

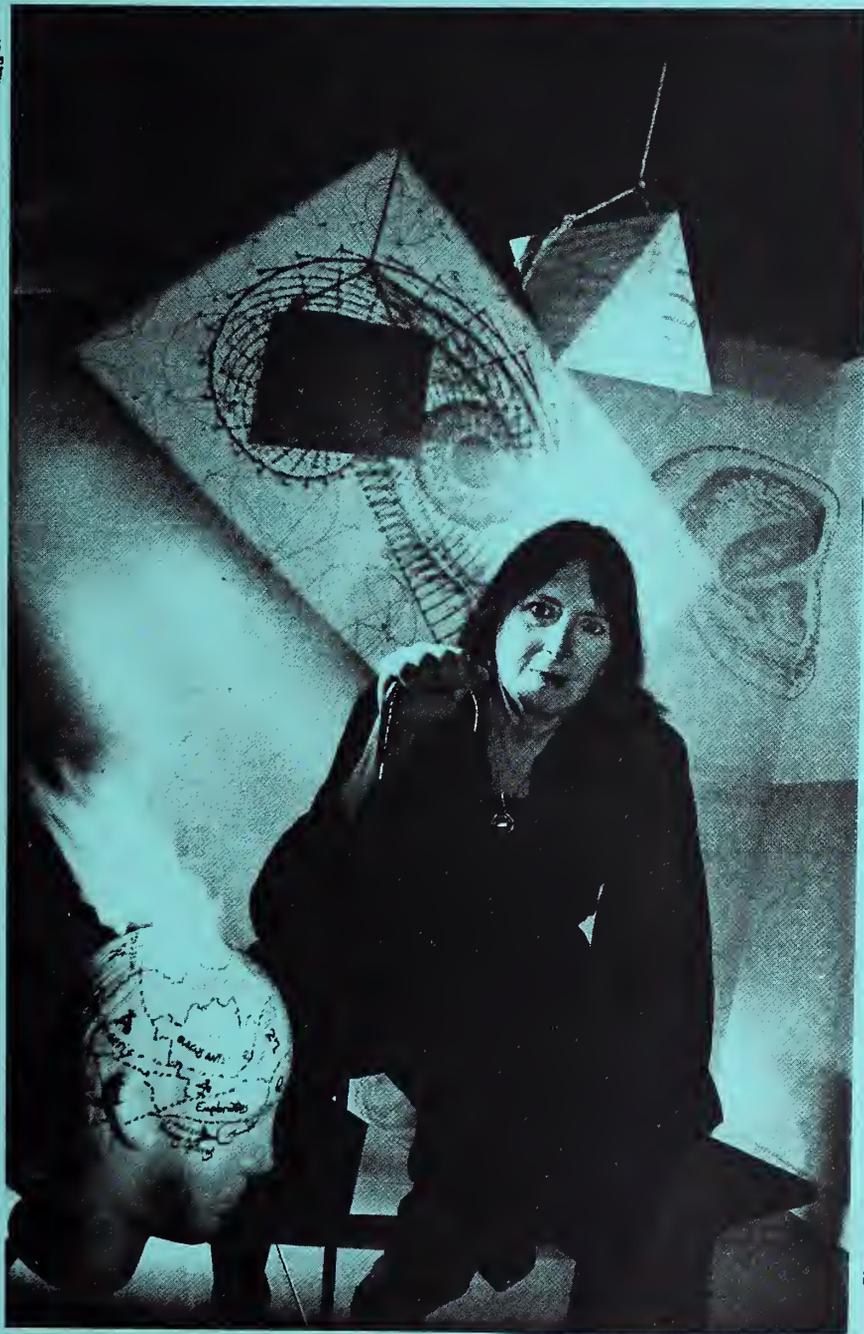
TransSisters

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The Journal of Transsexual Feminism

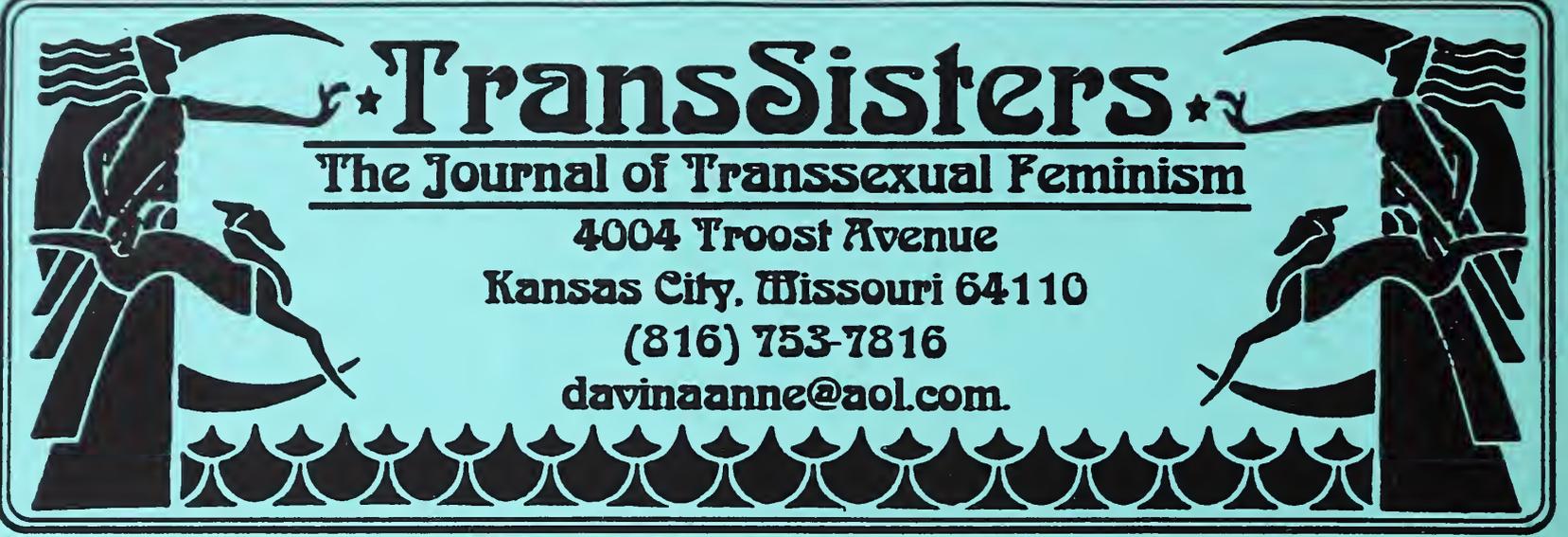
Issue # 8

Spring 1995



Interview with the Transsexual Vampire: Sandy Stone's Dark Gift

Plus: The Incredible Shrinking Transsexual Identity!!!! ✻ THE POWER OF SHAME: THE SHAME OF POWER ✻ The Distorting Lenses of Theory ✻ The A.B.C.s of T.G. P.C ✻ TRANSSEXUAL HEROES ✻ *Writing Ourselves* ✻ and more



TransSisters

The Journal of Transsexual Feminism

4004 Troost Avenue

Kansas City, Missouri 64110

(816) 753-7816

davinaanne@aol.com.

Publisher / Editor:
Davina Anne Gabriel

Staff Writers:
Christine Beatty
Renee Chinquapin
Adrienne Davis
Dallas Denny
Davina Anne Gabriel
Rachel Pollack
Mustang Sally

Staff Cartoonist:
Diana Green

Contributing Writers

This Issue:
Candice Hellen Brown
J.L. Phillips
Lisa Rose

Statement of Purpose

In recognition of the fact that transsexual persons have been systematically silenced, marginalized, maligned and even brutalized, not only within mainstream society, but also even within feminist philosophy and culture,

TransSisters: the Journal of Transsexual Feminism has been created to further the process of defining ourselves and creating our own reality, rather than allowing others to do so.

As such, *TransSisters* is committed toward accomplishing the following objectives:

- 1.) to providing a forum dealing specifically with issues of transsexuality from a feminist perspective;
- 2.) to giving voice to the ideas, feelings, concerns and perspectives of transsexual feminists;
- 3.) to ending the misperception that transsexuality and feminism are antithetical;
- 4.) to ending the invisibility and marginalization of transsexual persons within the feminist community;
- 5.) to fostering understanding of the phenomenon of transsexuality among nontranssexual feminists;
- 6.) to promoting dialogue, understanding, cooperation and reconciliation between the feminist and transsexual communities;
- 7.) to promoting feminist consciousness within the transsexual community;
- 8.) to promoting honest examination of the complex issues which affect the lives of transsexual persons in a constructive, non-dogmatic manner within a feminist context leading to the empowerment of transsexual persons through feminist principles.

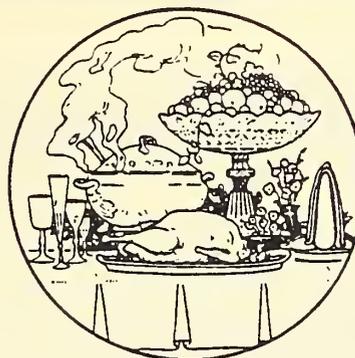
Although the primary focus of *TransSisters* is on issues of concern to male-to-female transsexuals, issues of concern to female-to-male transsexuals are also relevant to its purpose.

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Since *TransSisters* is a relatively new, small circulation publication, and every effort is made to make it as inexpensive as possible, so as to be affordable to the greatest number of people, *TransSisters* does not have a large operating budget. Therefore, *TransSisters* greatly appreciates receiving donations, both financial or otherwise, (e.g., stamps, envelopes, labels, computer software & equipment) of any size or kind. Such donations are a way for those who are better off financially to help insure the continued survival of *TransSisters*, to make possible improvements in the quality of the publication and to help keep its cost down, so that those who are less well off financially can continue to afford it.

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**COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF
TransSisters: the Journal
of Transsexual Feminism:
An Interview with
Rachel Pollack**

As a Sign That Ye Be Truly Free,
Ye Shall Be Naked In Your Rites.



Skyclad Publishing Company



♡ Letters to the Editor

(Editor's note: Beginning with this issue, TransSisters institutes a new policy regarding letters to the editor. Henceforth, all

letters containing attacks on or criticism of other individuals or entities will be made available to the persons to whom such criticism is directed, so that they are able to respond to it in the same issue in which it is published. The editor also reserves the right to respond to such attacks on or criticism of herself or of TransSisters. This policy is modeled after the policy of the readers' forum of the Neopagan journal Green Egg; and is intended to promote discussion and dialogue between divergent sides of controversial issues. -- Davina)

Dear Ms. Gabriel:

Recently I've had quite a few people tell me that infighting in the trans community is a result of a "Tower of Babel"-like miscomprehension of each others' words; that if we all got together and talked we would all see our similarities and come back together as a community. I'm not convinced. Certainly there is a crisis of language, but I see a larger issue on the horizon, a question of actions and goals.

Political movements throughout history have invariably had as a goal to make things better for those who follow. The civil rights movement, the labor unions, the farm workers, the peace movement, the environmentalists all strive to make the world a better place for their followers. But all too often transsexual politics breaks down to "I want mine" rather than helping your sister. A tremendous amount of energy and money have gone into accessing lesbian women's space but access to music festivals, conferences and sex parties do not address the very pressing needs of preop transsexuals.

The most important moment in my life was my SRS. For me and many of my transsexual sisters SRS consumed my every thought until I could achieve it. Surgery meant my rebirth just as it means life for many of my sisters. Surgery is not an "option" or a "choice." It is for many of us the only reason to live. Yet some would have you believe that surgery is irrelevant, that identity politics and inclusion are THE issues. I'd like to offer a more relevant alternative, access to medical treatment.

Where is the moral outrage at surgery being almost unobtainable for sisters of color? Where is the rage at states and insurance companies that deny medical treatment to the disadvantaged? Where is the horror at young kids rejected from their families and society's institutions, forced to live on the streets and to turn to prostitution for survival? Where was the money and the support for our sisters in Minnesota as they fought off the conservative Christian attack on that state's publicly funded surgery?

I have been fortunate in my life to have a few postops who

gave me an encouraging word and good information when it counted, but how many of the kids never get that word or information? How many kids do we lose on the streets because some of us are so preoccupied with our own issues that we fail to reach out to the kids who -- let's face it -- don't care about conferences or gay rights; they just want to be girls?

Little girls are the issue. How many of us would have been better off if someone had been there to talk to? If there were programs that helped instead of hindering, or if someone had fought the state or insurance companies to pay for medically necessary surgery? Not every "little girl" wants to be a radical lesbian politico; some of them just want to be wives and mothers. The common theme for all transsexuals has been physical correction of a genetic birth defect, and in pursuit of that dream, I no longer think of preops as sisters, but as daughters who deserve my help. I will never have children of my own, but I will pledge my support, time and money to the "girls" growing up today in the hopes that they can be spared some of the difficulties that some of us from my generation have had to overcome.

Modern feminism has focused on the right of a woman to control her own body, and feminists have banded together to empower each other to exercise those rights. It is time that we act to empower our daughters to reach their goals.

In Her Name,
Rachel S. Koteles,
Portland, Oregon

Dear Davina Anne,

First, I want to say I love *TransSisters* to pieces. I am an average white femme lesbian who can pass as straight when necessary. I have never questioned my designated sex. I am reasonably certain I would not have bucked my assigned gender role or orientation if I had not been born in 1959 in the US. I had to be taught to rebel and am still learning. I am in love with a good old fashioned stone butch so like a good femme, I bought *Stone Butch Blues* in hopes of understanding my lover better. The awesome result was that I began to understand myself better by studying the similarities and sharp contrasts in our experiences with the isms. Leslie Feinberg changed my life without my ever encountering her on anything but paper. You all are continuing to give me an fresh opportunities to grow by being willing to document your diverse experiences of being transgendered.

And please keep bickering! I am so impressed that you have the editorial integrity to print diverse, often tense and sometimes unflattering words. I have to disagree with Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan that you should not disagree publically, because "such a spectacle" is gratifying to those who want transgendered people exterminated. It requires tremendous courage and fortitude to acknowledge strife in an embattled community. False unity is not a sign of empowerment in my experience. My favorite

relationships are those that survive conflict for the sake of love and solidarity.

I feel a bit voyeuristic reading your journal partly because I am not transgendered but mostly because I think you're all very sexy. Thank you for risking the exposure that goes with the territory of good journalism. Go girls!

I am interested in networking with other supporters of transgender liberation who do not personally identify as transgendered. My internet id is SusanMRead@aol.com

Sue Read
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Dear Davina Anne,

I would like to respond to Margaret O'Hartigan's essay "What's In a Name?" from issue # 7 and, I hope, make a small contribution towards making our community more inclusive.

