



# Narrative and the Re/production of Transsexual: The Foreclosure of an Endured Emergence of Gender Multiplicity

Jodi Kaufmann<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

In some autobiographical narratives, transsexual has been narrated outside the gender binary. These narratives have the propensity to reconceptualize multiplicity of genders. However, the re/production of transsexual appears not only to be a function of how the subject position is represented but also a function of the structure of narrative. If this is so, then the following questions arise: What is the relation between the representation of a subject position in a narrative and the structure of narrative? and how does this relation function in the re/production of transsexual and gender multiplicity? In an analysis of one autobiographical interview, the author reads male-to-female transsexual as a subject position grounded in dichotomous gender that was disrupted only where ambiguity is allowed in the narrative structure, and this disruption was foreclosed through how the subject was represented and/or the structure of the narrative.

## Keywords

narrative; gender; transsexual

Traditionally, in the West, to be a male-to-female transsexual one had to narrate a specific story: “I am a female born into the wrong body” (Prosser, 1998). This narrative reinforced gender as dichotomous through representing subjects as either male or female while also re/producing subjects as male or female. In other words, not only

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<sup>1</sup>Georgia State University

## Corresponding Author:

Jodi Kaufmann, Georgia State University, College of Education, 30 Pryor Street #410, Atlanta, GA 30303  
Email: [jkaufmann@gsu.edu](mailto:jkaufmann@gsu.edu)

were subjects represented as always already female, and therefore in alignment with the heterosexual matrix and the dual gender system, but also their bodies, through the acceptable narration of this fabula,<sup>1</sup> were often re/produced as female, thus furthering the reification of a modern subject and dichotomous gender. Many male-to-female transsexual autobiographies rely on this representation of the subject (see Chablis, 1996; Richards & Ames, 1983; Simmons, 1990).

The representation of a modern subject and dichotomous gender in transgendered narratives has been disrupted. Hill (2000) in his analysis of autobiographical interviews of transgender people found that most of his participants positioned themselves outside the gender binary. Narrating their subjectivity as both/and (both male and female), either/or (either male or female), or neither/nor (neither male nor female), these participants constructed gender categories that allowed a “positive reconceptualization of a multiplicity of genders and sexes” (p. 30). This is also seen in many recently published autobiographical narratives (see BrianKate, 2003; County, 1996; Munson, 2002; Nestle, Howell, & Wilchins, 2002; Samson, 2003; Sepulveda, 2003; Wilchins, 1997). Jayne County, for example, in *Man Enough to Be a Woman* (1996) occasionally signs herself both/and, “The whole thing of being a mixture of both—a hermaphrodite, a eunuch—pleases me” (p. 139). Sepulveda (2003), however, in “Confessions of a She-Male Merchant Marine,” describes herself in Hill’s (2000) category of neither/nor:

Oddly enough, I don’t consider myself a woman. I think I’m as far from being a woman as I am from being a man. I identify as female, and want to be accepted as such, but I don’t equate that with being a woman. (p. 156)

Others, however, may be read as outside Hill’s gender categorization as they articulate a position that is predominately unrecognizable in terms of contemporary gender. This is seen when Riki Wilchins, in *Lines in the Sand: Cries of Desire* (1997), shares a list of her multiple and contradictory subjectivities: “lesbian, pre-operative transsexual with a cock, a woman, a femme, an addict, an incest survivor, and a post-operative transsexual with a cunt” (p. 138).

As these vignettes represent gender outside dualistic categories, they also possibly sign a space for an alternate material re/production of gender, a space for gender variant subjects, subjects that do not hide difference. I say possibly because I am not convinced that this representation is an endured emergence. I wonder if perhaps it is foreclosed prior to the end of the narrative, erased either with a representation of a modern subject or in the structure of the narrative itself. For, I would argue, the material and narrative re/production of male-to-female transsexual relies not only on the representation of the subject but also on the structure of the narrative. Roof (1996) suggests that our narratives in the West follow a specific structure that always concludes in the heteronormative, the normative of the modern subject (Roof, 1996). By concluding in the heteronormative, this structure disallows the re/production of a homologic body and subject, a subject constituted outside the logic of the heteronormative. The structure of this narrative, which Roof (1996) calls heteronarrative, begins

