game the commonality between my two joys in life. I found myself removing one uniform - complete with knee pads, jock-strap, double layered knee-high stockings, bulky sweater - and exchanging it for another uniform - padded bra, silk stockings, frilly panties, flowing slip. I went from playing macho boy to *femme* girl, different and the same, actually.

As I partook further in my hobbies I grew increasingly aware of the discipline needed to excel at each one. They

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\* Reprinted from TV/TS Tapestry, No 66

required practice, practice, and more practice to become even marginally successful. I'd spend hours trying to master backwards skating and an equivalent amount of time learning to pull up a back zipper. I had grave doubts I would ever learn either skill. Luckily, the end results seemed to work out - at least in the case of the zipper; with the backwards skating we just seemed to drive each other into the boards. (I've a sneaking suspicion that would still be the case today).



For whatever reason, a corselette binding my waist provided a great outlet for the release of my pent-up pubescent energy. Hustling down the ice with a puck in front of my stick brought about similar results. I would fantasize a future time when I would be able to combine my two passions, but alas, I never quite had the nerve - unless you count the hockey game in which I wore a Playtex

panty girdle instead of a cup (not only did it feel nicer, but it seemed to give me just as much protection).

I have not played ice hockey in over 15 years, but I am still deeply involved in transgending. I sometimes feel only half-fulfilled, but I have discovered a cure for such blues. I dress to thrill in my finest feminine fashions - a black merry-widow, sheer negligee, thigh-high leather boots - and sit back on the sofa to watch the Oilers battle the Flyers on television. It's the perfect way for me to experience the best of both worlds. I recommend it for any guy who "can't get no satisfaction" in the '90s. ■

♂♀♂♀♂♀♂♀

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## THE LADY UNDERNEATH\*

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For years I've hidden the woman  
Who's always shared my life  
But I recently introduced her  
To the woman who is my wife.  
They got along rather well,  
They laughed and talked a bit.  
My wife began to teach her  
How to walk, stand and sit.

Shopping trips for dresses,  
Makeup tips and fashion too.  
My two best friends together,  
Every experience new.  
Everyone has a secret  
They hide without a trace.  
Mine lies beneath my clothes,  
Silks, satins and lace.

But my wife has met the lady  
Who for years I've had to hide  
There is no problem, they are friends.  
And always at my side  
The lady who for years I've hid,  
And never left a trace,  
Now is free to come and go  
And show her pretty face.

*April L. Willis*

\* Reprinted from *TV/TS Tapestry*, Issue 66 ■

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## YOU CAN BANK ON IT !

(IN YOUR *FEMME* NAME, TOO)

*by Anne Forrester*

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If you go out and about often while dressed and in your *femme* identity - and you have no difficulty in passing as 'her' - you must from time to time find a problem paying for more expensive purchases if you don't have sufficient cash with you. (And carrying large amounts of cash about your person is never to be encouraged - in either male or female role). Of course, if you have a bank account and a cheque book, or if you carry one or more credit cards, then you would have no trouble at all - except that they will carry your male name. So why not obtain similar items in your *femme* name ? As long as you can pay the bills incurred by your 'other half' and have no intention of defrauding the banks it's perfectly legal, very simple, and makes life so much easier.

Apart from an account and/or credit card(s) in your own (male) name the first requirement is a recognisable female signature - one that you can reproduce time after time, even with other people watching you. So the first thing to do is to sit down and produce a female signature that is different from the style of your ordinary male signature, and then to practice until you can reproduce it automatically whenever required.

### Credit cards

If you hold one of the major credit cards (Visa or Access [Mastercard]), then obtaining a second card on your account is simple. The card companies issue a form for you to complete, and for the second card



holder to sign. You may have to pay a second annual card fee to some companies, and you will certainly have to undertake to meet all debts incurred by the second card holder: however, these appear without distinction on your monthly statements. The important point here is that the account is still in the original account holder's name (*i.e.* your male name), and no names of second (or subsequent) card holders appear on any statements or correspondence from the card company.

The essential requirement is simply that all charges made on the card are paid according to the company's rules (in Britain, usually a minimum of £ 5.00 a month or 5% of the outstanding balance, whichever is greater); and as the principal account holder it is *you* who has to pay the bill, not the secondary card holder.



### A question of identification

There is an important distinction between the two major cards as to how names appear.

Visa cards carry just initials and a surname, without any indication of gender (*e.g.* "M Smith"). However, if the sum involved is large and the vendor makes a telephone call to confirm the validity of your card, then gender is one of the points the card company asks the vendor to check - so you must be prepared for this.

**Access (Mastercard)**, on the other hand, gives both a gender designation and first names in full on the card (*e.g.* "Ms Mary Smith"), so you will certainly need to be immediately identifiable by the vendor as a credible female.

One other thing that is essential, of course, is that you use a consistent signature on your card. This calls for a little thought. If your card says "Ms Mary Smith" on the front, and you have signed it on the back as "M.Smith", then you must remember always to sign "M.Smith" when buying goods or services, as it is the signature on the back of the card that vendors check first, not the details of the name printed on the front.

As credit card fraud becomes more of a problem for the banks you may also find that if a telephone call is made to confirm payment of larger amounts, then you may be asked for a lot of personal details that should match up with those given to the card company when you opened the account. (For example, when using my Access card to purchase a large sum of foreign currency recently I was asked to give my address, date of birth, and mother's maiden name).

Finally, as part of the ongoing battle against fraud some companies are experimenting with the incorporation of photographs on their cards. If this should become common practise then obviously you will have to provide suitable photos for both your appearances - and then make sure that you maintain a consistent feminine appearance from day to day.

### Bank cheque accounts

If you have a current account in your own male name at one of the major banks it is often not difficult to convert it into a joint account with your feminine *persona*. Your bank



should supply you with a mandate form for your 'partner' to sign with a specimen signature, and you can then apply for a new cheque book bearing both names, and a cheque guarantee card for your 'partner'. If you are a credit-worthy customer of the bank, this can often all be dealt with by post.