Let me begin by saying that I have great respect for Margaret and all she has been able to accomplish. As someone only recently (and still partially) out, I feel a bit uncomfortable being at all critical towards one of our community's pioneer activists. So I offer my suggestions in a spirit of acceptance and cooperation.

We are now caught up in an alphabet soup of classifications. These include transsexual (and transexual!), transgendered, cross-dresser, drag queen, gynomimetic, MTF, FTM, gender dysphoric and euphoric, transgressively gendered, gender blender, androgyne, GIDAANT and a host of epithets now sometimes used by us with pride, following in the tradition of the transformation of the word "queer." John Money is even devising a new classification (*J. Psychology & Human Sexuality*, 6 :3, 31-48, 1994) using "body-image syndromes" as an organizing principle. It is certainly easy to drown in this mess, and those of us who don't yet understand exactly where we fit are very confused.

I have noticed, however, the proliferating use of the new word "trans" in this country. I believe this started in either Australia or Great Britain where the term "trannie" is popular. The term "trans" has the virtue of being short, pithy, catchy and inclusive of all who care to be included. As a prefix originally, it is very useful in all kinds of word-building (such as Kate Bornstein's "transgressively gendered"). It fits in banners such as "Gay, lesbian, bi and trans" very nicely. It refers to us as *trans* people, a descriptive term, not a clinical classification. I believe most of us view ourselves as composed of multiple facets. Keeping our gender identities as one of those facets rather than the be-all and end-all of our being may also enrich our community.

I understand Margaret's point that she has changed her *sex* and not her *gender*. Unfortunately, most people don't understand the difference, and arguing about it amongst ourselves seems counterproductive. It is also not clear cut. Margaret may have changed her sex so far as her secondary sexual characteristics and her external genitalia, but she did not change her internal genitalia, chromosomal, nuclear or antigenic sex. Such distinctions may mean little to us as individuals, but they play out in the world at large, and particularly the legal community. One day we may have reproductive organ transplants (the Chinese

may have done so already) and if men can get pregnant (there may already be a real-life *Junior*) that would only muddy the situation further.

Actually, that may not be such a bad thing. Let's blur the distinctions a bit and create more room for all of us. The legal system needs precise definitions, so when we are dealing with the law and legislation, let's be specific. Margaret has every right to be identified as transsexual, and she is correct in noting that legal hair-splitting is now being used against us. But when we speak of community at large, let's try to include all *trans*people who want to be included.

Thank you, Davina, for all your efforts to promote debate and sisterhood.

Looking forward,
Laura Alexandra Beyer,
Chevy Chase, Maryland

Letters to the Editor:

"Smells Like Teen Pussy" smells like a double standard to me.

TransSisters Letters to the Editor policy states: "All letters must be signed, but names will be withheld upon request, except for letters which criticize by name any individual, organization or entity. Anonymous personal attacks will not be published." And yet "Teen Pussy's" "Open Response to Rachel Koteles" was written by a *TransSisters* staff writer using a pseudonym.

Letter-writers to *TransSisters* have thus been served chilling notice that criticizing a staff member's opinions exposes them to criticism by staff members not held to the same standard of responsibility the letter-writers themselves are.

"Teen Pussy" would not have been printed, under the existing letters policy, had it been submitted to the Letters column for the simple fact the author criticized another by name without providing her own name.

If the editorial policy of *TransSisters* exempts staff writers from those standards expected of its readers then the slide down the slippery slope of hypocrisy is well under way.

Sincerely,
Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan
Portland, Oregon

(Mustang Sally responds:

Attack? Excusez moi, but what attack? I say three things about Rachel Koteles in my open response (which opens into a general essay). Each of those three things is both factual and neutral in tone.

The first thing is that she knows nothing of my life and motivations. This is true: I have never met, spoken or corresponded with the woman; she doesn't know diddley about me. Therefore, the second thing is true: what she states about my life and feelings are a projection -- that projection is demonstrably the product of her politics. It is also beyond dispute that she used a slur against me when she said my being less than thrilled about having grown up transsexual was "a guy thing."

These factual statements do not an attack make -- they are a

rebuttal, pure and simple. If Margaret O'Hartigan takes umbrage at my calling her protege politically correct, well, that happens to be true. Rachel presumed to tell me how to live my life according to what she believes is universally right instead of what I believe is right for me, as evidenced by her "should" statements. If a correction and a refusal to follow orders is an "attack," I am led to suspect a little bit of a God complex is at work here.

Margaret makes the mistake of thinking she or anyone in her orbit can tell me what to do. I believe I've made it abundantly clear how resistant I am to other people telling me how to live my life. Margaret is attempting to pull a trick right out of the dyke separatist book: force a tranny to come out publicly in order to defend her reputation. This pressure makes me even less interested in ever coming out publicly.

Interestingly enough, I was given a copy of Margaret's letter and asked to respond after writing the essay on transgender political correctness which appears in this issue. It is apropos in light of this over-reacting cry of "attack" -- which smells like trans paranoia to me. -- Mustang Sally)

What's Not In a Name

Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan's attack on the Transgender Caucus of Hands Off Washington was irresponsible and based on elitist, sexist and genderphobic arguments.

The fight against the right wing initiatives was a long campaign, a struggle fought on many different levels. A caucus was formed to guarantee and facilitate the participation of t people in that struggle. The tg caucus was composed of individuals from various t communities and representatives from t organizations. Many, if not most, of the people involved with the caucus were mtf transsexual women, but there was significant participation from the tv or crossdresser community as well as ftms.

The caucus tended to operate as a clearing house and referral service to plug people from the t communities into, not only Hands Off Washington campaign efforts, but all efforts against the initiatives. We had t people who did bigot busting work. That was the strategy of sending people out where the bigots were trying to gather signatures and convince people not to sign the petitions. There was tremendous t participation in organizing a march of several thousand people against 608 and 610. We had a tg representative, a mtf post-op transsexual woman, Marsha Botzer, who served on the highest governing body of Hands Off Washington, the State Board. And t people who sat on the King County Steering Committee.

O'Hartigan seems to feel that there was something demeaning about us creating a t safe space in the Hands Off campaign office. We had TG Tuesdays, advertised in the *Seattle Gay News* and elsewhere. These were times when work parties of t people would put out mailings, staff the phones and do other vital office work. As a political activist I know that the so-called grunt work is often the most important work in any struggle. And there is certainly nothing degrading in anyone's efforts, sacrifice and contribution to a struggle, no matter how seemingly humble it may be to O'Hartigan.

Now, were there insensitivities to transsexual and other t

people and issues in the campaign and within Hands Off Washington? Of course there were. The lesbian, gay and bisexual movement has a long way to go in understanding our oppressions and how our oppressions interrelate with theirs. Remember it wasn't so long ago when lesbians were fighting for the right to participate in the gay movement and in the women's movement. In fact the tg caucus saw this struggle as the second half of our mission.

Now as to the question of language. We became known as the tg caucus because in Seattle the term is generally understood in both the t communities and the lesbian and gay community to mean all t people.

As a female-to-male transsexual I can appreciate the importance of O'Hartigan's SRS. The ability to be sexually functional in the way one wishes. To have a body that "feels right," in the most personal and intimate of ways. And I can appreciate the medical risk and financial hardships that obtaining SRS can mean. But as a ftm ts, I don't have that possibility even if I won the lottery. Thus I also understand that its not the penis that makes the man, or the lack of one or presence of a vagina that makes a woman. And I am not one of the "occasional ftms." Me and my brothers represent half of the transsexual population. If anyone wants to know why we are occasional in the mtf movement they need look no further than attitudes like O'Hartigan's.

If my post-op mtf sisters feel it's important to use the term *trans* instead of *transgender*, well, OK. Language is an evolving thing. It's absolutely necessary to be able to communicate with clarity and understanding, and with pride and dignity. A term or a name that can do that is an important tool in the struggle for liberation. And it's good to have the right tool for the job. However, that still leaves the job to be done. As Marx said, "Philosophers have only interpreted the world, the point is to change it."

All of the t people who sacrificed their time, energy, money and, yes, maybe sometimes had to put up with ignorant views, were fighting for all of our lives. Including O'Hartigan's. For her to accuse us of violating her soul because we didn't use the term she prefers is outrageous. For O'Hartigan to claim she was demeaned by being associated with transvestites, transgenderists and ftms is genderphobic and sexist. And for O'Hartigan to argue that our name was as oppressive as the initiatives themselves clearly shows she needs a reality check.

And fast. This coming year promises to be even more critical than 1994. Not only is Washington again facing 608, all of us are facing assault from Gingrich, Helms and the rest of the right wing, while Clinton and the Democratic leadership are capitulating just as fast as they can. And it's not just queers that are under attack. They and their goons are attacking women's reproductive rights, health care, immigrants, people of color, youth and people on welfare. You better believe that transsexuals will be among the first thrown off public assistance.

And the tg caucus will be back. It may take another form. It may even have another name. But the substance of it will be the same. And that is to encourage and facilitate all transsexual and

other transgendered people and supporters in the battle against oppression. T people can and are taking our rightful place in the front lines of building a better world. O'Hartigan is welcome to join us.

Kaz Susat
Seattle, Washington

(Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan responds:

Attn: Davina Anne Gabriel, Editor:

How dare you even consider printing Susat's character assassination and lies about me. He makes completely false, unsubstantiated accusations against me.

Susat's statement, "For O'Hartigan to claim she was demeaned by being associated with transvestites, transgenderists and fims is genderphobia and sexist" is a complete fabrication. I have never made such a claim and Susat provides no corroboration to support his statement for the simple reason no such corroboration exists. Such a claim is a figment of his imagination.

The only transsexuals to work to defeat the 1978 legislation in Minnesota which would have prohibited public-funding of sex-reassignment surgery were myself and two female-to-male transsexuals. One was, and is, closeted. The other -- Al DeRaad - and I lobbied legislators and dealt with the straight, mainstream media, identifying ourselves publicly as transsexuals. I have never had a better, more trusted political ally than Al, and Susat sullies the memory of one of the earliest successful transsexual political efforts with his false accusation concerning my stance towards female-to-male transsexuals.

I am currently working in Portland with female-to-male transsexuals to end the gay and lesbian organization, Right to Privacy, desecration of Al Hart's memory through its continued use of Al's female birth name for its annual "Lucille S. Hart Dinner." I am currently working closely with a 20-year-old ftm here in Portland to mount, on his behalf, a legal challenge to Oregon's continued refusal to fund sex-reassignment procedures. Partial proceeds from a leather/SM show produced by a genetic leather woman are going towards funding the fight.

How dare you print Susat's lie and impugn my commitment to female-to-male transsexuals, Davina?

Likewise, Susat's statement that I have claimed to be demeaned by association with transvestites is a lie, as well. I have performed a number of times at Darcelle XV's -- a drag revue here in Portland -- and value my acquaintances and friendships with the female impersonators and drag queens with whom I have worked in the course of those performances.

I had a front row seat at the Lesbian Avengers' drag king show held at a Portland queer bar February 25.

And over the past six months I have devoted hours of unpaid legal secretarial work helping Jerry "Snickers LaBarr" Kallioinen build and file a charge of discrimination against the Portland public transit agency and its advertising agency, Obie Media, for those firms' refusal to run an ad on a bus promoting Jerry's cablevision female impersonation talk-show -- and did such a good job that Tri-Met and Obie settled out of court, awarding Jerry

\$2,500, providing him 10 free bus ads and agreeing to revise its human rights policy. I broke the story in Portland's queer paper, Just Out, and the story was subsequently picked up by the Associated Press.

In April of last year I was the sole guest on one of Jerry's shows, and several months later marched in Portland's queer pride parade proudly carrying the show's sign before the convertible Jerry rode in.

How dare you print Susat's lie that I claimed to not want to be demeaned by associating with transvestites?

Susat lies when he claims I argued the name of Transgender Caucus "was as oppressive as the initiatives themselves." Can you or Susat quote the passage where I supposedly made such a claim? I know it will be rather difficult to do, as there is no such statement made by me. Why, then, does Susat make it and you want to print it?

By the way, where was Susat's Workers World Party when Al DeRaad and I defeated the 1978 legislation which would have meant death for some of us?

Where was Susat, personally, during the years the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network had a policy prohibiting transsexual participation? He lived in Seattle yet did nothing to end such blatant discrimination against us. The SBWN changed its policy because I filed a charge of discrimination against it with the Seattle Human Rights department and I refused and continue to refuse to accept its new policy of discriminating against trans people who have transitioned less than a year.

Where was Susat during Transgender Action Committee's and Queer Nation Seattle's protest of transphobia in the Seattle queer community at the 1993 Seattle pride day parade? He refused to have anything to do us with us, and did not march with us behind the "Transgender Action Committee" banner.

How dare Susat say I claimed to be demeaned by being associated with transgenderists and how dare you print such a lie?

Susat is entitled to hold a different opinion of Transgender Caucus of Hands Off Washington than mine -- yet does not address my criticism of its utter failure to include support for changing sex in its mission statement or its failure to address specifically transsexual issues in H.O.W. literature.

Susat lies when he claims I felt there was something demeaning about a "t safe space" in the Hands Off campaign office. I consider it exploitative of H.O.W. to advertise for and utilize transsexual labor while neglecting to address specifically transsexual issues such as the initiatives voiding existing post-operative marriages. The sole exception to H.O.W.'s shameful neglect of transsexual issues was the literature which came out of its Olympia chapter that at least contained the word "transsexual" -- which, I suspect, was the result of my constantly raising trans issues in Olympia, where I lived in and near from 1987 to 1993.

So Susat was magnanimously "fighting for all our lives. Including O'Hartigan's." In the meantime I made sure transsexual issues were not neglected in Washington by spending hundreds of dollars of my own money to create anti-initiative literature of my own and mailing it to every newspaper in Washington and Oregon, standing on sidewalks in small towns like Issaquah and

Yakima passing out that same literature, and getting anti-initiative opinion pieces I wrote placed in straight, mainstream publications such as the Oregonian and Vancouver Columbian. And, oh yes, I folded flyers and licked envelopes for Portland's Radical Women to help their fight against Oregon's Measure 13. Susat assassinates my character by falsely claiming I consider such "grunt work" to be "seemingly humble."

It's funny how Susat hears and sees things I never said or wrote and doesn't see what I did.

It isn't funny, Davina, that you would knowingly print such lies about me.

Susat's statement that "For O'Hartigan to claim she was demeaned by being associated with transvestites, transgenderists and fms is genderphobia and sexist," is a lie, Davina, and you know it. If you didn't know it before, you know it now.

*Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan,
Portland, Oregon*

Dear Davina,

You are to be congratulated for printing letters of diverse opinion, but you lose Brownie points for commenting on them. Frankly, your use of editorial license to respond to letters with which you disagree undermines the integrity of *TransSisters*. It becomes less of a publication for our community when you do so, and instead sounds more like Davina's personal organ. It really hurts your credibility!

As regards to my NWC article and my letter in the following issue, I stand by my opinion. The only incorrect assumption I made was that NWC™ goers had never discussed inclusion. I reiterate that it broke my heart to hear it was a unanimous decision.

I still believe many post-ops are practicing unconscious elitism. Call it a judgement or whatever, that's how I see it. I can see how you would have a lot invested in maintaining your denial: it would cause you to question things upon which your whole world is based, including the meaning of the surgery. This is not a new assumption on my part. It is based on part of your lengthy response to my letter.

To quote you "...to (mis)characterize the women who support this policy as 'elitist' does not make them so, however many times you repeat it, any more than merely saying you are a woman makes you one..." Well, please, tell us all, what DOES make one a woman if not self-definition? Are you saying it's only genital surgery that makes one a woman? Does that mean that pre- and non-ops MTFs are really MEN? Please enlighten us.

By the way, my lover is a genetic woman, and she disagrees with the NWC policy. Score: Janis Walworth 1, My Lover 1. And finally, your cheap shot at my mentioning talk show appearances is immaterial to this issue. See, I've never excluded anybody from anything just because they haven't been on a talk show.

Sincerely,
Christine Beatty
San Francisco, California

(Editor's response:

Let's see if I've got this straight, Christine. It's alright for you to write letters insulting me, impugning my motives and my character, and making false accusations against me, but it is entirely unacceptable for me to respond to such letters. Hmm...seems to me that there's something just a bit inequitable about that arrangement, like maybe that it gives you a decided advantage over me and an opportunity to take potshots at me which I'm not allowed to defend myself against. Sorry, Christine. No dice, I don't agree to your terms. This is not a place where you can trash the editor with impunity.

*As a matter of fact, I do not respond to any opinions simply because I disagree with them, and there have been a great many such opinions expressed in this column that I have not felt it worth responding to; however, I do feel that I have the right to respond to letters that contain insults, engage in name-calling, impugn my motives and/or character, attribute unconscious psychopathologies to me, and/or make unjustified accusations against me, against *TransSisters*, and/or against any group of people that I happen to be a part of. And I do consider any such attacks on the supporters of ROP (formerly NWC) policy to also be an attack on me, since I am one of those supporters of that policy, and quite unapologetically so. While it is true that some publications do have a policy of not responding to letters to the editor, there are also others that do respond to such letters; this is not a practice that is unique to *TransSisters*. If that makes me lose brownie points with you, that's alright; I can live with that.*

Personally, I think that it would be a lot more becoming of you to graciously accede to the fact that opponents of ROP policy presented a much weaker case for their position than did supporters of that policy, rather than being a sore loser about the matter by continuing to impugn their motives and character, and engaging in unsubstantiated name-calling. You undermine your credibility and lose brownie points with me for this. But, since you insist on doing so, I will continue to respond to your unjustified and baseless allegations. However, this will be absolutely the final time that I will waste any more space in this publication on the unsubstantiated and scurrilous allegations against this event, its policies, its organizers, its participants or its supporters that have heretofore characterized this debate.

As to the specific points of your letter: You are most certainly making assumptions about the nature of the discussions conducted by ROP participants when you compare them to racists as you did, and you are most certainly making assumptions when you state that the only possible reason that anyone could support this policy is because she has an investment in maintaining denial of her supposed "elitism." The fact of the matter is that you were not present for those discussions; you have absolutely no idea of what they consisted of; and your characterization of those discussions and of the persons conducting them is based entirely upon what you assume to have transpired. If this does not constitute making assumptions, then I don't know what does. However, the ROP, its organizers, its participants and its supporters are not in any way answerable to you; and you have no right to characterize them or to pass judgement on them in any

way, and to do so is a blatant example of the worst sort of "holier-than-thou" kind of thinking.

You are also very clearly making assumptions as to the meaning of the statement by myself which you quote; and as a matter of fact, your assumption as to my meaning is not correct.

You are, of course, entitled to your opinion, but the mere fact that you hold such an opinion proves absolutely nothing whatsoever; and so far, you have not provided even one scintilla of concrete evidence to support any of your accusations. Of course, as I have previously pointed out, it's a lot easier to make accusations than it is to substantiate them; and so far, the opponents of ROP policy have proven themselves rather adept at the former, but woefully inept at the later. Your entire argument comes down to one of: "I think these people are elitists, therefore they are elitists." Sorry, Christine, but it doesn't work like that. You very obviously haven't taken my advice to go back to Logic 101.

Likewise, the fact that your nontranssexual lover agrees with your position is totally irrelevant, and does not in any way negate my point, which was that if even one nontranssexual woman supports the policy of ROP, this disproves your allegation that the only possible reason that anyone could have for supporting it is because she has an investment in maintaining postoperative privilege, since nontranssexual women obviously do not have such an investment. It is not a matter of keeping score of how many nontranssexual women support or oppose the policy. So to reiterate, Christine, get thee to Logic 101 forthwith and posthaste.

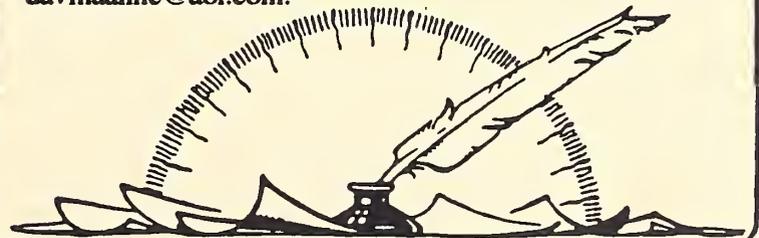
Furthermore, to attribute such motives to someone like Janis Walworth -- who is the organizer of the Full Circle of Women Conference, which is open to anyone who identifies as a woman,

regardless of operative status -- is not only plainly absurd, but is also highly irresponsible. If anyone obviously does not have a stake in maintaining so-called "postop privilege," it is Janis Walworth. Personally, I believe that you owe all of the organizers, participants and supporters of this event one very big, heartfelt and sincere apology, but especially so to Janis.

And finally, as for my so called "cheap shot" regarding the frequency with which you mention of the number of talk shows you have appeared on, this was in response to your accusation that some postops "crow" about how long they have been postop "like it was some kind of contest," -- another accusation that you provided absolutely no substantiation for whatsoever, and which is likewise based entirely upon unfounded assumptions -- and was not in regard to your accusation of elitism in relation to ROP policy. Moreover, it was not any more of a "cheap shot" than was your distorted characterization of postop women whom you consider to be "elitists." Furthermore, as I very clearly pointed out, I did not make any inferences regarding your mention of the number of talk shows you've been on, but only pointed out that I could have done so with equal legitimacy as that which you based your unsubstantiated characterization of the postop women whom you consider to be "elitists" on. -- Davina)

Letters to the Editor

TransSisters: the Journal of Transsexual Feminism welcomes your comments, suggestions, (constructive) criticism, as well as information affecting the transsexual community, but most of all, your compliments! All letters must be signed, but names will be withheld upon request, except for letters which criticize by name any individual, organization or entity. Any such letters must be signed and will be made available to the individuals or representatives of the entities subjected to such criticism, and they will be allowed to respond in the same issue that such letters are published. Anonymous personal attacks will *not* be published. The editor reserves the rights to refuse publication of any letter and to respond in print to any letter which is published. Please include your address and telephone number in case we want to verify your letter. All letters are subject to editing. Please address all letters to: Davina Anne Gabriel; 4004 Troost Avenue; Kansas City, Missouri 64110. *TransSisters* can also be reached by fax at (816) 753-7816, but you must call first, as there must be someone here to receive your fax. *TransSisters* can also be reached via e-mail at davinaanne@aol.com.



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TRANSACTION NEWS

Funding for Transsexual Surgery Targeted for Elimination in Minnesota

(Minneapolis, Minnesota) -- Transsexual activists in Minnesota are struggling to prevent an effort by the state legislature to delete state funding for transsexual surgery in that state. Welfare reform bills introduced in both the state House of Representatives and the Senate earlier this year originally contained language removing funding for transsexual surgery from the list of medical procedures covered by state funds.

There are presently two public funding routes for transsexual surgery in Minnesota: General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC) and Medicaid. Surgeries funded by GAMC are paid for from fee for service directly through the state. Persons whose surgery is funded by this route would be those most impacted by an elimination of funding.

Medicaid funding for surgery is paid for through HMOs. Persons whose surgeries are funded via this route would most likely not be impacted by an elimination of funds due to the use of federal funds and two Minnesota Supreme Court cases in the 1970s. There are presently no doctors in Minnesota who are willing to perform transsexual surgery for the fee approved by the state.

The current total allocation for transsexual surgery in the Medicaid budget is \$75,000 per bi-annum. An average of about thirty Minnesotans per year undergo transsexual surgery, of which only a total of ten have been paid for by state funding since January 1989, at an average cost of \$10,200 each. Of the ten persons whose surgeries were funded by the state, half are now employed. According to a study by Dr. Sharon Satterfield commissioned by the state of Minnesota two years ago, none of the ten are presently on welfare.

When openly lesbian State Representative Karen Clark discovered the provision eliminating such funding buried in the 45 page bill, she contacted the bill's author, Bob Anderson, and asked him to delete it. She was initially successful in persuading him to strike the provision from the House version of the bill (H.F. 1), and the provision was deleted on 12 January 1995. But a measure to restore the stricken provision was subsequently introduced and approved in the House by a vote of 120-20. In a similar attempt to delete state funding for transsexual surgery last year, only 14 members of the House of Representatives voted to retain funding, but the measure containing that provision was subsequently vetoed by Minnesota Governor Arne Carlson.

The author of the Senate version of the bill was also successfully persuaded to delete the provision to eliminate state

funding of surgery from that bill, and an attempt was also made on the Senate floor to restore the stricken provision. However, in a surprise move, openly gay community activist and President of the Minnesota Senate, Allan Spear, ruled that the motion to restore the deleted provision was not germane to the bill because it is a health, rather than a welfare reform matter.

"She took out the rear part of her head, basically her cerebellum ... so she's a paraplegic, has been since. The medical bills to the state, six years ago were well over a third of a million dollars ... We're not talking about saving money here." -- Transsexual activist Ashley Rukes testifying before the Minnesota legislature against elimination of state funding for transsexual surgery

The House and Senate bills must be reconciled by a joint House/Senate committee composed of five legislators before a vote can be taken on them. At present, transsexual activists in Minnesota count two votes in favor of restoring the provision, two against, and one undecided. Transsexual activists also think that one of the persons

currently against retaining funding for surgery might be persuaded to change his vote. The committee is not meeting at the present time, and it is unknown when it will reach a decision on this matter. The legislative session ends at the end of May.

Three transsexual women, Diana Green, Dyna Slyter and Ashley Rukes -- all of whose surgeries were paid for by state funding -- testified before the Senate in favor of retaining funding for transsexual surgery on Tuesday, 24 January 1995. "This is the first time the local transsexual community has presented an organized front on its own behalf in a political setting," said Diana Green, one of the women who testified before the Senate.

In her testimony before the Senate, Green pointed out that many people who come out as transsexual prior to surgery lose their jobs. "I found myself in the position of working worse jobs ... everything seemed like a dead end ... I don't know anyone who hasn't had to make economic sacrifices. Financially, this is suicide. You have to have enough money to buy a brand new car, straight cash to get the male-to-female operation. On a downward sliding income, that's nearly impossible," Green was quoted as saying in the 1-7 February 1995 issue of the Minneapolis queer newspaper, *Focus Point*.

Another transsexual activist, Ashley Rukes, stated in her testimony that a friend of hers had put a gun in her mouth and shot herself in the head as a result of not being able to afford surgery. "She took out the rear part of her head, basically her cerebellum ... so she's a paraplegic, has been since. The medical bills to the state, six years ago were well over a third of a million dollars ... We're not talking about saving money here," she was quoted as stating also in *Focus Point*.

Dr. Walter Bockting of the Program in Human Sexuality at the University of Minnesota estimated that at least three persons waiting for surgery committed suicide within the last year, two of which were the result of not having sufficient funds to cover the cost of surgery.

In response to the attempt to eliminate state funding for transsexual surgery, a gender reassignment surgery funding committee was formed under the direction of the Gay and Lesbian Community Action Council Executive Director Ann DeGroot and transsexual activist Susan Kimberly. Approximately twenty transsexual activists, about three-quarters of whom are postoperative, are on the committee.

According to Diana Green, the Minneapolis gay, lesbian and bisexual communities have been extremely supportive of the transsexual community in its efforts to prevent the elimination of state funding for transsexual surgery. It's Time Again, Minnesota, a political action group organized in November 1994 to counteract legislation hostile to the queer community, has made prevention of the elimination of funding for transsexual surgery one of four issues that it has chosen to focus

on. Diana Green was one of the featured speakers at an It's Time Again, Minnesota fundraiser on Friday, 11 March 1995. In an editorial in the 3 March 1995 issue of *Gaze* magazine, gay writer Wizard Marks remarked that if right wing legislators are successful in eliminating funding for transsexual surgery that its next target may very well be queer-positive counseling programs and services.

Retrial Set in Transsexual Jail Rape Lawsuit

(San Diego, California) - A retrial has been set in the case of Susan Davis, a preoperative male-to-female transsexual, who filed a lawsuit against Wackenhut Correctional Corporation and the City of San Diego, California, alleging that she was raped anally while being held at the correctional facility.

Ms. Davis was arrested for prostitution on 2 October 1992 by a San Diego vice-squad officer who answered a personal ad. She was subsequently taken to the city's new privately-operated "state-of-the-art" all-male facility in Otay Mesa run by Wackenhut Corporation, a Florida-based private concern which operates prisons throughout the southern states and South America, despite the fact that all her identification said she was female.

According to her lawyer, Jeffrey Schwartz, she was "unequivocally" a woman at the time of her arrest. "She was taking hormones. She had breasts," he said. "They locked me in with other new prisoners," Davis recalled in an interview with Mark Gabrish Conlan for GLAAD/San Diego. "I was in a skirt and blouse that showed my breasts. I couldn't even go to the bathroom because there was no privacy. Eventually, I was taken

for mug shots and fingerprints, and was asked out loud, three times, whether I was homosexual, heterosexual or bisexual. I said I was transsexual, and was never asked if I was pre-operative or post-operative. The guard yelled out my answer every time I gave it, so everyone in the area could hear."