in the heteronormative. The introduction foreshadows the events to come. This foreshadowing tells of homology—the logic of the perverse and ambiguous—to follow as well as the heterologic conclusion—a conclusion that follows the logic of the heteronormative. Homology is allowed in the middle. It provides pleasure as we can safely enjoy its perversity because we already know the narrative will conclude in the heteronormative. We know this not only because of the foreshadowing in the introduction but also because we have read the structure so many times before. After the homology of the middle, the conclusion ends in the heteronormative by pulling any of the remaining homologic events and characters back into the heterologic—the logic of the heterosexual matrix. Thus, the introduction begins in the heteronormative and foreshadows the events to come. The middle is homologic, and the conclusion ends in the heteronormative. Analyzed within this structure, the subject position of male-to-female transsexual has been read as being constituted within the heterosexual matrix (Kaufmann, 2007). All gender ambiguity represented in the middle is erased in the heterologic function of the conclusion, and a subject position is re/produced that aligns with the heteronormative and dichotomous gender.

It appears, then, that the textual and material constitution of transsexual may be both a function of how the subject is represented and the structure of the narrative. Therefore, it is the purpose of this article to examine the autobiographical interview narrative of one male-to-female transsexual for the relation between the representation of the subject and the structure of the narrative to gain insight into how transsexual is re/produced and how multiplicity of gender is re/produced and/or foreclosed. Before engaging in a discussion of the methods used in this examination, I will discuss three representations of the subject, which in this interview appeared to have the propensity to disrupt a modern representation of the subject grounded in dichotomous gender. I will then present a reading of the interview. This will be followed by a discussion of how this narration appears to foreclose an enduring emergence of multiplicity of genders.

## Disruptive Representations

The subject in traditional transsexual autobiographies, as discussed by Prosser (1998) and noted above, relies on the representation of a modern individual. This representation can be read as a conglomeration of constructs that represent who and what constitutes the subject within modernity, as an era and an attitude of the historic past and present. This subject (and its deconstruction and/or death) have much been discussed (see, for example, Butler, 1993, 1999; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Foucault, 1984a, 1990; Gergen, 1991; Grosz, 1994; St. Pierre, 2000). The primary constructs of this representation as they appear in the interview narrative presented below are as follows: She is an essential and agentic individual (St. Pierre, 2001) who is rationale, well ordered, and accessible (Gergen, 1991). She is the product of victimization and alienation (Bal, 1999). Developing linearly, she is constituted as having a material outside and a psychological inside, and the sex of her body and her gender naturally align within the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1999). As each of these constructs function in

the formation of the modern subject, I read/envision/desire that the disruption of any one construct has the possibility of loosening the subject from its modern moorings, destabilizing its functions, and allowing for the possibility of any one of its features to become (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Thus, the deconstruction/disruption of any of the foundations on which this subject relies has the propensity to emerge gender outside the heteronormative binary, constituting a multiplicity of genders.

I read three representations of the subject in the interview narrative below, which had the propensity to disrupt a representation of transsexual as grounded in dichotomous gender. Each, in its own way, as Hill's (2000) either/or, neither/nor, had the propensity to loosen the subject from its modern moorings and represent multiplicities of genders. The first disruption was read through Haraway (1990) and her discussion of cyborgs; the second was read through Butler (1993) and her theorization of the body/subject emerging through language and the performative, and the third through Foucault (1980, 1984a; 1990) and his thoughts on how the self is constituted in discourse and power.

Haraway in *Cyborg Manifesto* (1991) declares that the binaries on which the modern self rely are collapsing; the natural distinction between nature/science animal/human, human/machine are no longer clear. Identities today are at once fractured, exceeding the boundaries of their signification, forever splintering as they seek essential unity—the proliferation of the category of woman, for example, as White, Black, transgender, poor, urban. However, there is a fusion, as bodies and technology become one—bionic prosthetics, clones, and pacemakers, to name a few. To illustrate this subject, Haraway uses the metaphor of the cyborg. The cyborg is about “transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities . . . about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints” (p. 154). The cyborg is a myth/vision/politics of the world and the subject that is situated in the historical present.