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Of course, if you are well known at your branch as a married man, if you bank at a branch where the manager wishes to meet all new account holders in person, or if you already have a joint account with your wife, this becomes rather less easy. It is probably worth your while making an informal enquiry about the procedure at your own branch, and if it seems likely that difficulties will arise then let it go. After all, if you have one or more credit cards in your male name then a cheque book is much less important. Alternatively why not try 'coming clean' and telling your bank manager what you want to do, and why? All right, I know it may be embarrassing, but I do know of a number of cases where this was done and the Bank Manager has proved both understanding and helpful. After all, it's business the banks are after, not making moral judgements, and if you can pay the bill incurred under either name that is all they really care about!

### And finally

Of course, all of the foregoing assumes that you are maintaining your male identity as your main role in life. If

you are transsexual then you will be taking steps to change your name legally, and changing the details of your accounts becomes very straightforward and there is no need to maintain the two identities.

One further advantage of carrying credit cards in your female identity (or even cheque guarantee cards that can be used in a cash dispenser) is that you can always withdraw cash from dispensers when you need it - and without the potential embarrassment of being stopped and seen as a woman carrying cards in a male name.

But why stop at cheque books and credit cards? If you drive while dressed you can (for an additional fee) take out Associate membership of one of the motoring organisations in your second name (in which case the AA - for example - prints the membership card as do Access; *i.e.* with gender and first name[s] in full). Should you suffer a breakdown while dressed you can then call for help knowing that you have a membership card that matches your appearance. Much less potentially embarrassing!

So why not go for it? Whether it is buying petrol or a dress, cosmetics or the week's food shopping, it is so much easier - and satisfying - if you have plastic and/or a cheque book that matches your *femme* identity. As long as you are not committing fraud, and have every intention of paying the bills when they come in, you are quite within your rights. ■

### The little black dress that puts you in the red

Worried about the amount that you spend on clothes? Catherine de Medici, Queen of France, possessed a dress which at present day prices would cost £ 6,000,000 - and she wore it only once!



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## SOME RANDOM COMMENTS

by Erin Carruthers

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Hello. I'm Erin Carruthers, a pre-op transsexual. At the time of writing (November 1993) I've been on hormones for just over a year, and so I'm about half-way 'there'. My home is in the Hebrides, on the island of Mull, so visits to Group meetings are obviously not on. However, as most of my family live in Aberdeen, perhaps one day I may be able to visit the Grampian Gender group and meet some of you. Nevertheless I do regard myself as a member of another Group - the Northern Regional Gender Dysphoria Support Group, which is even further away in Stockton-on-Tees. I have only been to one meeting so far but have friends in this Group, and this has been extremely helpful. Now, having introduced myself I would like to make a few random - but hopefully pertinent - comments on 'the scene'.

**Labels (1).** In a previous issue of *The Tartan Skirt* (October 1993) Anne asked what we should call a woman who is born female and is happy to live as one. This is an interesting question which may have several answers. I usually say either 'natural woman' or 'natural-born woman'. A friend who is a post-op TS used to say 'real woman' until I objected, saying that I regard *myself* as a 'real' woman, although not a 'natural' one. After all, it's the mind which makes us all the individuals we are, not the body. It is what is between the ears that counts, not what is between the legs ! My friend now uses the term 'biological woman', or shortens it to 'bio-woman' ! This is more logical, but the American term 'genetic woman' is probably better.

**Labels (2).** 'Girl' *versus* 'Woman'. No, I don't object to being referred to as a 'girl', in spite of my age. I believe

the term is used only loosely and as part of a 'camaraderie'. Next time I get to a group meeting in Cleveland (!) I'll put the question around.

**Labels (3).** Transvestite (dare I say it ??). Personally I have no objection to this term. It is, after all, only the Latin for 'cross dresser'. Anne says it is used in an insulting manner; but the people who wish to insult crossdressers will insult them whatever name is used. It is the person who is being targeted for insult, not the terminology. In my experience everyone knows the term 'transvestite' but few are acquainted with 'crossdresser', and hardly anyone at all knows what 'transsexual' means. I live about one and a half miles outside a village and rarely have the need to go into it, but everyone there knows about me and apparently the general opinion is that I am "cross dressing to evade the tax man" !!!

**Hormones.** Cyproterone acetate (also known as 'Androcur' and 'Cyprostat') is an anti-androgen - that is, a substance that depresses production of the male hormone testosterone - that is sometimes used in the treatment of transsexuals. However, a word of caution might be in order, as this substance can affect some people in exactly the *opposite* manner to that intended. I know, because I am one of them. In my case it caused loss of head hair, hair growth on the body where none had ever grown before, and it caused my blood pressure to go berserk and climb much too high. On doctor's orders I ceased taking the substance, but then suffered withdrawal symptoms - severe mood swings (that are gone now - thank goodness), but the hair problems remain.

Life is never simple, is it ? ■





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## SO WHAT ARE WE ?

### MORE ABOUT NAMES AND LABELS

by Phaedra Kelly

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Further to "What's wrong with that word 'Transvestite ?" (*The Tartan Skirt*, January 1994), what's wrong with *Gender Transient* as a label ? The development of the whole TV/TG concept has been arrested by the hindrance of the label - not, I believe, so much by outsiders' reactions to it but by our own experience of the meaning. It is said that whatever one is named one will take seven characteristics of; and *Trans* - meaning only to change or swap from one to another extreme - limits us as much as any finite law in Newtonian physics, but we are *not* limited and finite people. Our very virtue is to be adaptable, and the movement of time and space around finite laws, altering their compounds and making them irrational and unworkable, is something which, by our nature, we all reject. So why name ourselves for limitation ?

Transience - mobility either by conscious decision or birthright - offers an infinite range of options. In this 'quantum leap'-like lifestyle of ours it is gender which we have put forward for inspection, knowing not only that we can learn from it but also that we always need to be flexible enough not to be tricked by it. Thus *Gender Transient* seems a logical title to adopt.