Wackenhut, according to Davis, made no special provisions for transsexual prisoners. "They took me to the changing room and forced me to undress in front of five males. One of the guards said, 'God, you've got bigger tits than my mama's.' They dressed me in prison coveralls without any underwear and assigned me to a cell with another transsexual named Jessica. Later I had to undress again, also in front of other prisoners, to put on underwear."

She was placed in housing that was already full even though,

"They dragged me over to the toilet...One had hold of my hair, and they were forcing my head and neck in the toilet. They had my arms pinned behind me, and they hit me in the back and across the breast. They pulled the prison jump suit down to my knees, and the one behind me penetrated me. I don't know how long it went on. It seemed like forever." -- Susan Davis, transsexual rape victim

according to both Davis and Schwartz, there was empty housing available. They both contend that the guards should have realized that she would be in danger and that she should have been separated her from the general population. Schwartz was quoted as saying: "They have a policy of administrative segregation, which they did not follow." Standard practice in

San Diego County prisons is to segregate transsexual prisoners by sex according to whether they are preoperative or postoperative. But the county's publicly-run jails run by the county Sheriff's Department, also segregate preoperative transsexuals and effeminate gay men to protect them from homophobic fellow prisoners.

Davis alleges that she was harassed from the moment that she arrived. While Davis attempted to use the jail phone, she recounted, "a guy came up to me..., called me a 'punk' and said 'You ain't using shit.' I tried to use the phone again and another prisoner came up to me and punched me in the shoulder. He said 'We don't allow sissies to use the phone. We might get AIDS!'" When she complained to a guard, says Davis, "he turned around and walked away from me."

The following day, according to Ms. Davis, three inmates dragged her from her bed, ripped her jumpsuit off, forced her head into the toilet and at least one of them raped her and beat her. "I remember these three guys pulling me to my knees, and three more standing in front of the cell. They dragged me over to the toilet...I remember them, one on each side and one behind me. One had hold of my hair, and they were forcing my head and neck in the toilet. They had my arms pinned behind me, and they hit me in the back and across the breast. They pulled the prison jump suit down to my knees, and the one behind me penetrated me. I don't know how long it went on. It seemed like forever." She is unsure of exactly how many men actually raped her because they had her head forced in the toilet the whole time. She was never able to identify the men. "All she saw was orange jumpsuits," said Schwartz. Davis recalled that her assailants flushed the toilet

two or three times during the rape, and spoke in both Spanish and English. "One of them said, in English, 'Go to the guards, and they won't give a shit. We'll know if you report this.' As a final gesture, one of them kicked me in the belly, which was the hardest blow. I just fell to the floor. I don't know how long I laid there. I just knew I had to get myself cleaned up and I had to get to the phone."

Later that night, Davis called her sister to ask for help. It was Davis' sister who reported the rape and the beating to the nurse. On Sunday, the nurse went to Davis' cell. However, she did not ask Davis if she had been raped and she did not conduct an examination. Davis said that she tried to say something to the nurse, but she couldn't get the words out of her mouth. "Then, she just turned her back and walked away. She never asked me anything," Davis explained.

"I finally had to write a hot check to get out of there," she said. "I just had to get out of there." No charges were ever filed against Davis as a result of the arrest.

Davis was unable to press charges against her alleged assailants because of runarounds she was put through by both police and medical authorities

after her release. Though an examination by her personal doctor revealed tears in her anus that corroborated her story of forced penetration, she was unable to document the rape soon enough after it occurred to press criminal charges.

Davis spent six weeks in the psychiatric unit of Mercy Hospital following her release. She is still undergoing psychotherapy and treatment for trauma. Since she couldn't find a support group that was available free of charge, she started one of her own for rape victims in similar situations. "A lot of my old friends just don't want to be around me anymore because they look at me as something 'wrong.' Two friends told me they could feel my pain too much, and that's why they didn't want to see me anymore."

Despite her intense trauma, Davis filed a lawsuit against Wackenhut and the city of San Diego. "The more witnesses I talk to, the more I believe the guards deliberately set me up to be raped. One prisoner saw me get hit, another heard me crying and screaming, and a third prisoner said he'd witnessed it. They may have known within a few minutes what had happened to me--and they did nothing about it. The fact that my sister called the nurse should have made them examine me [for evidence of rape]. They didn't. I think they put a dollar sign over my life."

It was just this past summer, in June 1994, that the Supreme Court, in *Farmer v. Brennan*, ruled that transsexuals could sue corrections facilities for jail rape. (see "Trans-Action News" in *TransSisters* # 6)

Officials from Wackenhut claim the rape never occurred. "It's appalling that Wackenhut denies this rape occurred when there are three independent inmates who say that there is no question that the rape occurred," said Schwartz.

Going to court proved to be yet another trauma for Davis. In telling the story on the witness stand, Davis broke down and fainted just before describing the actual rape. Her attorney said she had suffered a panic attack, her doctors said she was medically unable to return to the stand, and Judge Jeffrey Miller then declared a mistrial. A new trial has been scheduled for 30 June 1995, and Schwartz has waived a trial by jury.

Davis recalls being cross-examined by attorneys for Wackenhut. "Their expert psychiatrist asked the most amazing questions: if I were a lesbian, what kinds of sex I engaged in and if my doctors were all gay....I felt like I'd fallen into the pit with the Ku Klux Klan. They've tried to make this into a prostitution case, a bondage-and-discipline case, a lesbian case. Because [her transsexual friend] Jeri and I 'adopted' each other, since she's a postoperative transsexual, they've tried to make it look like we're lesbian lovers. I can't see where that, or my past lifestyle, or

whether my father or mom beat me as a little girl, have anything to do with this case. But I've had to turn my life over to them because they felt they need to know."

Davis said one thing she's grateful for is the support of the community in her legal effort. GLAAD/San Diego is working

with other community groups to promote a benefit to help defray some of Davis' legal expenses, and Davis [and GLAAD] hope that her case will increase awareness of how homophobia affects not only lesbians and gays, but transsexuals as well.

"Taxpayers need to know where their tax dollars are going and what they are going for," Davis said. "The next time, it may be their sons or daughters. The police never asked me what I was. I could have been a 'masculine' female. They just assumed. People need to know these things happen, because the next time it might be someone they love."

GLAAD/San Diego urges San Diego media outlets to continue their coverage of this story as it unfolds. GLAAD also urges concerned members of the community to express their concerns about the need to protect all prisoners, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, to Wackenhut Corporation, Public Relations Dept., 1500 San Remo Avenue, Coral Gables, Florida 33146-3036 [phone: 305-666-5656].

First Conviction Delivered for Murder of Brandon Teena

(Falls City, Nebraska) -- Marvin Thomas Nissen, 22, of Falls City, Nebraska has been convicted of one count of first degree murder in the death of Brandon Teena and guilty of two counts of second degree murder in the deaths of Lisa Lambert and Philip DeVine. Nissen was also convicted of one count of first degree burglary.

Brandon Teena was a preoperative female-to-male transsexual, living as a man in Falls City, who was murdered after it was revealed in the local media by Falls City police that he was anatomically female following his arrest on a misdemeanor

"A lot of my old friends just don't want to be around me anymore because they look at me as something 'wrong.' Two friends told me they could feel my pain too much, and that's why they didn't want to see me anymore." -- Susan Davis, transsexual rape victim

charge of check forgery.

Brandon was subsequently raped by two men on 24 December 1993, whom he identified to local police as Thomas Nissen and John Lotter, but whom police failed to charge until after Brandon was murdered. Brandon had been warned by Nissen and Lotter that they would kill him if he reported the rape to the police, but he did so anyway. Brandon was subsequently murdered in his home one week later, along with his roommate Lisa Lambert and Phillip DeVine, who was visiting them at the time. Only after Brandon was murdered did local police charge Nissen and Lotter with rape and sexual assault against him. (see "Trans-Action News" in *TransSisters* # 4)

During preliminary hearings last fall, Sheriff's deputies testified that they were convinced that Lotter and Nissen had committed the rape and sexual assault, but had been directed by Richardson County Sheriff Charles Laux not to arrest them. Laux was defeated in his bid for re-election as Sheriff last fall.

Jury selection for Nissen's trial began on 13 February 1995, and the actual trial began on 21 February. Witnesses for the prosecution testified that Nissen and Lotter were angry and resentful of Brandon after learning that he was anatomically female but had been living as a man. Testimony during the trial also revealed that the Sheriff's office interviewed dozens of people and prepared an extensive report on Brandon's rape and sexual assault during the week between the rape and the murder. Nissen's attorney called no witnesses to testify on his behalf during the course of the entire trial. According to reports in the *North Platte Telegraph*, even Nissen's supporters felt that he was guilty.

The verdict was delivered by the jury of ten women and two men -- all from Omaha, Nebraska, and sequestered in Falls City throughout the course of the trial -- at 2:30 p.m. on Friday; 3 March 1995 following eighteen hours of deliberation taking place over the course of two days. Sentencing will not take place until after the trial of Nissen's co-defendant, John Lotter, for which jury selection is scheduled to begin on Monday; 8 May 1995. The minimum sentence for first degree murder in Nebraska is life imprisonment; the maximum penalty is execution. Second degree murder is punishable by a sentence ranging from ten years to life imprisonment.

Nissen wept and buried his head in his hands while the verdict was read by presiding Judge Robert Finn. Judge Finn is the same judge who presided in the trial of Michael Ryan, who was the leader of a fundamentalist Christian cult in nearby Rolo, Nebraska in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and who was convicted in the death of five year old boy in October 1986. That trial was widely reported in the national media in the mid-1980s. Ryan was sentenced to death by Judge Finn following his conviction in that case. Nissen was tried in the same courtroom in which Ryan's trial took place.

Nissen was not tried for the rape and sexual assault against Brandon, but may still face trial on those charges at a future date. Whether he will face trial on those charges is dependent on what sentence he faces for the charges he has already been convicted of. It is not expected that Nissen will face trial for rape or sexual

assault if he is sentenced to death.

The families of all three victims as well as Nissen's family kept vigil at the courthouse throughout the course of the trial. Other than the families of the defendant and the victims, there were few spectators at the trial, and most of the local townspeople seemed resentful of all of the media attention that the trial had brought to their town.

New Zealand Transsexuals Granted Marriage Rights

(Wellington, New Zealand) -- The High Court at Wellington granted transsexual persons in New Zealand the legal right to marry in December 1994. "Once a transsexual has undergone surgery, he or she is no longer able to operate in his or her original sex. There is no social advantage in the law not recognizing the validity of the marriage of a transsexual in the sex of reassignment. It would merely confirm the factual reality" the Court's judgement stated. The judgment followed an application from the Registrar of Marriages for a declaration on whether two people of the same birth sex could be legally married if one of them has changed his or her sex.

A judge on the High Court, Justice Ellis, was quoted as stating: "If society allows such people to undergo therapy and surgery to fulfill that desire, then it ought also to allow such persons to function as fully as possible in their reassigned sex, and this must include the capacity to marry...In my view, the law of New Zealand has changed to recognize a shift away from sexual activity and more emphasis being placed on psychological and social aspects of sex, sometimes referred to as gender issues."

The ruling seems to have been accepted without any opposition. The Christian Heritage Party expressed disagreement with the decision, but it is a very minor party and carries very little political weight, having no seats in the Parliament. Transsexuals in New Zealand still cannot have their birth certificates or their passports altered. The current Registrar of Marriages, who appeared on a television interview to be sympathetic to the change in the law, had been lobbied recently by local transsexual support groups to change the policy, and this led to her applying for a ruling from the High Court.

Transsexual Ban Costs Sydney Lesbian Center Money and Community Support

(Sydney, Australia) -- A founder of the group working to build a lesbian center in Sydney, Australia, has withdrawn \$20,000 of the \$30,000 she donated to the project to protest a 10 December 1994 vote to ban transsexual lesbians from using the planned space. The move to exclude transsexual lesbians came in the wake of the expulsion of several transsexual lesbians from last year's annual Lesbian Confest in Melbourne. (see "Trans-Action News" in *TransSisters* # 7).

Georgina Abrahams told the newspaper *Capital Q*: "I am heartbroken as the Lesbian Space Project was something I put a lot of my love into, but I don't want to be associated with a

project that is discriminatory, ... that categorizes people into right and wrong, good and bad. There's no place for that in the '90s." Ms. Abrahams was one of the key organizers of LSP, and had specifically stated at the beginning of the fundraising drive that LSP would be inclusive of transsexual lesbians. In addition to withdrawing her donation, she publicly resigned from the board of LSP as a result of the vote.

About \$250,000 has been raised for the project.

The vote to ban transsexual lesbians from the space was achieved by using a large number of interstate proxies, a matter which has angered many women within the Sydney lesbian community, as it is not expected that the women who cast proxy votes will ever use, or contribute to the LSP.

The vote has caused a deep sense of repugnance in many quarters of the Sydney queer community. Many organizations and individuals which had previously supported the project, including Transgender Liberation Coalition (TLC), are asking for their money back, based on the fact that when fundraising was commenced, LSP touted itself as a transsexual inclusive organization.

Lesbian Line, a telephone counselling service also disassociated itself from LSP because of the vote, and the fortnightly queer newspaper *Sydney Star Observer* has referred to LSP as the "Laughing Stock Project," and has moved the coverage of transsexual issues from an opinion column to regular press coverage alongside gay, lesbian and bisexual issues.

New York Republicans Threaten to Take Hormones Away from Incarcerated Transsexuals

(Albany, New York) -- In the wake of the election of Republican Gov. George Pataki in New York state, and Republicans gaining control of the state legislature, hormones for transsexuals incarcerated in New York have been targeted as a source for budget cuts.

Approximately seventy male-to-female transsexuals, who are warehoused among the male prisoners even though they are often targets of abuse, are incarcerated in New York state prisons. According to Dr. Leo Wollman, taking away medication they were receiving before being imprisoned "would be punishing them medically by depriving them of the things they need for their physical and mental health."