For Butler (1993), the body/subject emerges in and through language. The body and subject are inseparable. The emergence of the body as a site and the constitution of the subject as a position happen simultaneously through language. To be constructed through language means that the body/subject is a consequence of discourses that regulate intelligible notions of gender (Butler, 1993). However, to be constructed does not imply that there is an active agent doing the constructing. It is our linguistic structures that convey the understanding that there is a doer, an actor who acts on an object. This happens because grammatically the “I” of the sentence is connected to the verb—Martha sells stock. This connection makes the “I” appear as the agent of the deed; Martha, as the “I” of the statement, is an individual who actively chooses of her own free will to sell stock. However, the selling or any doing connected to the “I” is a forced choice because there is no subject without the choosing. There is no Martha prior to the choosing, but this is not just the doing of the person we recognize today as Martha in the instance of deciding to sell stock; it is the sedimentation over time of the “I” as doer that constitutes the possibility of Martha as an individual. This same structure also connects attributes to the actor. This is done through connecting the “I” of the

statement to an adjective—Martha is female. The accumulation of these attributes attributed to the “I,” constitute the specific individuality of the “I.” Through repetition, this performance creates the enacted fantasy of a modern individual. Any attributes, acts, and desires, then, do not represent an ontological reality of a self but are the effect of language and function to produce the illusion of the individual.

Foucault (1980, 1984A, 1990) spoke of the self as a function of the discourses available. Discourses are organizing principles; they are the rules, practices, strategies, and metanarratives within a certain historical and cultural context. Foucault speaks of many discourses that function in our formation, but it is sexuality and sex that are the most important (1990). Sexuality is not a natural, instinctual drive; it is a social construction, the manifestation of “a great surface network” of discourses, strategies, and knowledges that form a discursive myth (Foucault, 1990, p. 105), and sex, contrary to common belief, is subordinate to sexuality. It is through the formation of sexuality that sex has arisen as an element necessary for the operation of sexuality. The concept of sex contributes several, indispensable functions to the formation of the modern self: It has made it possible to group together in an artificial unity multiple elements—biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures. It offers a causal principle, making it appear that sexuality is its natural effect. By being thus defined, sex is able to mark the line of contact between knowledge of human sexuality and biological sciences of reproduction, which functioned as normative principles for human sexuality. Also, the concept of sex made it possible for power to invert its relationship with sexuality by making it appear as if sexuality is rooted in a “specific and irreducible urgency” which power attempts to dominate (Foucault, 1990, p. 155). Thus, sex makes it possible to evade what gives power its power by enabling one to conceive of power solely as law and taboo. “Sex is the most speculative, most ideal, most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations, and pleasures” (Foucault, 1990, p. 155). It is through sex that each subject must pass to have access to his/her own intelligibility as it is the hidden and generative principle of meaning. The West has arrived at the point where a subject can expect her intelligibility to come from the completeness of her body and her identity from an obscure nameless urge (Foucault, 1990).

The method by which I read these disruptions and their foreclosure in the autobiographical interview narrative follows below.

## Method

The interview analyzed in this study was generated as part of a larger study that analyzed how transsexual was re/produced in narrative (Kaufmann, 2004). The participant, Jessie, was a 32-year-old professional who transitioned from male-to-female after graduate school and had sex reassignment surgery in 2002. In this interview, Jessie spoke for almost 2 hours in response to the request, “Tell me your life story.” The interview was audiotaped and transcribed. The transcript was reviewed and approved by Jessie.

To create a data set of a size that could be analyzed in depth, I constructed an abridged narrative from the interview. This narrative was constructed using predominately Jessie’s