As to initials, well almost everyone abbreviates or initialises titles. Bird watchers call themselves 'Twitchers' as TVs call themselves 'Trannies' - and tax inspectors lack the imagination to call themselves TIs. However, the wide range of initials used in commerce and corporate business is a coded language in itself (e.g. as in FTI = *Financial Times Index*, etc.

Human being ? Sure. But then, 'fellow human being' tends to be followed by 'fellow traveller', a beautiful term whose use has been made hazardous by redneck values and its association with Communist underground movements in the 1950s. Nevertheless in places where, because no other word is known or accepted, I *have* stated "I travesti, I human being". But I am the first to call myself gender transient (GT), and am lumbered with producing a definition, even though I now prefer not to try but to let the narrative of my life tell the story for me. There are other GTs who, like myself, choose not to be men or women but GT/Androgyne - the third gender, persons in transit. What we do about labels is use what of them is good and necessary, and ignore the rest into extinction.

We have no time now to debate or discuss what we will be called. We have named ourselves GT and then stepped out into the world to live it. All that's wrong with the word *Transvestite* is that it has been hijacked by a myopic media; but the actual TVs to whom it belongs as an inheritance hardly step out themselves to live it, so what can they expect ? With my present membership of the National Union of Journalists, and an interview imminent in their trade paper, you might soon find yourselves re-named by the media, although I have no control over that nor (sadly) how they will apply, use and (inevitably) misuse it.

If you don't like what you are called in the media, get out and change it. Write to them about their interpretation and application each time they get it wrong. If enough of you do, it will change. ■

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*N.B. When I ran my computer's spelling checker over Phaedra's article it didn't recognise all the words, and amongst other suggestions thought that 'Trannies' should be 'Grannies', and that 'Travesti' might be 'Travesty'. Do you think it knows something that the rest of us don't ? - Ed.*



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## FEMINIST CORNER

### 1. NOW *THAT'S* WHY I'M A FEMINIST !

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Yes, I freely admit to all my friends and relatives that I am a feminist. And even in the male role that is usually accepted without much comment. But what do I mean by it, and is it something to which all genderists should own up ? And what do we mean by 'feminist' anyway ?

Well, let's get one thing straight. I do *not* see myself as one of the 1960-ish bra-burning feminists that got the word such a bad name. And I am *not* against femininity - far from it. However, I am all for feminism if that means that women should expect to receive equality of opportunity in all walks of life - including jobs and promotion; to be treated with respect by everyone - and that includes *all* men; to not be patronised or talked down to on the grounds that women can't understand the serious things of life; and to not be sidelined as a form of 'second class citizen'.

Now if you think that I am just talking stereotypes, then think again. While in the feminine role I merge into the background and go anywhere and do anything that a woman does when going about her daily life - and if you have not experienced it yourself I can tell you that women *are* discriminated against, they *are* patronised, and they *are* treated as second class citizens. Oh yes, it may be nice when a man holds open a door for you, or gives you his seat on a crowded bus or train, or stands aside to let you pass. It is *not* so nice when you are ignored by waiters and salespersons who prefer to serve the men first, or when you are addressed on the lines of 'Yes, dear, never mind', or when a man ignores you and addresses your male companion as though you were either deaf or daft; or when it is the man who is handed the menu in a restaurant; or

when it is the man who you expect to see behind the wheel of a car, with the woman in the passenger seat; and so on *ad infinitum*.

Now all of this is just society's way of treating women as second class citizens. Personally I am delighted when I find that my bus or my train is being driven - or my aeroplane is being flown - by a woman. It doesn't happen very often, though, even although women are usually better at many of these jobs than most men. And as a woman I find that I am treated with a great deal more courtesy and respect by other women who are doing a responsible job in society than I am by their male counterparts.

Now all of this makes me mad at the way that *most* men treat *most* women. Oh yes, I've heard of the 'new man' who does his whole share of housework, shopping, and looking after the kids - but just try to find one of these paragons and you'll soon discover that they are very thin on the ground. Usually it is more on the lines of an occasional wiping up after a meal, or pushing the pram around the block once a week; and their 'new man' image rarely extends beyond their home to the workplace.

As multi-gendered individuals we are privileged in being able to see the inequalities that society still imposes between the sexes: certainly we are more able to see the injustices that women suffer. So perhaps it is only fair that we should express the feminine side of our natures by joining the feminists whenever they cry out for justice and fair and equal treatment. As I said at the beginning: I am proud to call myself a feminist, but that won't stand in the way of my enjoying being feminine. The two things are not only compatible, they are both essential aspects of our gender diversity. ■

*But it isn't all one sided - now read on :-*



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## 2. SO WHAT ABOUT WOMEN AND WORK ?

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Well, take heart all of you m-to-f transsexuals and transgenderists who want to earn your living as a woman - and the rest of you just watch out. Did you know that Government estimates anticipate that in the next decade at least half of all available jobs in Britain will be occupied by women ? Indeed, it's already starting right at the top ! After centuries of male domination Hazel Aronson recently became the first woman judge appointed to the Scottish Supreme Court, while Averil Mansfield has become Britain's first female Professor of Surgery, at St Mary's Hospital Medical school.

And there's more. At a recent meeting of the British Psychological Society women in top jobs were said to be often of higher calibre, and with skills and determination of a higher quality than, those of typical male managers. However, there is a down side to this. Because women have to show many traditionally masculine attributes in order to reach the top in commerce and industry - e.g. toughness and self-assertion - and must 'outmen the men' in environments based on 'appropriate male behaviour and cultural values', anyone who has been on a *regimen* of female hormones will most probably have lost the necessary testosterone-induced aggressive edge.

Not surprisingly, because of all this women who do make it to the top and then have to maintain female characteristics without being too feminine, and undertake tough actions in a predominantly male world while at the same time looking after family responsibilities, are thought liable to become "anxious, introverted and neurotic".

However, in order to cope with this situation, most highly successful women fit their domestic responsibilities around their work (rather than the other way around), tending to keep their jobs at the centre of their lives and working at them full-time rather than part-time.

So then, are success and femininity incompatible ?  
Definitely not ! ■

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## 3. BUT THIS IS DISCRIMINATION !