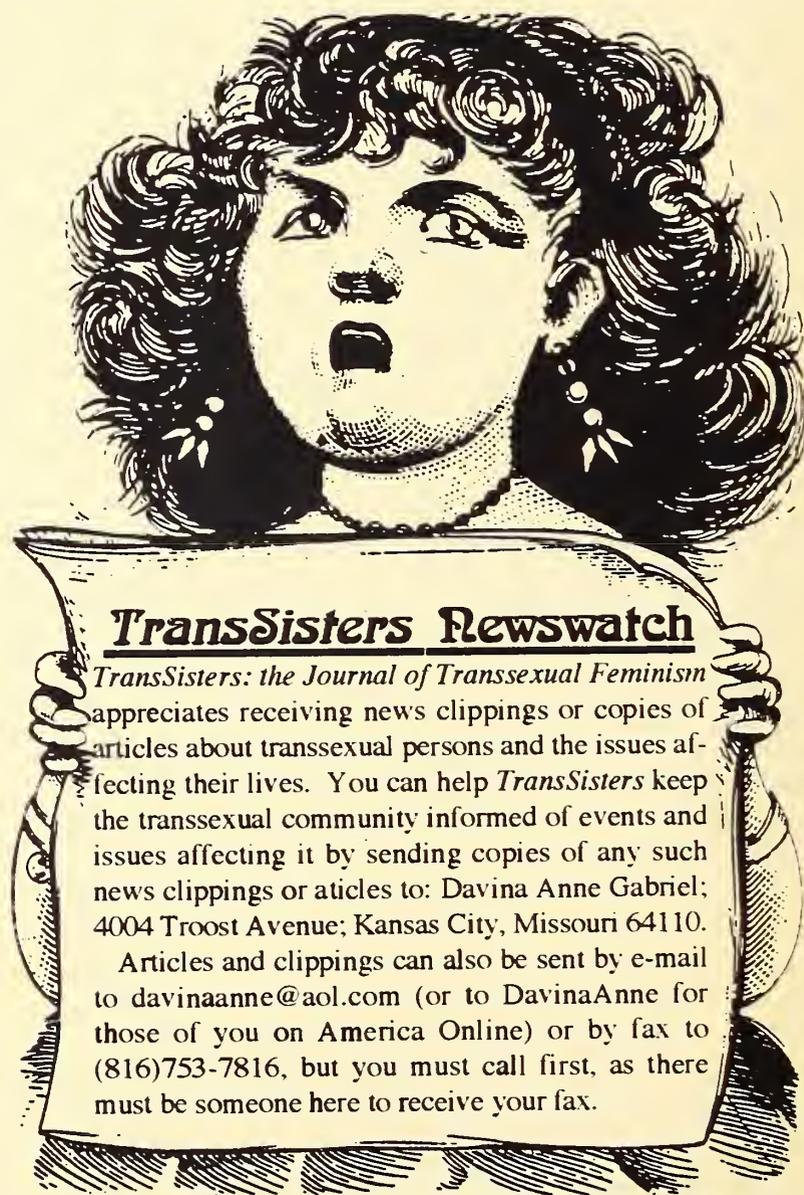
But right-wing politicians see these prisoners as easy targets. Michael Nozzolio, a state legislator from the town of Auburn, site of one of the state's largest prisons, calls hormone therapy for transsexuals "coddling" and "prison perks."

The prison system has provided right-wing politicians like Nozzolio with some strange math. They say it costs \$700,000 a year to provide 70 prisoners with estrogen. This comes to about \$10,000 per person, which is the full cost of transsexual surgery. In the view of many transsexuals knowledgeable about the therapy, it actually costs the state only \$1 per pill at the most, which comes to no more than \$40,000 a year for all 70 prisoners.

Judge Censured for Anti-Transsexual Remarks

(Tacoma, Washington) -- Eatonville district Judge Alan Hutchinson has been formally censured by the Washington State Judicial Conduct Commission for calling two preoperative transsexuals who appeared in his court requesting name-changes prior to surgery "immoral and mentally ill." Judge Hutchinson also refused to grant the name-changes, which are usually granted as a matter of course in such cases, until after the transsexuals actually completed surgery. (see "Trans-Action News" in *TransSisters* # 7)

The censure order was signed by eight of the eleven commissioners and requires Judge Hutchinson to attend a diversity training workshop. The Judge's attorney has indicated that he plans to appeal the commission's decision.



TransSisters Newswatch

TransSisters: the Journal of Transsexual Feminism appreciates receiving news clippings or copies of articles about transsexual persons and the issues affecting their lives. You can help *TransSisters* keep the transsexual community informed of events and issues affecting it by sending copies of any such news clippings or articles to: Davina Anne Gabriel; 4004 Troost Avenue; Kansas City, Missouri 64110.

Articles and clippings can also be sent by e-mail to davinaanne@aol.com (or to DavinaAnne for those of you on America Online) or by fax to (816)753-7816, but you must call first, as there must be someone here to receive your fax.

"A little rebellion now and then is a good thing." - Thomas Jefferson in a letter to James Madison, 30 January 1787

PROTEST AGAINST MICHIGAN WOMYN'S MUSIC FESTIVAL'S EXCLUSIONARY POLICY WILL CONTINUE THIS YEAR

Despite the successful entry of several transsexual women into the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival last year, it is expected that the brochure for the 1995 Michigan Womyn's Music Festival will again contain the same discriminatory language as it has in the previous three years; that is, that "MWMF is a gathering of mothers and daughters for all womyn born womyn." Festival producer Lisa Vogel has explicitly indicated that the decision to allow transsexual women to enter the festival last year does not signal an end to the discriminatory policy and that she has every intention of retaining the discriminatory policy this year and in future years.

As the producers of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival have made clear that they have no intention of changing the festival's policy of discriminating against transsexual womyn, the effort to change that policy that has been conducted at the previous three festivals will continue this year.

Strategy for this year's protest has not been finalized as of yet, but it is expected that one or more transsexual women will probably enter the festival again this year and refuse to leave if asked to do so. There will probably also be a transsexual encampment outside the festival again as there was last year.

Since there is a great deal of expense involved in conducting this type of activity, we are in great need of financial assistance to continue with this important work on behalf of the transsexual community. Our expenses include such things as literature, buttons and stickers to distribute, transportation, festival tickets, food, camping supplies, postage, telephone calls, faxes, among other expenses. Altogether, it requires a sum of several thousand dollars to conduct this activity each year. The individuals involved in this activity also spend hundreds of hours of their time and expend enormous amounts of personal energy on it.

However, we all feel that our effort is very worthwhile because what happens at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival not only affects that event itself, but has wide-ranging implications on what happens within the lesbian/feminist community throughout the world. Women come from all over the world to attend the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, and they take back to their local communities what they have learned at the festival. Conducting this kind of educational

activity at Michigan is simply the most efficient and effective way of reaching the entire lesbian/feminist community and of drawing attention to the exclusion of transsexual womyn from lesbian/feminist events everywhere. The protest against the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival's exclusionary policy is, quite simply, *the frontline in the struggle against the exclusion of transsexual womyn within the lesbian/feminist community.*

Please help us to continue to the vital work that we have begun at the festival. We have managed to accomplish a tremendous amount of consciousness-raising both at the festival itself and in the larger lesbian/feminist community, and we know that the vast majority of womyn who attend the festival support our right to attend. We have no doubt that we will succeed if we only persevere. But we need help in order to sustain our momentum.

We need to raise a lot of money in a very short period of time. Any amount of money that you can possibly contribute to this vital effort will help us to continue the process that we have begun, and will help to further the empowerment of our community everywhere.

In addition to money, we need more transsexual womyn who are willing to go to the festival and to help us conduct our consciousness-raising activities. We are in need both of transsexual womyn who are willing to enter the festival knowing that they might be expelled and of transsexual and nontranssexual womyn who are willing to help us conduct consciousness-raising activities outside the festival gates.

Please send whatever financial contribution that you can afford to:

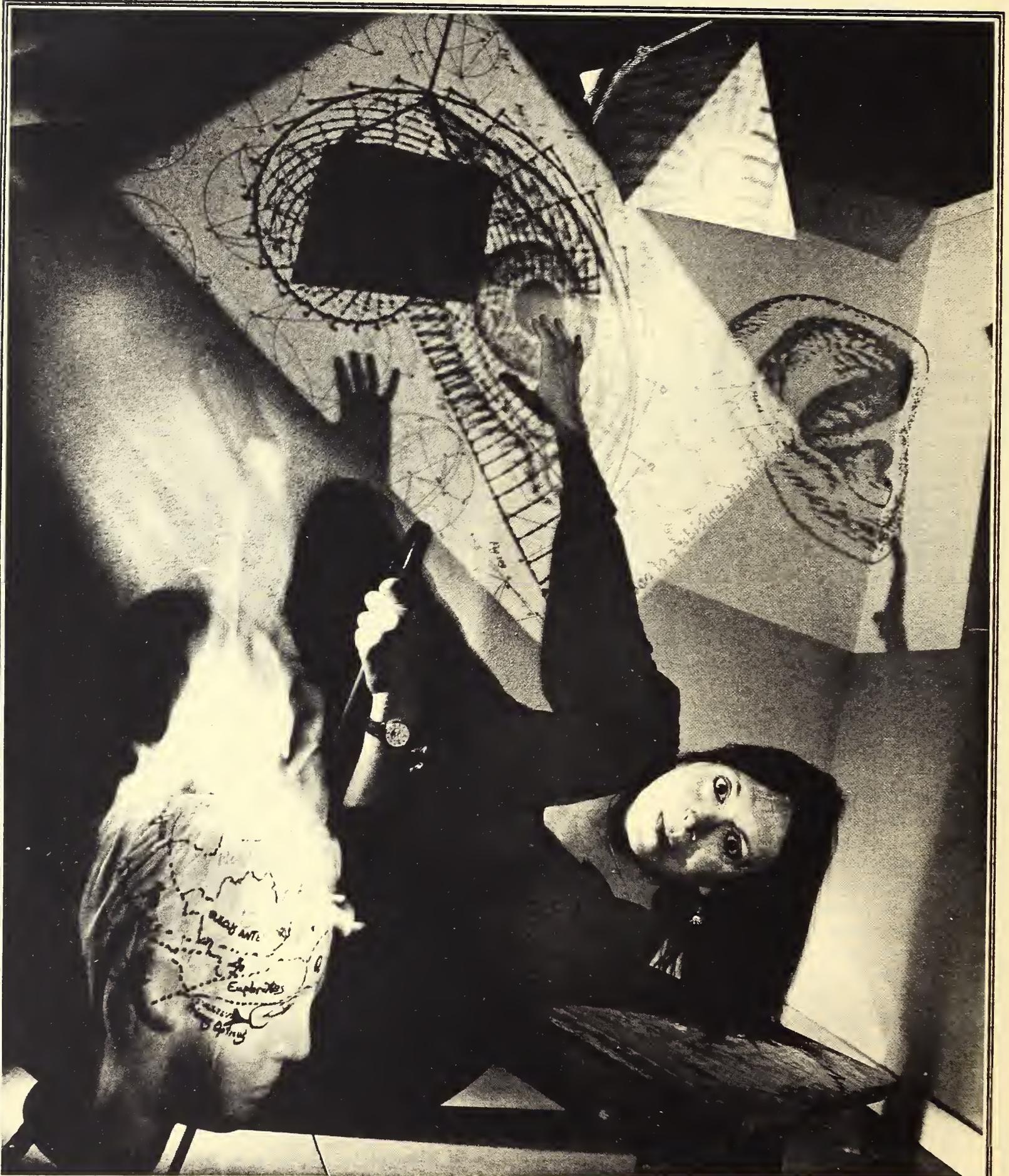
Davina Anne Gabriel
4004 Troost Avenue
Kansas City, Missouri 64110

Please make checks payable to Davina Anne Gabriel and indicate "Michigan Fund" in the memo space.

If you would like to get involved personally in the consciousness-raising activities that will continue to take place at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, please contact me at the above address, by telephone at (816) 753-7816, or by e-mail at davinaanne@aol.com or at DavinaAnne if you are on America Online.

Thank you for your consideration.

--Davina Anne Gabriel



Allucquère Rosanne Stone

photo by David C. Macenzie

Interview with the Transsexual Vampire: Sandy Stone's Dark Gift



Allucquère Rosanne Stone

by Davina Anne Gabriel

Nearly every transsexual woman who identifies as a lesbian and/or a feminist has, at one time or other, heard the name of Sandy Stone. In fact, Sandy Stone -- whose full name is Allucquère Rosanne Stone -- has become somewhat of a legend within the transsexual lesbian/feminist community. As a recording engineer for the all-women record company Olivia Records in the 1970s, she found herself unwittingly thrust into the unenviable position of being the focal point of the most well-known controversy involving the inclusion of transsexual women in women-only space to date, a position that was accorded further prominence by its recounting by Janice G. Raymond in her book *The Transsexual Empire: the Making of the She-Male*, in which she stated that "the Sandy Stone controversy" had assumed within the lesbian/feminist community a position of prominence comparable to that within popular culture to that of the controversy over René Richards' legal challenge to play professional women's tennis, also in the late 1970s. The so-called "Sandy Stone controversy" has become practically emblematic of the entire controversy over transsexual inclusion in lesbian/feminist space that is now well over two decades old.

Her essay "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto" which was included in *Body Guards: the Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, redirected the entire course of academic discourse on transsexuality; was instrumental in sparking the beginning of the transsexual/transgender civil rights movement; and has gone on to become one of the most frequently cited works in both academic and nonacademic discourse regarding transsexuality since it was published. It was, in fact, her statements in that essay that transsexuals had failed to adequately

develop effective counterdiscourse to the criticisms of academic feminists such as Janice Raymond and her admonition to transsexuals to begin to define their own lives that provided me with the inspiration to begin publishing *TransSisters*.

Currently, she is Assistant Professor in the department of Radio-TV-Film at the University of Texas at Austin, where she studies issues related to interface, interaction, and agency; and is director of the Advanced Communication Technologies Laboratory. Previously she was a visiting lecturer in the

"...when Lestat ... gives the Dark Gift to mortals, they are not only freed in time, but they're also freed from fixed identities....real self-knowledge frees us to move beyond a single identity to be all of who we are in complex, multiple ways -- to come to use all our identities..."

departments of Communication and Sociology at the University of California San Diego, where she taught film, linguistics, gender, cultural studies, and feminist theory. She has conducted research on the neurological basis of vision and hearing for National Institutes of Health; was a member of the Bell Telephone Laboratories Special

Systems Exploratory Development Group; has been a consultant, computer programmer, technical writer and engineering manager in Silicon Valley; and worked with Jimi Hendrix in music recording. She was invited to Sundance Institute in 1986. She produces the Monterey Symphony radio broadcast series. She is director of the Group for the Study of Virtual Systems at the Center for Cultural Studies, UC Santa Cruz, was program chair and organizer for the Second International Conference on Cyberspace at Santa Cruz, California in 1991, was an organizer and member of the program committee for the Third International Conference on Cyberspace at Austin, Texas in 1993, was a member of the program committee for the Fourth International Conference on Cyberspace at Banff, Canada in 1994, and is an advisor for the Fifth International Conference on Cyberspace at

Karlsruhe, Germany in 1995. Her academic publications have been translated into eight languages and include "Will The Real Body Please Stand Up?: Boundary Stories About Virtual Cultures", in Michael Benedikt, ed.: *Cyberspace: First Steps* (MIT Press); "Sex, Death, and Architecture", in *Architecture New York* (ANY); "Virtual Systems", in Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter, eds.: *Incorporations* (MIT); and "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto", in Kristina Straub and Julia Epstein, eds.: *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Sexual Ambiguity* (Routledge), recently reprinted in *Camera Obscura* 26. Her book *The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age* will be released by MIT Press in Spring 1995. The next book in a projected series, *The Gaze of the Vampire: Tales From the Edges of Identity*, will be published in early 1996. Her first science fiction novel, *Ktahmet*, is forthcoming from DAW Books/New American Library. She is currently working on a study of vampirism, desire, and presence.