own words—altering the text only for clarity and brevity—Bal’s (1999) concept of an event, and Moustakas’s (1994) concept of data reduction. According to Bal, an event is “the transition from one state to another state, caused or experienced by actors” (1999, p. 182). There are three criteria for selecting events: (a) Does it communicate change? (b) Does it determine future events? (c) Does it have two actors and a predicate—an actor that acts on another actor? I found that, in following these criteria exactly, I lost much important information. Thus, I primarily used Bal’s suggestion but also used my own intuition in keeping lines of the story that I felt were necessary to the meaning of the narrative. I combined the idea of using only events with Moustakas’s (1994) suggestion of data reduction, using everything that is narrated but only including it once. I then interpolated scenes when the theme connecting a series of events changed. This gave me a narrative structure of an introductory scene, middle scenes, and a concluding scene. This was done to analyze the narrative according to Roof’s (1996) heteronarrative structure. After scenes were interpolated, I conducted a line-by-line analysis, reading how the subject was narrated, asking, What are the constituents of the representation? I then examined how these narrations related to the structure of the narrative: Did a disruption occur in the introductory, middle, or concluding scene? If the disruption was read in a middle scene where ambiguity is said to be allowed, where in this scene was it found—the beginning, middle, or the end of the scene? I then related this placement back to the heteronarrative structure and the function of that segment of the structure: Did a disruption appear where only heteronormativity is allowed, or did it come at a point where ambiguity was foretold? I then examined the relation of each representation and its position in the structure to each other: If a disruption occurred in the middle and was followed by a representation of a modern subject, how did this contextual and structural relation function in the re/production of transsexual and gender?

This reading of Jessie’s narrative was my reading of her story. It emerged through my theoretical perspective and my positionality, as a White, biological female who performs female to the best of her ability.

## A Reading of Gender in Jessie’s Narrative

Jessie represented herself<sup>2</sup> primarily as a modern subject in her autobiographical interview. In her condensed narrative, consisting of seven scenes and 2,883 words, she only disrupted this representation on 10 occasions—once in the first scene, five times in the second, and two times in the fourth and fifth scenes. Each of these disruptions had the possibility of representing multiplicity of gender but was quickly foreclosed through erasure of the representation or the narrative structure. Due to space, only three condensed scenes and an in-depth analysis of these scenes will be presented below. The introduction and conclusion were chosen because of their function within the heteronarrative structure. The second scene was chosen because it clearly illustrated how a modern subject and its disruptions were narrated in a middle scene; it contained the most disruptions of any scene in Jessie’s narrative, and it did not rely on the other scenes for clarity.

## Introduction:

I was born February 6, 1972, in a small town in central Georgia, around 12 min after 10 in the evening. I had been born with a congenital heart defect called Common Atrium. When I was 5, I had open heart surgery. I had pace maker surgeries in 1977, 1980, 1984, 1992, and 1999. I was still in denial about the gender issues.

The introduction of Jessie's autobiographical interview appears at first to represent a modern self throughout. Beginning with the date, time, and place of her birth, she begins her narrative in the traditional form of autobiography, a narrative form that arose with and depends on the concept of the modern individual (Foucault, 1990). Adding to the details of this self, she is narrated as being born with Common Atrium. The facts of her birth and health adhere to the "I" introduced, constituting the position of a modern self (Butler, 1993). This self is then destabilized as she tells of having open heart surgery and a series of pacemakers implanted. The implanting of pacemakers produces a body that is formed in the material discourse of technology. This body sutures the divide between science/body and natural/unnatural, destabilizing the "structuring of the Western self" (Haraway, 1991, p. 174). It is in this destabilization of the structure of the modern subject that the possibility for different gendering emerges, a gendering which does not align with the heteronormative binary. This disruption is then quickly staunches as in the last sentence a modern self is once again narrated as Jessie foreshadows homology, or the trouble to come in the story, "I was still in denial of the gender issues." Here, the I is agentic, having the power to deny the issues of gender, which are depersonalized through the article *the*. Thus, in the introduction of Jessie's narrative, she is represented as a modern subject in the beginning and conclusion. A disruption appears in the middle of the scene. The indication of homology to come, however, does not rely on a disruption but on a modern self.