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The ages-old battle between the sexes never seems to die down, does it ? '*Discrimination rules, OK*'. So what are the latest aspects of this gender discrimination ?

Actually, it seems that nowadays the discrimination is often working in reverse, and against men. For example, in a report on *Men and Women at Work* published recently it is shown that men are more likely to have their sexuality questioned for taking a job traditionally performed by women than *vice versa*. Males also have a narrower choice of work and are often offered lower paid jobs. It seems that long-term unemployed males are often regarded by employers (frequently unfairly) as being lazy, whereas women who have been out of work for some time are looked upon as "maternal", and tend to be excused their lack of recent work experience.

In a survey of 118 males it was found that nearly half had been advised to seek low-paid warehouse or shop floor work, compared with only 10% of the 108 women questioned, who were much more likely to be steered towards higher paid secretarial or administrative work.



On the other side of the coin, however, when employers were surveyed they saw sexual harassment as being "routine", with more than a third of them saying that it was inevitable for a woman working in a male environment to suffer this, while only 26% of employers thought that a man working in a female environment should expect the same.

In America this reverse discrimination also seems to be taking off. For example, the Clinton administration has already appointed women to a number of top posts - including that of Air Force Secretary. And not only do women now make up 11% of the total US military strength but there are actually 21 female generals and admirals on active duty. (And how many are there in the British armed forces you ask ? You may well ask !).

Not to be left out of the 'discrimination debate', even animals are getting a look in, for medical researchers in America have pointed out sexism even in the laboratory. As female mice are smaller and more expensive than male mice, and their menstrual cycle makes the results of tests more complicated, guess what ? That's right - male mice are mostly used for experiments. (However, as the results are then usually generalised to cover the whole species - and often translated from mice to humans as well - this is definitely NOT a good thing, even if the principle of using animals for experimentation can be defended in the first place).

Obviously, you can't win. In general every-day life women are treated as second-class citizens, while men are discriminated against in employment. You just can't tell which gender is best off. **So think yourself lucky if you can enjoy both genders. ■**

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*If you think that bras, stockings and high heels are erotic, just try wearing them ALL day.*

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## Mrs AVERAGE

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If you like your female life style, how would you like to try to shape up as an 'ordinary' woman ? Well, if you want to fit in as 'Mrs Average' this is what you must aim at :-

The average married woman in Britain is called Susan. She is between 35 and 59 years old, 5'4" tall, weighs 10 stones (140 lbs), has a 26" waist and a 36B bust, and wears size 5 shoes - usually low-heeled court shoes bought for around £17.56 a pair. She is a keen bargain hunter and shops frequently at sales and charity stores. Of course, she buys her knickers at Marks and Spencer, and she spends £342 a year on clothes and gets through 20 pairs of tights a year.

Mrs Average lives in a semi-detached house in a city suburb, goes to the hairdresser once a month and is most likely to work as a clerk or a secretary, earning an average of £241 a week. You will not be surprised to learn that she has 2.1 children, having had her first baby at the age of 25 (but not getting married until 29 !). She drinks the equivalent of a modest four glasses of wine a week and spends nearly £2 a week on sweets and chocolates - although that is for the rest of her family as well - and spends around nine hours a week in her kitchen. Mind you, that is in addition to 26 hours a week spent on cleaning and household chores, 37 hours a week working outside the home, and 30 hours a week watching TV (no, not us - the television, silly !). She prefers the soaps, and *Coronation Street* and *East Enders* are her favourites.

No, this is not a picture of *Superwoman*, but just the statistically average married woman in Britain in the 1990s. So you still aspire to be an 'average woman' ? Well, good luck to you. I guess that most of us would never have the stamina (let alone the figure) to make it. ■



## HAVE YOU READ ?

Some Books Reviewed

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*Hormonal Treatment for the Transsexual - an Overview for Professionals.* by Sheila Kirk MD. Wayland, MA, USA: IFGE. (Audiocassette, running time approx 75 minutes). 1993. \$ 19.95

No, this is not something about which I am asking "Have you read?"; this time it is "Have you heard?". Although aimed primarily at health care professionals, this audiocassette is something that every transsexual should acquire, both for their own information and also to give or recommend to their family doctors - most of whom know little or nothing about gender diversity, but through whom most transsexuals will have to make their first approach when seeking professional help in their transition.

Dr Sheila Kirk is a physician and gynaecologist who is herself transgendered, and she is an expert in the medical management of transgendered persons. On this tape she gives a very detailed exposition of the position regarding hormone treatment in both male-to-female and female-to-male individuals, and it naturally contains a great deal of specialist medical language. Nevertheless, most transgendered individuals who are serious enough about their situation to be considering hormone therapy should have no difficulty in learning a great deal from it.

Dr Kirk deals in detail with the various hormone preparations currently available, recommendations for their dosage, their effects and contraindications and - of especial importance - the necessary physical and laboratory

examinations that are essential before treatment begins and for monitoring the effects and general health of each individual during (and often after) treatment. It must also be noted that a number of the preparations discussed by Dr Kirk are referred to under their trade names, and not all of them are the same or are available in Europe. However, some other preparations available in Europe but not currently in America (*e.g.* the anti-androgen 'Androcur') are also given very detailed consideration.

Both the benefits and the disadvantages of hormones are listed, and many transgendered persons keen to enjoy the benefits of hormone therapy (like breast growth and re-distribution of body fat) will need to be aware both of limitations (oestrogens will not reduce your waist size, will not cause growth of head hair, nor will they feminise your male voice), and of the down side - possible weight gain, vein problems in the legs (possibly leading to phlebitis), high blood pressure and a marked decrease in sexual interests, activity and ability, as well as possible bouts of depression, gastric disorders and even difficulty with wearing contact lenses - any of which may occur with some people.

Those individuals with some pre-existing medical conditions (such as diabetes or heart disease) will already be aware of the potential hazards of hormonal therapy, and these are carefully considered by Dr Kirk, along with the commoner (and more avoidable) hazards of poor diet and excess alcohol and tobacco consumption. Of particular interest is the use of oestrogen patches that are now being evaluated, and which may be much safer than the usual oral (tablet) preparations for older individuals or those with a pre-existing heart condition.