This interview with Allucqu re Rosanne Stone was conducted by telephone on Sunday; 29 January 1995.

Davina: Most transsexuals who have heard of you have done so by reading *The Transsexual Empire*, but it seems like not very much else is known about you within the transsexual community. So, to start off with, could you just provide some background information about yourself and what you were doing before going to work for Olivia Records?

Sandy: Well, I kept it a secret up until now, but I'm not really a transsexual; I'm simply masquerading as one... No, but seriously, before Olivia I was engineering for Jimi Hendrix and Crosby, Stills and Nash and Van Morrison...I did *Tupelo Honey*, for instance. One of the names I used back then was Doc Storch. I had several *noms de engineer*.

Davina: What recordings did you work with Jimi Hendrix on?

Sandy: I did most of the warehouse tapes at Record Plant, and I did "Stone Free."

Davina: You transitioned in the early 1970s, is that right?

Sandy: That's right.

Davina: What was it like transitioning back then? Was there a lot of pressure to conform to cultural stereotypes?

Sandy: Well, I deliberately chose Santa Cruz to transition in because Santa Cruz is a very accepting community, so I found that I really didn't have to conform to too many stereotypes. That was an experimental stage for me too, living as a woman preoperatively for several years.

Davina: Did you identify as a lesbian when you were in transition?

Sandy: I didn't identify as anything in particular when I was in transition. I was quite open to seeing which direction my sexuality took, and besides, I had read the laundry list quite well, and one of the things on that list was that one should accept the possibility that one will be completely unattractive to people of any gender or sex afterwards, and this was repeated to me a number of times by therapists and by the people at Stanford. One in particular who was trying to shake me out of my conviction, quite brutally at one point said, "Do you have old friends?" And I said, "Yes, I have many old friends." And he said, "What will you do when they reject you?" And so I decided that I needed to be true to myself more than I needed not to be rejected by anyone else, so I did proceed, but that was why I was doing so without any real sense of sexuality; I didn't expect to have one necessarily.

Davina: So, what did you tell your physicians in regard to your sexual orientation?

Sandy: I told them that I didn't know, and that was a point against me. I told them that I was seeing a woman. I was, in fact, living with a woman at the time, but we were not lovers. And they said that was bad and that I had to stop it, and I wouldn't. And that was strike one.

The Stanford program and I did some mutual retraining. In my final interview before approval I refused to say that I was totally committed to wanting surgery, and they said that if I weren't a hundred percent committed, then I wasn't eligible. I said that anyone who was a hundred percent committed to anything was probably crazy, that everybody had reservations if they were honest and looked deeply enough. And Don Laub, who was doing the interview, said "I don't believe that, and I'm sorry, you've struck out." We actually went back and rewrote that conversation later with the assistance of Marty Norberg, the coordinator. Marty wisely saw that we had arrived at an impasse which was merely linguistic, and she scripted another meeting between Don Laub and me in which Don simply said, "Are you ready for surgery?" And I said, "yes," and we proceeded from there.

Davina: So you were instrumental in their revising their guidelines; is that correct?

Sandy: I was one of the people who was. I may have been among the first, but I know that there were lots of other people. I remember talking with another person who smoked a pipe and was there at the same time I was. I said, "Tell me, if you think of yourself as a woman, why have you chosen to smoke a pipe?" She took out the pipe, a small ceramic one, and looked at it. And she said, "I am a woman. This is my pipe; therefore, it is a woman's pipe." And she grinned, and I said, "Ah, I understand!"

Davina: You mention in "A Posttranssexual Manifesto" that transsexuals are generally expected to create a "plausible history." Was this something that you were required to do?

Sandy: Yes. It was not something that I was required to do for Stanford, but it is certainly something that is required by society in general, and so my policy is and was that in order to get along in the world as gracefully as possible that when strangers ask me about my background I come up with an invented history, and if I get to know them well enough, or if they already know that I am a transie and they ask me a direct question, I will give them a true answer.

Davina: When did you first begin working at Olivia?

Sandy: I think it was 1975.

Davina: How did you get the job there?

Sandy: The women of Olivia had heard about me from one of the few women engineers then active. I think they had approached her to ask if she would work with them, and she was busy with other projects or didn't want to, and she told them about me. And so they sent a delegation to meet with me and talk with me. They called first, and I didn't know anything about Olivia at the time. And it occurred to me later that another friend of mine who was postoperative had set me down on the couch, clamped headphones over my ears, and played Cris Williamson's "The Changer and the Changed." And I remember lying there thinking, "Oh, this music is so beautiful, but wow, the mix is awful!" It was a harsh judgment, perhaps; they were doing the best they could. Then when they called me, it took me a while to connect the name Olivia Records with hearing that album, because I had heard it a

year or two previously.

Davina: Did you lose work in the mainstream music industry as a result of transitioning?

Sandy: No, I had already withdrawn from the mainstream music industry. I had gotten tired of waking up on the floor, quite frankly. I actually worked with Marty Balin for a while during transition, and he was fascinated. Most of the rock musicians I knew were. Crosby, Stills and Nash were very supportive; everyone I knew in the business was.

Davina: Janice Raymond mentions several transsexuals in her book, but she seems to single you out for particular vituperation. Why do you think she has such animosity toward you in particular?

Sandy: I can only speculate because we've never met. I know that she is an extremely angry person, and I know that a lot of her work on transsexualism stems from deep hurt and scarring, and I can't deny her that experience, but I think that she took off after me because of the Olivia thing, and also possibly because of some feminist writers' conference in 1970-something. They had a list of the ten biggest problems in the women's community, and right under "Is Gloria Steinem really a C.I.A. agent?" [laughs] was "What do we do about Sandy Stone?" I think that the Olivia events gave me a certain profile that perhaps neither I nor Olivia wanted, but having achieved, we didn't know quite what to do about. There were a number of mistakes that I made and that they made, in public debates with lesbian separatist communities back in the days when we still believed that there was a possibility for dialog, and I think that those exacerbated the situation. And it's possible that Janice Raymond had some friends in that community because there were some academic people there, and it's also possible that Janice Raymond was friends with Julia Penelope, who at that time was known as Julia Penelope Stanley, and was the Chair at the Dept. of Linguistics at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. And there was a kind of odd connection between there and Nebraska having to do with a lover of mine at the time.

Davina: Raymond doesn't really give very many of the details surrounding the Olivia controversy, so could you elaborate on that?

Sandy: Yes, in the first place, I don't think she really knows much about the Olivia controversy. In the second place, I was quite open with the Olivia collective about being a transie. In fact, they already knew, but I didn't know they knew, so one of the very first things I told them when we had our initial meeting and got to like each other very much was that I was a transie. What I didn't tell them was that I was still in transition, and I didn't tell them that not because I was afraid of it or that it might eventually be an explosive issue, but simply because I felt it was personal information and I wasn't ready to share it. So at the time that I started working for Olivia, I was actually preoperative. They didn't know that, and I didn't know it was volatile. I figured I would tell them at some point when we got to know each other better.

Davina: So, before going to work for Olivia, you weren't aware of any controversies regarding transsexuals within the lesbian community?

Sandy: You didn't really "go to work" for Olivia; you became part of that collective. It was really a sisterhood at that time, and in a very deep way. I didn't feel so much that I was being hired, so much as that I was joining a family, one in which we shared

common goals and beliefs, the primary set of those goals being to make music and politics at the same time.

The controversy started with Janice Raymond sending us a chapter of her book. It happened to be a chapter that didn't mention me, but was quite vituperative about the issue of transsexualism, and she asked if we would pass it around for comment. I think she thought she was blowing the whistle on me. I think she thought that no lesbian in her right mind would have anything to do with a transie and, consequently, that Olivia must have been totally ignorant of my situation. So this thing came in, and I think Judy [Dlugacz, one of the founders of the Olivia Collective] probably read it first, and passed it around with a note on it saying, "What do you think about this?" The other women were writing things like, "This is sick, what's wrong with this woman?" And I thought about it for a while, in my sort of academic way, and wrote something like, "I think that a book on transsexualism from a critical perspective is certainly needed, but this is not that book."

We sent that back to Janice Raymond, and then sometime later she published the book, and I discovered I was in it. Shortly thereafter, or possibly a little bit before, we started getting letters from other women and they took the form of trashing one of the new albums in terms of the quality of the engineering, and they were all written in about the same way. Judy commented on the fact that they all took the same general shape. There would be some paragraphs on how awful the album was, and toward the end there would be some sort of mention of, "Oh, by the way, we understand you have a transie working for you in the capacity of engineer," and after a while there were quite a few such letters. Some of them were quite astonishing. They made distinctions between what they called "male" and "female" styles of recording and mixing. This seemed to have to do with how prominent the drums were in the mix and whether the lead vocal was featured or pulled back into the mix. We were stonkered by this. Such distinctions were meaningless, really; they were simply based on local prejudices, and we didn't share them. We were making the best music we knew how, and we felt that the things these women were objecting to were the very things we wanted to be doing. Not me, but the collective as a whole. I personally felt that we were witnessing a nostalgia for the Bad Old Days of women's music, when albums were mixed under poor listening conditions and on equipment of inferior quality, and that a certain segment of our audience preferred that style because it really did create an identifiable genre. They didn't realize that we were trying to *escape* that genre. We didn't want to spend the rest of our lives making garage-quality music.

We soon found that we couldn't escape the politics in which our audience steeped every single thing we did. Stuff that we thought had no possible political connotation turned out to be political hot potatoes. For instance, there were a lot of politics around what our artists wore on and offstage, all related to the idea of what a Real Lesbian should wear. I recall how heavy the reverberations were when Teresa Trull first wore lipstick onstage...talk about dividing the community!

And so, in addition to all that -- which was novel for all of us and needed grappling with -- we became aware that there was a contingent out there that was quite vocal and that didn't like at all that there was a transie at Olivia. So we had meetings and decided that the best thing to do was to have some meetings with the women's community at large and air those issues and address

them directly and find out what we could do about it. So we did that.

The first meeting we had was in Berkeley, while we were on tour. We discovered that a contingent of radical separatists had flown in from Chicago for this meeting, and that...let's say that the crowd was ugly. We were happily tripping along thinking that what we were going to do was to create dialog. We were too naive to recognize that the meeting had already been stacked against us. And so we went in, we sat down, I think there were possibly eight or ten of us from Olivia present. There were maybe twenty, maybe thirty other women in the room, maybe more. I don't remember whether Judy made a statement first or whether the other people did, but I remember that the statement put forward by a spokesperson for the other women in the room was purposefully inflammatory, and said things about transsexualism and related topics that were simply untrue, but I don't remember exactly what they were. It was more-or-less Janice Raymond-like statements about transies being men and raping women by their presence and it was couched in a sort of "everyone-knows-this" language, and "have-you-stopped-beating-your-partner?" type statements. The collective and I glanced at each other while she was reading, and our jaws began to drop. And when the statement was finished there was silence for about a minute, and Ginny [Berson] looked at me and said, "Sandy, would you like to respond to that?" And I made the biggest mistake of my life, possibly to date -- I said, "That's all *bullshit*." The tone in my voice wasn't hostile, it was more like wonderment that anyone could actually stand up in public and maintain a position so bigoted without withering away on the spot.

And instantly the room was filled with screaming, shouting women. We were never able to restore order. There were people standing on chairs, shouting. I remember Nancy Vogl shouting, "Now Olivia's finally shown its true colors!" When things finally did quiet down the contingent of women other than those who were members of the collective refused to continue with the discussion unless I left. The collective said I was a member and they wouldn't proceed without me, and there followed pandemonium, and it wouldn't stop. We realized that we were in an unheralded situation and so we retreated to the other end of the room, and held a little caucus in the midst of this noise, and decided that for the sake of finding out just what it was that these women were angry at, I should, for this one time only, leave the room, and so I did. I left and went back to where we were staying, and eventually flew back to Olivia House in Los Angeles. And the problem was that, once I did leave, there was no resolution, and the meeting finally broke up with no understanding. And that was when we first realized that we had a problem. We were all in shock.

Then the rest of the group sat down and drafted a statement of support that was published in whichever lesbian publication those things were published in at the time and we began to strategize. What we did was to continue to publish statements and try to engage the community in dialog. And, of course, there was a tremendous amount of support. There was no question of that, but, there was this absolutely intractable, small, but extremely "moral majority," that never let up, and eventually began to do things like threaten boycotts.

Davina: So the movement to have you ousted came completely from outside Olivia?

Sandy: That's right.

Davina: And there wasn't a contingent within Olivia that wanted to get rid of you?

Sandy: Absolutely not.

Davina: I think that's very unclear in Janice Raymond's book, because when I read her book I got the impression that there was a faction within Olivia that wanted to oust you.

Sandy: To the best of my knowledge, there was never a faction within Olivia that wanted to oust me. We became terrified that someone would actually launch a boycott of Olivia Records, and that would kill us. It wouldn't take very long at all to sink us. Our financial situation was okay, but precarious. We had a very big accounts receivable, much, much higher than a company should have had, dangerously high because we wanted to support our distribution system and the women in it, and that meant because they were all living financially close to the line themselves -- many of them -- that they were slow in paying. And we wanted to support them in that as best we could, and so we ran a high receivable. Anything that interrupted our cash flow could have been disastrous. And when the boycott began to be threatened, we had to sit down and do some serious thinking. And there was a point at which the collective said, "Sandy, the reality of the situation is that if you don't leave, there's real danger." And so I left.

Davina: And when was that?