## Scene2

My earliest memory regarding my gender issues was in the first grade. There was a broken water spigot. These boys said, "Hey, Jessie, go turn on that water spigot." The water came out so hard and so fast I was shocked. I was crying, "I can't turn it off." I hung out as much with girls, if not more, than boys, and I had stitches that were healing. Rough and tumble play was always out, but not that I wanted to do it anyway. I remember, in first grade, telling a girl that I wanted to be a girl. My childhood was not pleasant in a lot of respects because I was always ridiculed. When I was 10, my parents divorced. I started getting really fat, and so people saw me as effeminate. Sometimes I would try to play it down and sometimes I wouldn't. I was the only male flute player from fourth grade through ninth grade when I quit because I kept getting too much hell. I was nerdy; I was geeky; I was inquisitive; I was assertive. I always behaved in all these very contradictory ways. When I was 11 or 12, the

teasing got really bad. I had no friends. I decided I should assertively masculinize myself. But, I had too much pride to give up the flute because I really liked playing it. Growing up in the South was not necessarily oppressive, even though it was in some respects. It is just that there aren't any alternative narratives. San Francisco is the new Gomorrah where all those faggots are, you know. And you don't want to be a faggot do you? In fifth grade I got called a fag in class. Of all the teachers I ever had, only Miss Smith, one of these Southern Black women who, of that last generation, was very strong, would punish people for mistreating me. I was always kind of teacher's pet because I always knew the answer and never felt shy about raising my hand. That was yet another reason that I had to be loathed in the most distinct way because I wasn't ashamed of it. When I was 7 or 8 years old, I became a Beatle maniac. I did not have the language to say I had a crush on the Beatles, but in hindsight, I did. When I was 11 or 12, there were several girls in my town named Jessie. I was feeling a lot of pressure to fit in because I didn't fit in, and I knew it. It was a contradiction because I had my own self direction, but on the other hand I desperately wanted approval and people to love me. I don't think I will ever reconcile that. I made people start calling me Jeffery. I got even more involved with soccer. I could never perform like everyone else because of my heart condition. Right about then I saw my first PBS special about transsexuality, and I thought wouldn't it be great if I could wake up tomorrow and be a girl. That scared me at the time. I just tried to push it back with sports and religion and keeping up with football and all the things that were the hallmarks of Southern manhood. Going into high school, I was instantly despised by pretty much everyone. I pretty much had a nervous breakdown. I would come home from school and just cry for hours. In tenth grade, I came back to high school really thin. Some people started being nice to me. I ditched marching. The band director, this Black man, felt odd around me because he thought I was gay. I got a bench and started pumping a little iron. I was in really great physical shape. Suddenly people were being nice to me. People started using me for rides to school. I didn't make the varsity cut in soccer. But then I got on the academic team and became captain in short order because I had excellent memory for facts. We were in the top 10 in the state throughout high school. I was under even more pressure. I was in advanced classes and the top club for preppie boys. Girls started paying attention to me but didn't quite know what to think of me. And the guys started calling me stud, sarcastically, and as a backhand compliment. But I figured out by then that these people were so fake. Because everyone used to hate my guts, but now it was like only certain people hate my guts and the rest are being nice to me because I am smart and attractive. That was the first big life lesson: People are fake as hell and if you start tweaking certain factors then those people can be manipulated.

The first middle scene, in which Jessie narrates her earliest memories of gender dysphoria and her subsequent attempts at masculinizing herself, begins with a modern subject. Starting with her "earliest memory," she links the past to the present, constructing, in the traditional form of autobiography mentioned earlier, a linear