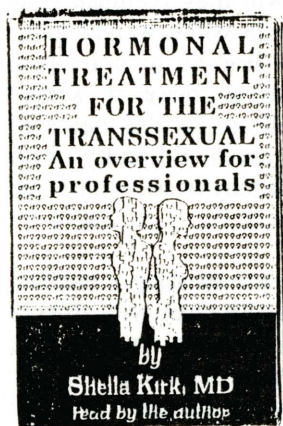
The greater part of the tape is naturally taken up with the male-to-female situation, but on the second side the female-to-male situation is also considered in some detail, and accompanying the tape is a detailed medical



bibliography that your health care professional will find essential for follow-up reading - although one or two of the items listed (especially those reporting work in Amsterdam) appear not to have been published so far in the medical literature, and would require correspondence with the authors if further information is required.

This tape is undoubtedly a uniquely comprehensive overview of hormonal therapy, and as such it will be an essential guide for health care professionals who are concerned with gender diversity. However, if you are contemplating hormonal therapy for yourself, then buy it and make sure that you are not expecting either the impossible or even the dangerous - and above all, make sure that your own doctor has a copy too.

A.F.



**YES !** magazine. Published every other month. £ 2.00  
London: Yes ! Publishing. (On sale at most larger newsagents)

I guess that most of us read a number of womens magazines, but you may not yet have seen this one. *Yes !* is

aimed directly at the larger woman - size 16 and over - and is sub-titled "The positive approach to plus sizes".

Although around 47% of women in Britain are size 16 or over (American size 14), few shops seem prepared to recognise the fact, and most stock their rails with delightful dresses, skirts and blouses - not to mention lingerie - apparently designed and made solely to fit teenage beansticks. The more comfortably built woman has to search far and wide in order to find something that fits, and is lucky to acquire anything that is either smart or fashionable: and as most male-to-female cross dressers tend to be on the larger size when it comes to womens clothes, that probably includes you.

This new magazine includes a number of articles and items on clothing, fashion, makeup, sewing and knitting patterns, *etc*, all for the larger woman, and so should prove to be an invaluable source of practical help to the rest of us. So far there are few advertisers compared with the number found in most womens magazines, but those that are here all cater for the larger sizes. Of particular value is a Special Size Directory that lists shops and stores throughout Britain which stock, or specialise in, larger size clothes, lingerie, shoes, *etc*, and this alone is worth the price of a copy. Well worth putting on your magazine shopping list. ■

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### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

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"Above all, be comfortable in your clothes in both a mental and a physical sense. It's difficult, if not impossible, to look good if your shoes are giving you hell, your middle shirt-button keeps popping undone or you wish you hadn't decided to wear that tartan beret with the pom-pom".

From *The Working Woman's Handbook*



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## WHAT'S THAT WORD ?

- a wander through the alphabet

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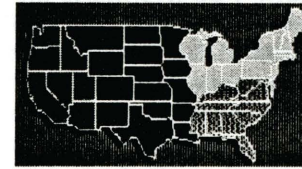
**A** is for **Androgyny**. A state where it is not clear whether a person is either male or female. You can see androgynous people in any town on any day - you just don't know whether to call them 'Sir' or 'Madam'. Medium length hair, no makeup, generally dressed in 'grunge' fashion with sloppy-Joe sweaters, jeans and trainers. As people generally expect to identify others clearly as male or female, most don't know what to do about androgynes - which is probably why most of them don't like obvious 'men in a dress' either.

**B** is for **Breasts**. Isn't it funny that nearly all of the slang and jargon words used to describe these things begin with the letter **B**? 'Breasts', 'Boobs', 'Bosoms', 'Bristols', and so on. Yet their proper anatomical name doesn't. As they are peculiar to mammals the correct name is 'Mammary glands'; but don't you think that seems to lack something?

**C** is for **Comportment**. Which is the term preferred in America, although in Britain we usually say **Deportment** - which is the same thing, actually. It means the whole way in which a person holds and carries themselves - and it is very different as between men and women. Whether it is standing up, sitting down, walking or running, eating or drinking, women do it differently to men. For example men sit with their legs apart, stride out when walking, and whistle after Taxis: women don't. And if you really want to 'pass' in normal society you will need to study and perfect the proper way of doing it. ☺



## FROM ACROSS THE POND



### - A LETTER FROM AMERICA

*By Bonnie Allen*

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Hi! everyone, this is your 'frigid' gal here in the United States - and I mean frigid. I am writing this in the coldest January on record in Philadelphia. We have been hovering around the 0°F (-17°C) mark all week, with around 10" of snow and 2" of ice on the ground. We are having a power emergency and most companies are closed for the rest of the week. But enough of the weather. There's nothing we can do about it but bitch - and that's a waste of time.

I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday at Christmas: I know I did. The holidays are a wonderful time for some, but for others it can be a very hard time emotionally. I know how those people feel because I have been through both phases of the holidays. At one time in my life I hated the holidays and could not wait for them to be over, so that I could get back to my life. However, I finally came to grips with my emotions, and along with coming out in the world I was also able to get rid of old stigmas that affected me during the holidays. I no longer look on life as a losing proposition but as a re-birth of my true self and identity. Since I have cast off the idea that I could never be myself I have learned to enjoy the happy times. After all, there's no reason why everyone can not be happy: we are all humans and real people. Do yourselves a favor, and when important times come, enjoy them and be proud of who you are - a person with feelings that need to be expressed and a life that is to be enjoyed.



I have a habit of writing down sayings and one of these that seems very appropriate is from Eleanor Roosevelt who said that "*Life was meant to be lived...*". So live life to the full. Be proud of yourself and never think that you are anything but the most important person in the world. After all, everyone is a person who should be respected by others, and only when you respect yourself can others respect you. The same goes for love. Only when you learn to love yourself can you expect to love others.