Sandy: I think it was '78 or '79. I was postoperative at the time.

Davina: You were accused of taking work away from women and coming by your skills because of male privilege. How did you respond to those charges?

Sandy: Anyone who knew the real situation knew the accusations were false. My purpose in coming to Olivia was to train women to be engineers. The idea was that we could bootstrap a corps of women engineers by giving them training that they might not otherwise be able to get, and give them that training in a supportive atmosphere. That was the whole idea of my coming to Olivia. We wanted to build a studio that would be a school, whose purpose would be to train women.

Davina: Janice Raymond stated that you played a very "dominant role" at Olivia. Would you characterize that assessment as accurate?

Sandy: Of course not. It's not only inaccurate, it's ludicrous. In the first place, Raymond had no way of knowing what actually went on at Olivia Records. The collective meetings were only open to the collective, and there were no leaks to Janice Raymond. [laughs] Olivia was always run on a consensus basis. I had no more influence than anyone else. And the thing is: one can make a blanket statement about men, that by virtue of their socialization, men tend to be more dominant or aggressive in a given social situation than a normally socialized woman would be. But of course, there's tremendous variation among individuals. And while I certainly had male privilege, my way of moving in the world has always been to be extremely shy, which I realize is at odds with my public persona quite frequently, and my way at Olivia was just that.

Sometimes within my area of expertise I was assertive. I was there because I knew certain things, and it was my job to talk about them. Outside my area of expertise, I didn't know, and at that point I listened to other people, and I think there was a pretty reasonable give-and-take, and I think that if there had not have been, I would never have been asked to join the collective because

we spent quite a while checking each other out before I joined. I wasn't just hired by telephone from Los Angeles. I was interviewed. I was questioned. I did an album with them. I went down and visited with the collective and then went down and stayed with them for a while. We had meetings. It was a long process during which we all got to know each other very well.

I also feel that the idea that I could play a "dominant" role in Olivia is demeaning and insulting to the other members of the collective. They each were, in their own ways, quite assertive when they wanted to be. The few original Olivia women started a women's record company. That takes incredible guts. It takes incredible assertiveness. The idea that I was a person who waded into the middle of this room full of wimps and just took it over is crazy.

To write that a transie is naturally a dominant or divisive force in a women's group tells us more about the writer than it does about transies. It reveals the writer's own personal sense of helplessness and anger. It assumes that all women are easily manipulated. Most of the women I know find it ludicrous. I feel that it replicates the oldest problem in building a feminist consensus: that we can be our own worst enemies, that for whatever reason some women find it more satisfying to increase divisiveness rather than work toward compromise.

Davina: How do you respond to Raymond's charge that if your "commitment to and identification with women were genuinely woman-centered [that you] would have removed [yourself] and assumed some responsibility for the divisiveness?"

Sandy: I think that's an opinion and I think that she's entitled to it, and I don't think I would have done it, and I don't think there's any way to know. That requires an entire episteme that did not exist, not just on my part, but on everyone else's part as well.

Davina: Are you generally satisfied with the way Olivia handled the situation?

Sandy: Yes, absolutely. I'm still friends with some of the Olivia people, and I think there is a great deal of mutual affection there that has yet to find ways to unfold. We live in different parts of the world now and do different things. Olivia is now a distribution center and a travel agency. It's not a collective anymore. Many of the Olivia women have gone through significant changes in their lives. While originally the collective was a hundred percent separatist — men were not allowed in the house, for example — some of the women have gone on to rethink their positions. A few are now in heterosexual marriages. We've all gone on to become more of whoever we are and more deeply textured in who we are and the ways in which we move in the world.

Davina: Who were some of the musicians you worked with during your time at Olivia?

Sandy: Be'be K'roche, Cris Williamson, Linda Tillery, Holly Near, Meg Christian, Sweet Honey in the Rock, Teresa Trull, Mary Watkins, Woody Simmons, Nancy Vogl... and a number of others who did independent projects.

Davina: Did you ever work with Alix Dobkin?

Sandy: No, Alix Dobkin came out as an anti-transie right away.

Davina: Yea, I know. She's very virulent in her opposition even now, still.

Sandy: Yea, I know. I read the latest issue of *TransSisters*. [laughs] I worked with anyone who was connected with Olivia Records or even some people who just came through there, and of

course all of the musicians who played on our sessions for all of the albums that Olivia did between 1975 and either '78 or '79 including remixing "The Changer and the Changed."

Davina: What did you do after you left?

Sandy: I went back to Santa Cruz, and resumed my life there with a much, much higher profile in the women's community. And again we had a meeting because there were separatists there who hadn't realized that I was there. And I did, if you want to put it that way, "divide" that community in that the major part of the community -- and this is what I think it ultimately comes down to when Raymond says transies divide women; this is what I think that ultimately means in practice -- in the Santa Cruz community, the overwhelming majority of the women there felt that I should be considered a member of that community and the two or three very angry separatists felt I shouldn't, and on that basis, we all went on.

Davina: But overall, you were well accepted in that community?

Sandy: Overwhelmingly. When I say two or three separatists, I'm not fooling. There was not a very large number of women who were not accepting.

Davina: When I was at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival last year, someone who was an organizer of that event back in the '70s told me that you worked on the sound crew there at one time. Is that correct?

Sandy: No. I was never at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. But I remember one story coming to us during the height of the separatist flap at Olivia. When Sandy Stone seemed to be the buzzword in the women's community and we were figuring out how to deal with all those issues, I remember that someone in the collective said that she had spoken to a woman who had been at that festival who said that I had gotten up on stage drunk and had grabbed the microphone and had made some obnoxious remarks. And we got a huge chuckle out of it. And I remember saying, "Ah, the Sandy Stone persona is up and walking through the world like a golem. [laughs] Gee, I've gotten to be so well known I don't actually have to go out on tour anymore; my persona's out there on tour for me."

Davina: I've heard one person who knew you back in the '70s describe you as "a lightning rod for hate against transsexuals." Do you think this is accurate?

Sandy: Yes.

Davina: Why do you think you became this as opposed to someone else?

Sandy: I think it was largely because my visibility at Olivia and the way that that issue unfolded in the press. I think that we were actually at that time a fairly close-knit community that communicated in part through publications and through meetings and festivals, to which very much the same people went, and that news travelled very fast in that way.

Davina: I understand that there was the beginning of a transsexual feminist movement back in the mid-1970s. Is that correct?

Sandy: Yes, although I don't know very much about it.

Davina: I also understand that there was something called the TransSisters collective back in the '70s. Is that correct?

Sandy: Oh, you're talking about the TransSisters. The TransSisters was not, strictly speaking, a transsexual political movement because most of the women in it were genetically female, but we were an organization. We had t-shirts and we

marched in parades as a contingent and so forth.

Davina: Why was it called the TransSisters collective?

Sandy: Because there was at least one transie involved and we were a group that felt like sisters and we were involved with electronic work, so it seemed like the name covered all those possibilities.

Davina: What happened to that collective?

Sandy: We simply disbanded gradually in the late '70s or early '80s. It got to be almost ten years old and we were getting tired of it. All of us wanted to do things that brought in more money. Some of us reached a point at which we began to think about going to college or going to university and getting educations in one thing or another and some of us did. In other words, our lives just began to diverge. You might say we began to grow up.

Davina: Why do you think that there is a transsexual feminist movement re-emerging at this time?

Sandy: Because I think that the *geist* is right now. I think that many women in the first and second waves of feminism, particularly American feminism, have had an opportunity to get a better overview, or get a better lay of the land, to see what the terrain of feminism is in a more deep and complex way, and have seen what's possible. In other words, to understand a little bit more about how power works in our culture and in our society and within the feminist movements, and to understand that the analysis of transsexuals as men and as always divisive and alien is a simplistic one, and to understand that real life is more complex than that, and perhaps understand that all people need to be judged as individuals, and that some transies, just as some women and some men and some who are none of those categories are, in fact, objectionable and some are not.

Davina: What about factors in the transsexual community itself?

Sandy: The factors within the transsexual community are very similar. I think that most, if not all, transies now have a broader awareness of the political issues and the social issues. Having been through a number of years of identity politics, we understand that personal, inner strength as well as the ability and power to move gracefully in the world comes not from denying one's identity, but accepting it fully and affirming it. And that means all of one's identity, that locking out or closing off or denying one's past is not standing in the center of one's personal power. It's not moving from the center of one's grace. It's not being fully who one is in a deep and loving and consequently capable-of-being-loved way.

Davina: What do you think about the general course of transsexual activism and transsexual feminism today?

Sandy: I think that, so far, it's moving ahead in an absolutely magnificent and glorious way, and I think that about the time I will think of something to say like, "Well, I think that maybe it should be heading off in this direction," that it probably will.

Davina: Do you see any trends within it that are disturbing?

Sandy: No, I can't think of any. If you want to suggest something I'll tell you how I react to it.

Davina: Well, it seems to me that any kind of social movement develops an extremist fringe, and I see that happening among transsexual activists today, and I find that to be rather disturbing.

Sandy: Well, that's been true of any movement including the feminist movement. There's nothing you can do about that except draw boundaries, and that's always difficult, and near impossible to do. You have to say, "Those people are not part of this movement as I or we conceive it." I don't know what else

anyone's ever been able to do about that.

Davina: Do you think that we are making any of the same mistakes that the feminist movement made?

Sandy: Oh, yes. I think that to the extent that there is extremism it is the same kind of extremism, but from a different point of view. But that kind of divisiveness is ultimately destructive. The thing is, it's not destructive in the short term for the people who need it, because they do need it. And there's nothing you can do to change their minds at the moment when they need it. It's just a stage of their personal growth that they have to go through, and if they're lucky, they go through it, they complexify it, they unfold it, and then they encompass it. And by encompassing it, it becomes part of them. It doesn't become all of them. It doesn't overwhelm them and rule their lives. And once that happens, they look around at the world, and see that the world is a bigger place than they thought, and people are deeper than they thought, and they move on. They open to the rest of the world and to other people, and they re-establish those links, and they find in those links the deep love of themselves and others that they thought they were going to find when they closed themselves off.

Davina: What are some of the lessons that transsexual feminism can learn from the larger feminist movement?

Sandy: I think we need to learn the specifics of how identity politics works. I think we need to learn how to build coalitions, which the feminist movements at large have never been terribly good at. I think we need to learn the compromises that we must initially make in order to be able to bring the larger part of the transsexual and transgender movements into closer contact with the mainstream of feminism.

Davina: Are there things that transsexual feminism can learn from the separatist wing of the feminist movement?

Sandy: Yes, I think we can learn a great deal about how pain works and about how denial works, and about how deeply that scars us. By "us" I mean both us and the separatists as the community of beings.

Davina: I feel that there is still not a high degree of feminist consciousness among transsexuals, and one of the reasons I started *TransSisters* was to promote that kind of consciousness. How do feminist transsexuals go about addressing the lack of feminist consciousness among transsexuals in general?

Sandy: By doing things like publishing *TransSisters* and widening its circulation and continuing to raise the level of its quality, which you are doing. Thing number two is by the more difficult, more time consuming and complex process of face-to-face and day-to-day conversations and understanding, by forming focus groups, by forming wider political associations, and addressing the issues in that framework, by what was called in the 1960s and '70s "consciousness raising." We are probably at the stage now that American feminism was in the 1960s, or possibly 1970s. We're running twenty years behind. That's not unreasonable, and I think with time, more and more of us will become aware of the tools that the feminist movements have already forged and tested. We can benefit greatly from them. We'll inevitably learn to use them, but it will be a long, slow, and not unpainful process.

Davina: Do you think that Janice Raymond makes any valid points in *The Transsexual Empire*?

Sandy: Well, I'm sure there are some valid points in it, but I can't remember at this moment what they are.

Davina: In "A Posttranssexual Manifesto" you state: "I read Raymond to be claiming that transsexuals are constructs of an evil phallocratic empire and were designed to invade women's space and appropriate women's power." In the introduction of the new edition of *The Transsexual Empire*, she denies that that is what she was saying. How do you respond to that?

Sandy: First of all, I'm grateful for the new introduction because it allows gender and sexuality classes at the university level to have two sides of the issue, even if one side is a little crazed. I have not changed my opinion in regard to her book. I think she is still, quite covertly, writing from a position of deep hatred of men, and she projects that onto transsexuals. I think that if she really believes she is writing an objective book, what I feel for her is pity and sorrow, and I wish that she could grow to the point where she could get over it or through it.

Davina: Do you think that the reason that *The Transsexual Empire* has been re-issued at this time is as a response to the gains and increased visibility that transsexuals have achieved in the last several years?

Sandy: No, I think it's because there's an opportunity to sell books. I don't think it has anything to do with our gains. I think it has to do with the rapidly increasing number of gender and sexuality courses, and of the rise of queer theory, and that translates into volume sales.

Davina: You stated that the informing principle of "A Posttranssexual Manifesto" is that "technical arts are always imagined to be subordinated by the ruling artistic idea, itself rooted authoritatively in nature's own life." I'm not sure I know exactly what you mean by that, so could you explain what you meant there?

Sandy: What I'm saying is that one of the ways that people justify oppressing people of any alternative gender or sexuality is by saying that the social norm is natural. That is, it originates in the authority of Nature itself. In other words it comes from God, an authority to which there is no appeal. All this is, in fact, a complete fabrication, a construction. There is no "natural" sex, because "sex" itself as a medical or cultural category is nothing more than the momentary outcome of battles over *who owns the meanings* of the category. There is a great deal wider variation in genetics than most people except geneticists realize, but we make that invisible through language. The way we make it invisible through language is by having no words for anything except male or female. One of the ways our culture erases people is by not having any words for them. That does it absolutely. When there's nothing to describe you, you are effectively invisible.

I wrote a novel many years ago, whose theme was a very small group of women, one in particular, who began to dream in a new language, and the dream became so real that they began to speak it in their waking life. It raised itself up out of the dream state. It followed them into their waking existence and eventually they discovered that by speaking that language they could fall through into another universe in which other things were possible, things which they had never dreamed of because they had no language in which to express them. Because that universe was under attack by a group of people whose purpose was to change that language and restructure it so that those things would become invisible again, this group of women realized that what they had

"...the quality of life improves with self-revelation -- mutual, caring self-unveiling as it feels appropriate and graceful."

to do was raise some sort of army and fight the group. So they went looking through all the universes, to find women who were capable of fighting that battle. And they did -- they organized a core group and they raised their army around it, and they fought back against this force. And they almost won; but in the end, the countervailing force won. It couldn't kill them, but what it did was to cause them to forget who they were and to forget the source and center of their power, and scatter them to the four winds. They lived that way, cut off from who they were, for many, many lifetimes. Then one day, one of them began to dream again, and once again realized what was going on, and knew that she had to try again to fight that battle. So again she went out to find the others. I was one of the others; this is my personal myth. One of the things they forgot was who they were in their current universe.