development of self as well as a singular identity between narrator and narrated. A modern self remains through the water spigot fabula and the following vignettes of first grade. This position begins to fracture in the sentence, "I started getting really fat, and so people saw me as effeminate." Using the word *saw* Jessie puts a bar between the inside and outside of self, the self as being and the self as appearance. This fracture has the propensity to indicate a performative self because the signifier "effeminate" is placed on the subject from the outside, and it is not recognized as adhering to "I." Thus, effeminate becomes the possibility of an enacted performance, a signifier that she repeatedly performs, embracing and repulsing, never performing it in the exact same way, disrupting the signified, loosening it from its gendered foundations. The disruption shifts again to a modern individual, agentic in the attempts to portray identity, "Sometimes I would try to play it down, and sometime I wouldn't." She continues as an agentic, gendered self, choosing to play the flute and quit when the negative feedback got too much, isolated in her individual position, "the only male flute player." Being the only male who played the flute also functions to substantiate her gender as having been female all along (Prosser, 1998). Jessie continues to narrate a modern self, as she states, "I was nerdy; I was geeky; I was inquisitive; I was assertive." The simple structure of these sentences, pronoun, verb, adjective, intensifies the essentiality of her constitution by directly linking the adjective to the "I." She thus constructs a multifaceted modern self. This tightly constructed self is then called into question as she concludes this string of constituents with "I always behaved in all these very contradictory ways," moving the attributes from being to behavior. This again places a rupture between attributes and being, allowing the possibility of a performative self. Read in retrospect, reading the first part of the sentence through the last, the positions of self are called into question as essence and imply doing not being. In other words, the doer behind the deed has been separated from the attributes that constituted self (Butler, 1999). In this separation, not only is the subject obviously severed from any notion of agency, she [it] is also enacting a performance that has no original, and every repetition not only solidifies gender as it is always already performed, but in its repetition, which is never an exactitude, gender has also the possibility to be performed differently, performed outside the binary. However, this moment is lost as a modern self then continues to be narrated in several ways: First, it is constructed on the theme of victimization and alienation, "The teasing got really bad. I had no friends." Second, relying on agency, she determines to "assertively masculinize myself." Third, following the modern constructs of the internal attributes of pride and desire, and the social construct of rights, Jessie refuses to give up the flute. A disruption is then implied as she mentions that there were not any "alternative narratives" growing up in the South (Foucault, 1990). In this noting of the limitations of identity narratives from which to chose, not only is the possibility for gender multiplicity open through signifying gender as a narrative but also the noting of absence of narratives simultaneously constructs their presence. In the constitution of this presence, a possibility of gender multiplicity emerges. This is quickly terminated, and a modern subject is narrated through the fabula of being called a "faggot" in school. This self is disrupted when

Jessie narrates that “I did not have the language to say I had a crush on the Beatles, but in hindsight, I did.” Although at first glance it appears she is labeling an experience that had the nature of a “crush,” in the explicit act of labeling this experience retrospectively, she has brought to the fore the process of constituting truth from the abyss of experience out of the discourses available to her (Foucault, 1990). This allows the possibility of the reconstitution of gender outside the heterosexual matrix. The homology of the subject is thus brought to the fore, albeit briefly, for then she is once again the modern individual aligning with the theme of isolation and alienation—“I didn’t fit in.” A modern self continues through agency: “I made people start calling me Jeffery.” A discursive subject follows: “Right about then I saw my first PBS special about transsexuality, and I thought wouldn’t it be great if I could wake up tomorrow and be girl.” Presented with alternate discursive positions, she consciously desires altering her body and subject. Here, then, sex and gender are not essential, but fluid and based on desire. Returning to agency, she tries to “push it back . . . with all the hallmarks of Southern manhood.” A modern self of alienation continues, constituted with a physical outside and a psychological inside that “had a nervous breakdown.” Once again following alienation and victimization an agentic self follows: “I came back to high school really thin. I started pumping a little iron.” The essentiality of this position is emphasized as the psychological inside and the material outside of Jessie are further separated through the responses of people to his newly constituted outside juxtaposed to his “faggot” inside. This is seen in the mention of the band director’s reading of him as gay, the sudden “nice” response from people, and the dual response from his female peers who became interested in him but “didn’t quite know what to think of me.” Jessie’s narration of himself here is a clear reflection of Foucault’s modern body and subject: He is taking himself “as an object of a complex and difficult elaboration . . . [making] of his body, his behavior, his feelings and passions, his very existence, a work of art.” He is not attempting to “discover himself” but “tries to invent himself” (Foucault, 1984b, pp. 39-40). Jessie as a modern individual of reason follows as he figures out “the first big life lesson.” This lesson, which concludes the scene, not only positions Jessie as a self but itself is constituted on the ideology of an essential self, as the positioning of people as fake is only possible in relation to the notion of real. In addition, that these people can be manipulated emphasizes Jessie as an agentic individual.