I know that this all seems like a 'pep talk', but sometimes people need to be reassured that they are indeed *people* in this world, and not someone to be shunned and ridiculed by others. It is so easy to fall into a deep and dark world that seems so terrible. I know, I've been there; but I have never seen that world since coming to grips with my real self. I am Bonnie, and I am a woman through and through. I praise the fact that I am who I am, and I will live and work as the real person. That came about only after I started loving and respecting myself. I am a very outgoing person and enjoy life and people immensely; and to enjoy life and people is one of the greatest gifts a person can have. So come on, be happy with yourself and don't feel bad or sad.

I always think that God gave me a gift of being able to be a woman, and yet I have lived part of my life as a man so that I now can understand how men are and how they react and think. That gift will make my remaining years the best years of my life.

Now back to work. I said last time that I would divide this article into sections, so here goes.

### BONNIE's BITS

Everyone wants a wonderful wardrobe of clothes and to have really beautiful items in their wardrobe, but it is easy to forget that unless you only attend full-dress fashions balls and formal gatherings you need some casual clothes to

complete that wardrobe. When looking for casual clothes, watch how other woman dress casually, and after investigation come to a mid-point in casual dress, making it fit your image. If you tend to get too casual you may sometimes fall back to your male *persona*. Always dress for the time of the year, and when summer arrives always dress light and bright. Put away those dark nylons and opt for lighter shades - or if your legs are really good, none at all ! The best casual slacks I have ever found is a real good pair of what Americans call 'blue jeans'. (The misnomer is that they now come in other colors). Don't buy jeans that are too baggy or don't fit properly. You can look elegant and still be casual. All you must do is not *overdo* the dress.

Speaking of dress, many woman wear long casual dresses for summer, and they are indeed very nice to wear, and go over very well for most places you go to in the summer. One last item is your summer makeup. Make sure that you don't overdo it, as many woman cut back on the use of makeup as it can really be a mess in summer heat if it's overdone.

I mentioned casual dress for the summer as it has made me feel good while languishing in the dead of winter. Try to have your wardrobe contain some casual items, and I really think that you will be happy with the results.

### BONNIE's WORLD

These are not for everyone. If you are going through the transition then they are indeed necessary, but you must be careful how you administer them. The proper procedure is to contact an Endocrinologist (*i.e.* a doctor who specializes in the chemicals of the human body, and knows what is needed and in what dosage). Do yourself a big favor and take time to find a doctor who can make this part of your transition safe and happy.



Once you are on hormones you will sense many changes taking place, most of which are very wonderful and exciting. There are some side affects, however, but let's start with the good effects. You will develop breasts - although depending upon the individual the size may vary. You may also develop hips and a rear end that may rival those of any genetic female. All of these items depend upon your body fat content and the re-disposition of your fat deposits. You will most likely get softer facial features and skin and the hair on your head will become finer. Your body hair will become finer and softer, but will never go away. The muscle structure of your limbs may become more elongate and less muscular looking. All together the hormones will help change the physical makeup of your body to coincide with your gender. If you are a male to female then you need to overcome your testosterone and make estrogen the dominant hormone. Some other beneficial affects are a lowering of cholesterol levels in the blood and shrinking of the prostate gland in men. More about the benefits can be found in Dr. Sheila Kirk's book *Hormones* (available through the IFGE).

Side affects of hormonal therapy can vary between individuals and may include nausea, headaches, depression, brittle nails, dry skin, skin rashes, phlebitis, leg cramps, mood swings and some others. Taking larger doses with the idea that more is better is a definite formula for failure. I take a small dose of hormones and already am seeing breast development and much softer skin and hair features. The dosage was prescribed by my doctor and it has done well and with NO side affects. **I can't stress enough that proper medical supervision is essential.** Remember, you are dealing with your body and its internal workings. You need the best advice, so don't short change yourself. Find the proper people to help you through the 'Hormonal Experience'.

## BONNIE's BITCHES

Now this is not so much a pet peeve as a plea to everyone in our wonderful little world to remember that we are *all* human beings and have feelings. Don't label people in our community in the way that society does to us. We may use acronyms such as TS, TG, TV and CD to identify where we are in our world, but don't make these a negative statement. I see too much of "the CD does not care for the TS because TS have their problems and feel that they are the only ones with problems, and the TS doesn't care for the CD because they don't understand the world of a TS", *etc, etc*. What we are doing when we speak negatively of our sisters is no better than what society does to us. We need to work together to make society understand who and what we are; and maybe some day we can live in better harmony with the rest of society.

We have all been placed in our situations by an uninformed society, but we should not come down to the level of that society in dealing with our problems but try to bring society up to our level. As long as we fight amongst ourselves then society will always have the upper hand. I would be delighted if we could get society to accept, and not just tolerate us. I always strive to treat all my sisters with the utmost respect, and want nothing better for them than to have a happy life and live as a comfortable, happy member of society. Please, all of you, take the time to weigh your words properly and not put others down. Once you learn this within our community then it will become easy with other people; and you will be a better person for it.

Well, it's time to go, and if I had a fireplace I would say that I am going to put another log on the fire, but since I don't have a fireplace I'll have just turn the heat up a bit. I hope you all stay well and happy, and enjoy life, as it is the only one you ever get. Love and best wishes from your gal 'Across the Pond'

Bonnie



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## THE BERDACHE SPIRIT\*

by Wendy Susan Parker

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In 1530 the Spanish explorer Cabaza de Vaca wrote in his diary of seeing "soft" Indian males in Florida tribes, dressing and working as women. Later, numerous reports by 17th century Spanish Conquistadors in the Southwest and 18th century writings by Catholic missionaries, French fur traders, and British colonists in the northwest confirmed the same phenomena in other tribes. Cultural anthropologists later documented this "third gender" status in at least 120 other North American tribes, and in other cultures around the world.

These "soft" males were named *berdache* by the Europeans. The name was taken from the Persian *berdaj*, originally a derogatory term meaning a passive homosexual partner, usually a pretty or feminine young boy. Yet Indian *Berdache* are very different from the European view of *berdaj* as "sodomite heretics", as written about by the middle ages crusaders who invaded Persia. Instead, native cultures seemed to embrace the notion of an opposite gender identity...different from one's anatomical sex, but without any implied sexual preference. *Berdache* were viewed by most native tribes as having an almost sacred status, for Indian spiritual philosophy not only accepts a 'third gender' status, but almost encourages it.