Jessie represents both a modern subject and its disruption in the second scene. The scene begins with a modern subject constituted through chronology of experience in the tradition of autobiography. This representation is disrupted when she separates her being from appearance. A modern self quickly returns with the attachment of attributes to the I and the constitution of an agentic psychological and physical self. This is briefly disrupted as the doer is separated from the deed, behavior is demarcated from being. A modern self then returns, constructed through the discourses of alienation, agency, and rights. Shortly interrupted, a discursive subject is implied as the lack of alternative discourses is mentioned. A modern self is then represented in the faggot fabula. A disruption is then read through her retrospective naming of her crush

on the Beatles. An individual is then again narrated through the themes of isolation and agency. Once again, a disruption reappears when she encounters the PBS special on gender dysphoria. The remainder of the scene functions through a representation of a modern subject consciously constituted as a work of art. The scene concludes with a rational self of modernity, learning the lessons of life. This scene commences and concludes with a modern subject. Disruptions are represented five times in the middle, but each narration is quickly stanchd and a modern subject reemerges as the narrated.

## Conclusion

And at the same time, there is also a spiritual aspect to it, too. I started learning about the history of transgender and paganism. Even before that I read a book about how patriarchy has run our civilization into a dead end, and to move forward we need to revive the Goddess aspect of our culture that was part of our pagan tradition before being suppressed by Christianity. So at the same time I went from being an agnostic to starting on a Goddess path. I guess you could say I am the ultimate conservative: I am nostalgic for a time when there was a Western culture that had respect for transgender people in the establishment order, in the priesthood. I began believing that I have been called by the Goddess to step out of the patriarchal rat race, and start by the example I set from my life and my work and my options, bringing Goddess values into the Western mainstream. Sometimes I am not sure if I really believe that, but I decided that I want to believe that. I am reviving a tradition whose time is coming out in this age of environmental degradation. We need to think about the earth as an organism that if we destroy it then we destroy ourselves. I am not advocating going back to becoming hunters and gatherers because the upshot of patriarchy is that these events have led us to the point where technology has the potential to emancipate us from menial labor, and we can have a green technology that has the minimum amount of impact on the environment. I do have faith. But that won't happen in our life. I sincerely believe that whether or not there are Gods or Goddesses or whatnot, it is pretty much the best idea that has come along. There is really not much of the actual religious practices of these Goddess religions that have survived all of these vast groups. So we are just having to make it up as we go along. One thing we don't want to find is a religion, an ideology that just holds us back from just living examples of the kinds of values that are out there commuting our disabled planet.

Jessie represents a modern subject throughout the conclusion. In the beginning of the scene she is learning, reading, re/producing knowledge, which allows her, as a rational, agentic subject, to chose her spiritual path, moving from agnosticism to the goddess path. Then she reflects on her stance, labeling herself "the ultimate conservative." Butler (1997) speaks of this self reflective gaze as power in recoil. It is the power of this gaze turned back on itself that becomes internalized as the subject's own

conscience. Thus, the subject produces a self as she becomes her own Other. Continuing to represent a modern subject, Jessie is agenic in her work to bring “Goddess values into the Western mainstream.” This self is not only agenic in its work, but it is also teleological in its progressive journey toward healing the planet. Solidifying this position, the tone of this self becomes pedantic, “We need to think about the earth as an organism that if we destroy it then we destroy ourselves.” This pedantic self, the propagator of knowledge that will heal the planet and us, continues through the end of the story, maintaining a representation of a modern subject.

## Discussion

Jessie re/produced and was re/produced within gender dichotomy. This was a function not only of the structure of the narrative and how the subject was represented but also how the structure and the representation of the subject functioned in relation to each other. How the subject was represented in Jessie’s narrative aligned with Roof’s (1996) heteronarrative structure. Representations of a modern subject emerged in the heterologic positions of the narrative, and these notions were disrupted only where homology was allowed. Each scene began and concluded with a modern self, and the possibilities of gender proliferation were read in the middle of the introduction and middle scene. It appears then the heteronarrative structure that erases homology through concluding in the heteronormative (Roof, 1996), also, in this instance, erased the possibility of gender disruption and proliferation through concluding with a modern subject. The erasure of gender disruption did not only appear to be a function of the conclusion, however; it was also encouraged in the following three ways: First, the foreshadowing of homology to come in the introduction relied on a modern subject. By relying on a modern self in telling of difference to come, difference is constructed as that which is outside heteronormative. Roof (1996) notes that we can enjoy the homology in the middle of a story, as we delight in the Freudian theory of homosexual adolescence, because we know we are safe in that all will conclude in the heteronormative. Does this logic extend to our representations that disrupt the gender binary? Are we safe in the foreshadowing of these selves because not only do we know we will conclude with a modern self, a subject that aligns with one and only one gender, but the perverse is also constituted on the modern self, allowing us safety in its return to the normative? And the return, in this interview, was never far away, which leads to the second means by which the gender binary was reinforced. Each instance of representation of a subject that had the possibility to disrupt dichotomous gender was sutured to the construct of a modern self. Alternate representations never had the opportunity to roam; they were surrounded on each side by a modern self. This functioned in keeping a very tight reign on difference, pulling the reader back to a modern self and thus the natural state of sex, gender, and heteronormativity. Explicitly, in Jessie’s narrative, when the possibility of gender proliferation emerged in the first scene through the destabilization of the modern subject, this disruption was erased in the next sentence with an agenic subject. In the second scene—the first two disruptions of gender wherein it was read as a performative through a separation of attributes from the “I,” in enacting

effeminate and moving the attributes of self to behavior—the possibility of gender multiplicity is erased in the following event. The third disruption of the second scene, when Jessie notes the absence of alternate discourses and thus constructs their presence, too, is terminated quickly with a modern subject—as is the following possibility of a multiplicity of genders when the truth of the experience of having a crush is constituted in retrospect, opening the abyss of interpretation of gender. In the last disruption, the possibility of fluidity of sex and gender noted in the watching of a PBS special on transsexuality was foreclosed by an agentic subject, who tries to “push it back . . . with all the hallmarks of Southern manhood.” The third mode through which a multiplicity of gender was erased in the relation between representation and narrative structure was noted when the conclusion not only pulled all homology back to the heteronormative, as Roof suggests, but also relied solely on a modern self. The possibility of a subject outside the gender binary never appeared. Thus, the possibility of gender proliferation was not just erased, as the homologic events Roof describes; it was foreclosed prior to its emergence. This narrative, then, through its structure, representations of self, and the relation between the two, re/produced transsexual as a position within a system of dichotomous gender, reified the gender binary, and erased a “positive reconceptualization of a multiplicity of genders and sexes” (Hill, 2000, p. 30). That does not mean it is a negative telling. If Jessie<sup>3</sup> or any narrator desires to self-identify as a woman, live as a woman, and integrate her life within the heterosexual matrix, then this is a beautiful narrative, a narrative that brilliantly, through construct and structure, re/produces, ideologically and materially, heteronormative bodies and subjects. If, however, a multiplicity of genders and sexes is desired, then I think we need to pay more attention to the moments when dichotomous gender is disrupted and foreclosed, those moments where representation and structure appear to be mutually constitutive. We need look not only at those moments wherein gender is or has the propensity to be proliferated but also to examine how these moments are terminated, how the subject is so quickly and subtly grounded within the heteronormative. Until such an understanding is reached, I believe our narratives will continue to re/produce subjects within a two-gendered system, and I, for one, desire an endured emergence of multiplicity of gender.

### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The author declared no potential conflicts of interests with respect to the authorship and/or publication of this article.

### **Funding**

The author declared no financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article.

### **Notes**

1. To receive medical assistance in transitioning, altering one's body to mirror a female body, one had to be diagnosed with gender dysphoria. Traditionally, to receive this diagnosis one had to have a body that would pass as female after surgery and narrate a specific story—I am a female trapped in a male body; I am attracted to men; I desire to live my life as it was meant to be—as a woman (Meyerowitz, 2002; Prosser, 1998).

2. Throughout, I use the pronoun that aligns with Jessie's self-representation. When she is self-identifying as male in her narrative, I use male pronouns. When she is self-identifying as female, I use female pronouns. When I am speaking of her outside of the narrative, I use female pronouns.
3. It is my understanding that Jessie's desire is at times to disappear as a woman into hetero-normative relations. At other times, however, she adamantly declares her queerness and the right to live her gender expression.

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## Bio

**Jodi Kaufmann** is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Policy Studies, Qualitative Research Program, at Georgia State University. She is currently interested in narrative, autoethnography, the re/production of gender, and the relation between theory and knowledge production.