Unlike European Americans, gender or sexual divergence did not threaten the Indians. *Berdache* males in particular often became healers, surgeons, counselors, therapists, high religious priests, shamans,

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\*Reprinted from *Chrysalis*, 1993; 1; 53

witch doctors, and medicine men. *Berdache* males could also become one of the multiple wives of Indian braves and, in rare cases, the wives of genetic females who became 'men' by proving themselves as warriors. The term *berdache* is of course a generic one, as these 'soft' men were called by different terms, depending on the tribe. They were 'Winktes' to the Lakota Sioux, 'Nadle' to the Navajo, 'Shamans' to the Mojave, and 'Mahu' to the Polynesian culture of Tahiti.



Since the *berdache* could mix characteristics of both genders, they were viewed as having a special status, as if they had been blessed by the gods. They were seen as prophets and visionaries, and thought to have a mystic and psychic vision of the future. They were often consulted by tribal elders and chieftains because they were believed to have a kind of 'universal knowledge' and a special connection to the Great Spirit.

It is extremely interesting to note that transsexualism is a Western concept, based on the notion that there are two 'opposite' sexes with distinct, culturally approved gender characteristics. Western philosophies seem much narrower in this respect than Eastern philosophies, which do not mandate such strict stereotypes. In Buddhism and other Eastern philosophies one is encouraged to seek the middle path.

Setting up a rigid dichotomy of paired opposites allows little tolerance for cultural and social variance of what is perceived to be masculine or feminine. With these narrow constrictions on all behavior it is little wonder that we live in such a neurotic and violent society. With little room to express the total spectrum of human emotion, from nurturing to assertive behavior, people have to hide or



ignore some of the basic emotional outlets ascribed to the other gender. Only recently do we see a social acceptance of men in touch with their feminine side, and assertive women who 'run with the wolves'.

Because of these opposite polar stereotypes, people who are dissatisfied with their gender role feel they have only one alternative: to anatomically become the other sex through surgery - something which was quite impossible before the surgical techniques and synthesized hormones of the 20th century. Native Americans allowed for more gender role flexibility without the social stigma of our modern culture.

In our myopic modern society, our restrictive Western social values see only two diametrically opposite possibilities - *yin* or *yang* - rather than the unifying



combination of both in an androgynous mix. One need not have hormonal or surgical modifications of one's body in order to express one's total self. A culture is really just an accumulation of social and historical habits through a repetition of tradition. The notions of

feminine and masculine behavior and being a woman or a man are social entities, not biological ones. (Sorry Mr Freud, but anatomy is *not* destiny).

It is arguable that many transsexuals of today have sex reassignment surgery only because of the pressure of a polarized Western society of extremes. In modern times one is forced to choose only one role, with no allowances for variations along the infinitely divisible gender spectrum. In a metaphorical sense, the modern post-operative transsexual could be seen as perpetuating gender role stereotypes, and thus doing nothing to remove the clothing and behavioral taboos which restrict both males and females. Even more confining in modern America is the view that calls for even more extreme role models. I call

this the Rambo/Bimbo syndrome. You are either Sylvester Stallone, Marilyn Monroe, or a disappointment !

Sex and sexuality seem to be a biological constant. However, gender identity should not be drafted by laws and defined by society's rules. The Indians of North America constructed a beautiful option of alternative gender possibilities without stigma. As part of their vision quest to search for higher truths they allowed a kind of personal freedom which we don't enjoy today. We are not given the personal life choices that were readily available in what we arrogantly call 'primitive' cultures.

A study of Indian berdache culture could help us all break out of the narrow-minded Western model which makes transgendered persons deviant, and allow us to appreciate the diversity of the human population wherever we may fall along the spectrum of the beautiful gender rainbow. ♀♂

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## LESBIAN SEAGULLS ?

*Whatever next ?*

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If you think you've heard it all, then think again. A Californian biologist has discovered that around 14% of female seagulls in a number of colonies nest together in pairs, jointly defending their nests, performing courtship behaviour and forming lasting relationships. They even lay eggs, although they are of course not fertilised. The 'Gay Gulls' seem to be perfectly happy as pairs and cope extremely well without males to spoil things with their aggressive behaviour. It has been suggested (by male biologists, of course) that the phenomenon is due to a shortage of male gulls - but equally well it could be that these birds of a feather just prefer to stick together. ■



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## OESTROGEN AND CYCLICAL BIOLOGY

by Erin Carruthers

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Why are some people transsexual ? One recent theory is that of the H-Y antigen. It is known that the human fetus is always female to start with, and this seems to be a fundamental development in all mammals. 'Maleness' has to be added on later, in two stages, and it is believed that this is the task of the H-Y antigen.

During pregnancy, at around six weeks into fetal life, the H-Y antigen attaches itself to a special site and triggers off quite drastic changes in the body - but not the brain - of the (still female) fetus. The clitoris develops into a penis, and what would have been a uterus shrinks and is resorbed back into the system. It is much later - maybe between the fourth and seventh months of pregnancy - that it becomes the turn of the brain to be masculinised. However, if for some reason the H-Y antigen fails to attach itself to its proper site then the brain remains in its original state - in other words, female. It has been suggested that this is the cause of male-to-female transsexualism, and according to Jo Durden-Smith and Diane de Simone, in their book *Sex and the Brain* (1983), there are significant differences between mens' brains and those of women.

We all know, of course, that the female brain-body system is geared to a monthly cycle. It is also known that during menstruation the ovaries considerably reduce their output of oestrogen. But what of the transsexual brain ? If the H-Y antigen theory is correct then as a transsexual I should have a female brain and a male body. My body won't be in a monthly cycle, because it has no ovaries, but surely my female brain can be ? Has it been waiting for biochemical

signals in the form of a monthly drop in the level of oestrogen production ? Well, in my own case it has been receiving oestrogen (in the form of ethinyloestradiol) for over a year now, but continuously and *not* cyclically.

So what is my point in discussing this ? Well, this year I have experienced a number of really bad headaches, sometimes turning into migraines which are excruciating. These headaches last from three to five days, and ordinary pain killers have no effect. Last September I decided to mark a calendar with details of these bad headaches; and lo and behold, in September, October and November they occurred for the usual 3-5 days, *but at the same time of each month.*

I mentioned this to both my family doctor and my psychiatrist, each of whom said it was not significant because I don't have ovaries. However, I pointed out that had I possessed them then my brain would expect (and get) a cyclical reduction in oestrogen for a few days during each month; but it isn't, because I am taking in the same amount of oestrogen *every* day of the month. Both doctors have agreed to let me try the experiment of *not* taking oestrogen tablets for 3-5 days around the time that the calendar says I should get the next headache.

These observations will obviously take several months before anything becomes clear, but eventually I shall be able to report. ■

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### Going bust

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The American Medical Association are said to have warned air stewardesses that it is unwise to have silicone implants to improve breast measurements as they are liable to explode at high altitudes ! (And one wonders what advice they give to passengers about this ?).



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## WILL PREGNANCY BE THE NEXT STEP ?

*by a Medical Scientist*

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No matter how hard you try, or what chemical and surgical reassignment regimes you go through, you must realise that there is no such thing as a 'sex change'. *Gender reassignment* maybe, but *sex* is determined by your genes, and even if you acquire a functional vagina and grow breasts there are two female experiences that you can never acquire - menstruation, and pregnancy and childbirth. Up until now, that is ! So, transsexuals sit up and take note !

In fact, although no surgeon has yet tried to transplant a uterus and ovaries there is probably no insuperable technical reason why this should not be possible. Of course, if such a transplant were ever to be successful it would also require a life-long regime of hormones for the recipient, to sustain the function of the transplanted organs. And apart from the problem of who would supply the donor organs, the greatest obstacles in the way of such surgery would appear to be ethical rather than surgical or immunological.

However, although nobody has yet attempted a uterus/ovary transplant (as far as we know !), and so the technical problems remain theoretical, the technology is already firmly in place that (in theory, at least) would enable a genetic male to become pregnant and have a child. Basically there are three elements of current medical practise and knowledge that would need to be brought together - *In vitro* fertilisation, ectopic gestation, and caesarean section.

*In vitro* fertilisation - the fertilisation of an egg by sperm in the synthetic surroundings of a plastic culture dish, and the

subsequent transfer of the fertilised ovum into the uterus of the potential mother - is now an every-day (albeit expensive) procedure, and in itself poses few technical problems; although not every procedure 'takes', and a woman who is anxious to have a child may require two or more attempts before she becomes pregnant.

So how could this be of use to a genetic male who wished to become pregnant ? Well, this is where the concept of ectopic pregnancy comes in. In a genetic woman, not every pregnancy becomes established within the uterus. Occasionally a fertilised ovum lodges and becomes attached to a point outwith the uterus, and this is known as an ectopic pregnancy. Most often this happens within the Fallopian tubes that lead from the ovaries to the uterus, and this places the woman in grave danger. As the embryo grows it expands the Fallopian tube, which is full of blood vessels, and if left undisturbed the tube will eventually rupture causing a massive, and frequently fatal, haemorrhage. Consequently, whenever a tubal ectopic pregnancy is diagnosed the pregnancy is terminated as soon as possible in order to save the mother's life.

*However*, occasionally (and in nature, quite rarely) an ectopic pregnancy develops elsewhere, and the fertilised egg lodges and becomes attached outwith the uterus and the tubes. If this attachment is to the peritoneum (*i.e.* the wall of the abdomen) one has a so-called abdominal ectopic pregnancy. Now abdominal ectopic pregnancies, while potentially dangerous, are far less life-threatening than those that occur within the Fallopian tubes, and if left undisturbed a placenta may be formed and the pregnancy can then continue more-or-less normally and go to full term, the woman being delivered by a caesarean operation in which the abdomen is carefully opened and the live child removed through the incision.

Now all of this is *very* risky, but in theory a genetic male could become pregnant in this way. If one puts together *in*



*vitro* fertilisation of a donated egg (maybe using the man's own sperm), implantation of the fertilised egg directly onto the abdominal wall (and this would be the technically difficult part of the operation), a massive course of female hormones throughout the ensuing pregnancy, and eventual delivery by caesarean section, male pregnancy and childbirth become not so impossible after all.

Make no mistake, though: although the procedure is technically possible, the risks, both to the birth parent (father or mother ?) and to the infant would be very high. However, the ethical arguments that would have to be overcome would probably be an even greater problem. Given the furore over much less technically difficult matters (such as the *in vitro* fertilisation which recently led to twins being born to a woman of nearly 60, or the use of sperm from a donor of one ethnic group to fertilise a mother of another ethnic group), you can just imagine the row that would brew up in the media - not to mention that from our morally concerned (and correct ?) political leaders - if ever such a procedure should be attempted on a genetic male. Even if the procedure should be successful, would such a person then be the infant's father or mother ? The lawyers would have a field day !

Speculation, maybe, but *in vitro* fertilisation has already been requested by lesbian couples seeking to have a child, and some interest in the possibility of male pregnancy has been expressed by Gay couples who also wish to be a complete family. No doubt some post-operative transsexuals would also be very interested, especially those who are happily married but who are unable to have children in the normal way. Probably the very thought of becoming pregnant would be sufficient to make most of you shudder (as it does quite a number of genetic women), but if you really want the whole female experience then just hang around. The medical profession has a habit of seeing that whenever something becomes technically possible, sooner or later it will happen ! ♥

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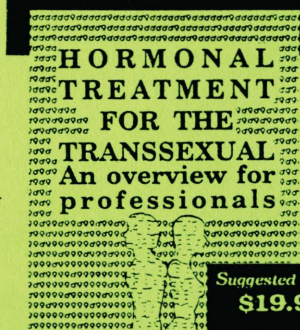
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