And one of things that I was in that universe was a woman. That's a fantasy scenario, obviously at odds with reality, but it made a very interesting basis for a book that was really both a kind of lesbian separatist screed and also a fairly accurate picture of the lesbian feminist movement of the '60s and '70s from a particular point of view. That view had to do with the discoveries that some of us were making about language and about the way language was used. This was about the time that Adrienne Rich wrote *The Dream of a Common Language*. It was a time when some of us thought that complexifying and enriching language -- in and of itself -- would empower us to build new cultural bridges. And in fact, that happened. Many of those bridges were built. But language in and of itself, just like any other tool, in and of itself, was not enough to empower us to change the world in the profound way that we all dreamed we would. But it was still enough to make a small but significant change. In regard to specific areas in which change occurred, I think at Olivia we hoped -- we dreamed -- that the very fact of bringing a new kind of music into the world was going to profoundly change the way that women thought, and by that fact, it would crystallize out a new set of beliefs in the larger women's community, and then in the world. And although we didn't manage anything quite so profound, we did contribute a change: a smaller change, but a real change. It was that way with so many other things, some of which were connected with feminism and some that were not. Rock 'n' roll contributed a significant change. Computers contributed a significant change. Drugs contributed a significant change. Each in their own way, they're all pieces of some puzzle which we are all trying to assemble, and thus to move towards some greater understanding of ourselves and each other; and by that process, to transform the world.

Davina: Was that the same book that you were referring to in the interview you did with *Mondo 2000*?

Sandy: Yes, *Kthamet*. Among other meanings, the word means "Remember".

Davina: And you said that that was going to be re-issued?

Sandy: Right. After having it in my drawer for years, and not thinking about it really as a publishable thing -- I wrote it in 1967 -- I took it out of the drawer one day, and almost on a personal dare, because my partner at that time liked it, I sent it to DAW Books. I simply sent it; the expression for that mode of submission is "over the transom". When you submit something over the transom it goes into the slush pile, the resting place for

all unsolicited manuscripts. Eventually someone may read it, but in large publishing houses the slush pile grows faster than editors-in-training can read through it. Thus the odds that an unsolicited manuscript will be read may not be great. So three months went by, and suddenly I got a phone call from Betsy Wollehim at DAW Books telling me that they think the novel is powerful and gripping and important, and that they're going to make it a leader in the line. And from there it was all downhill. I wouldn't do the revisions they wanted, because the revisions didn't preserve the things in the book that I felt were important, and eventually when I got a good agent I bought the rights back. And I haven't yet put them out for bid again. I'm so busy with writing and performing right now that I haven't had the opportunity to do the editing on the book that I want to do, but at this point I no longer feel the urgency that I did. I will eventually do the rewrites and turn it over to my agent and see what happens.

Davina: What exactly do you mean by the term "posttranssexualism?"

Sandy: When I wrote the manifesto, I wrote it with an imaginary community in mind. I dreamed of addressing a huge audience and saying "Will all the transies please raise your hands and come over to this side of the room and we'll form a caucus", and *mirabile dictu* a huge number of hands go up, and next thing you know we have a whole crowd of transies caucusing. At the time it was nothing more than a dream, but now I understand that I will see it actually happen in my lifetime.

I wanted my hypothetical listeners to understand that we need to work on our own issues as transies, and that we need to prepare for the "next transformation" -- which I envisioned as a deep and complex thing, involving new ways of thinking and acting. At that time "posttranssexualism" meant to me transsexuals who acknowledge and affirm all of their personal history, their entire background, back to birth -- their male, their female, their other -- everything they've done that is good or bad or indifferent. In other words, to take our own stance from our own deep centers, to move from that place like dancers, and by that act to become something other than a person who is trying to become an "unproblematic woman" -- a person who is not trying to disappear into a particular social community. When we do disappear in that way, I feel strongly that we inevitably lose or deny important parts of ourselves. Many of us hate some of those parts, for example the "man" part that many of us MtFs have left behind. Some of us express differently the parts we leave behind; it doesn't matter how specifically they are expressed. I think that some of us make a tremendous effort to deny them, to close them out, and to see them as having been painful and demeaning. I think it's necessary for some of us to see them that way, just in order to be able to marshal the energy to go on, to complete our transitions.

It's possible to draw a kind of energy from that self-hatred, and in a society constructed like ours, self-hatred can be a powerful source of energy. For example, self-hatred drives most acts of gender differentiation, such as the stereotype of feminine anorexia -- images of women as presented in popular culture teach women to desire kinds of physical appearances that they cannot really achieve without hurting themselves. Many young women naively assume that the anorexic women whose images continually bombard them from billboards and television are physically normal, which means that they themselves must be abnormal. They learn to hate their bodies, and to desire bodies that only exist

under painful and stressful conditions. And not just bodies, but the entire feminine identity -- Feminism 101, so to speak.

What I was trying to say in the manifesto -- what I'm still trying to say -- is no matter how you may do it, when you seal off a part of yourself, when you deny a part of yourself, you drain off a large amount of your energy into maintaining that denial. And the way to free up that energy is to be uniquely yourself, and to accept the consequences, to be willing to take the risk of being who you really deeply are -- a wonderful, beautiful, shining being -- and to be ready to accept the light that pours out of you. When you shine like that, people will open to you in a much deeper way, in a much more complex and more loving way than they will ever meet you when you are holding back.

Davina: Are you surprised that the community you imagined has come into being so quickly?

Sandy: Yes! Delighted. I think it's a better word than surprised. Just absolutely delighted. I cry about it. I admit that quite freely. When I first found out about you and *TransSisters*, when Kate Bornstein took me to a reading that she was doing where I met a large group of people, when I found out about Transgender Nation; moments like that, there were moments when I quite simply wanted to cry from happiness, from the sense that it was really happening. Yes, the moment has arrived, and the moment is only beginning to peak. Besides transies in the general population, in jobs or all kinds, there's an entire generation of transgendered academics who are just beginning to come of age. They're getting to the point where they can start writing dissertations. Once that happens there will be a tremendous visibility and a tremendous complexification of the discourse of transgender within the university. I'm helping to kick that along the best I can by publishing a book on transgender theory which is specifically meant to provide an academic underpinning for much broader discourses of gender and sexuality, and shortly I will not be the only person doing it. In a few years there will be quite a few transgendered academics in tenured positions, and they will mark off more wonderful moments on that upward curve.

Davina: You discuss the evolution of criteria for transsexual surgery in "A Posttranssexual Manifesto," and seem to be saying that they've not always been appropriate. Do you think that they are any more appropriate than they used to be?

Sandy: I think so. I think that a lot of physicians now are a lot more aware than they used to be. However, I think that when they evaluate candidates for surgery they still apply standard social criteria, and from the standpoint of preparing people for "normal" lives that's not unreasonable. I remember Don Laub telling me long ago that they probably wouldn't offer surgery to someone who looked like a fullback for the Rams. But on the other hand, some surgeons *do* do surgery on people who look like fullbacks for the Rams, although with a certain trepidation. From my conversations with them, I think their trepidation doesn't arise from bad motives. They feel that what they're doing is worrying about their client's ability to live in a world which makes certain social assumptions. And ultimately we all must live with some set of social assumptions; that's the definition of society.

Davina: You also talk about surgery on demand in "A Posttranssexual Manifesto," and this is something that some transsexuals are advocating a return to. Do you support this idea?

Sandy: I think it's a good idea, but I think it has big risks, and the risks are that if you do surgery on demand -- regardless of any

psychological criteria -- you are inevitably going to do surgery on someone who is going to go berserk later, and then that's going to be used against you in some court of law. It could be professionally damaging to you, and that's going to make medical people think twice.

Davina: I can also see it jeopardizing the availability of surgery for other people.

Sandy: Do you mean in terms of surgery for psychological reasons that health plans cover?

Davina: Not specifically. Just in general, I can see it jeopardizing access to surgery. If someone does surgery on someone who is going to go berserk, then a lot of physicians are going to say, "Well, this is too risky. This is not something that I even want to bother with."

Sandy: Yea, I agree with that too. It's something of a dilemma - philosophically I believe in surgery on demand, but practically I think it's a huge worm-can, and I think it will result in trouble for everybody.

Davina: Do you advocate removing transsexuality from the DSM?

Sandy: Absolutely, but I also realize that that means trouble.

Davina: How so?

Sandy: In that I think that some people who are now able to get surgery through their medical plans may not be able to get it. I think that's just the price of being recognized as people.

Davina: So how do we go about balancing those different interests there?

Sandy: Well, I think that the people who count on getting their medical procedures through being declared as having an illness are going to have to give that up. I don't think there's any other way around that. I'm not saying I would force them to give it up, but I think that that's inevitably what the course of things is going to be. I do not think it will simply be driven by altruistic motives on the part of the medical community that that diagnosis will be removed. I think that far and away the major reason will be that they begin to understand that transsexuality is like homosexuality, that is, part of a broader spectrum of normal human behavior than they have been previously willing to consider.

Davina: You also talk about the "wrong body" metaphor, and say that it is something that we should regard with deep suspicion -- and I agree with that -- but do you think that it might be a valid metaphor for some transsexuals?

Sandy: Yes, I do, but in the sense that as young people and growing people, we do have a limited vocabulary with which to deal with the world. And things which we might think of later in a much more complex language, we might early on learn to think of in fairly simple terms, and become attached to those terms, and never re-think them. And were we to rethink them later in life, we might find ways of expressing those same things, but ways that take into account greater psychological and social complexity.

Davina: Do you agree that the "wrong body" metaphor is something that has been imposed upon transsexuals by the medical profession?

Sandy: Yes, but I also think that it originates in society at large. I think that, for all intents and purposes, the only way we can speak about feeling that we are "other" in the sense of being transgendered has been to talk about it in terms of being in the wrong body. In other words, we simply haven't had the depth of

description to be able to think about it in any other terms because our society has made those terms invisible.

Davina: You say that the lexicality of the phrase "wrong body" suggests "the phallogocentric, binary character of gender differentiation." I understand why that term suggests binarism, but I'm not sure that I agree that it is necessarily phallogocentric. So could you explain to me why this phrase is necessarily phallogocentric?

Sandy: Certainly. It comes from first and second wave feminism, which had a fairly simplistic idea of what phallogocentrism was and how it worked; namely that any binary opposition must by nature be phallogocentric. That worked very well for a long time, and it allowed a lot of powerful, useful and transformative feminist discourses to arise and gave us good tools with which to examine the ways we use and respond to description of ourselves and others. One of the ideas common at the time was that any binarism was phallogocentric, since phallogocentrism implied intrusion, division, seeing things only in black & white, having no room for nuance or negotiation. Now I no longer believe that's strictly true; I would have to say I'm currently re-thinking the entire analysis, as are many other feminist theorists. You have to be doing that continually -- rethinking things you once thought were true for all time -- because social configurations, societies, continually evolve and change, and the meanings we attach to things change too; but that's off at a tangent from our discussion here.

Davina: You say that "transsexuals have been resolutely complicit by failing to develop an effective counterdiscourse" to radical feminist theorists. Do you see this situation changing?

Sandy: Oh, yes, definitely. As a matter of fact, it's not just a single counterdiscourse now, it's many discourses, some of which are effective, some of which are not.

Davina: How effective do you think this discourse is?

Sandy: I think at the moment it has limited effectiveness, but that it will become more so; it will become more effective with time as the situation evolves. Likewise, nontranssexual and nontransgendered people who are engaged in that discourse with us evolve as well, so the shapes which the dialogues can take evolve further and present new surfaces to each other.

Davina: You also say: "In the case of the transsexual, the varieties of performative gender, seen against a culturally intelligible gendered body which is itself a medically constituted textual violence . . ." Could you explain what you meant there?

Sandy: Yes. Think of textual violence as using writing to disrupt thought -- not in terms of polemics, but by the act of turning writing against itself, producing disturbing juxtapositions and making meanings clash with each other. Some poetry and much of contemporary music does this. Now, sometimes it's useful to understand the world by "reading" it, applying techniques of textual analysis. The underlying assumption is that we're all inveterate storytellers, that in fact all conscious civilized activity can be interpreted as storytelling...buildings tell stories of relative wealth, automobiles tell stories of speed and prestige. And bodies tell quite complex stories of desire and adventure, failure and achievement, dominance and submission.

When we are reading along in a text, the mechanism of reading and of the production of textual meaning -- our internal parsers and dictionaries and associative links -- is invisible unless it's disrupted. Tapping you on the shoulder while you're reading may disrupt your chain of thought, but the flow of meaning from

the text resumes as soon as you go back to reading. The mechanisms by which you produce meaning out of a text remain unaffected — they can only be disrupted by the text itself. No polemic can substitute. Now if we substitute “man”, “woman”, “bodies” for “text”, we are talking about the kinds of textual violence I suggested. When we construct the stories our bodies tell in such a way that they disrupt the mechanisms of meaning production, we are embodying textual violence. Today we have a much simpler term for this process, but the term *genderfuck* didn't exist when I wrote the manifesto. I don't think that *genderfuck* quite conveys the full dimension of what textual violence implies, but it's close, and drawing out the differences is beyond the scope of this discussion.

Davina: You suggest constituting transsexuals “as a genre -- a set of embodied texts whose potential for productive disruption of structured sexualities and spectra of desire has yet to be explored.” Could you elaborate on that?

Sandy: When I talked about constructing transsexualism as a genre I was suggesting that we could use the power of genre, and the multiplicity of genres, to mobilize thought quickly. Essentially a genre is a cluster of codes, sometimes quite subtle and elusive, that constructs our expectations and sensibilities in relation to a particular aesthetic. Each genre produces its own set of expectations... in film, for example, a Western won't tell its story in the same way that a romance will, visually or narratively. Each genre is unique; we know one pretty quickly when we see it. And most significantly for our purposes, there are more than two genres. Thus rethinking gender as genre avoids the trap of binarism, and also avoids some of the sticky problems inherent in trying to create space for a “third sex” or “third gender” when what we're really talking about is a continuum of sensibilities and behaviors. Kate Bornstein points out that talking about a “third gender” merely reinforces the binarism out of which the “third” is created and in juxtaposition to which it is seen and experienced. The gender-genre move is a relatively simple way to avoid this problem without having to invent an entire new language. Of course, I also believe that we do need a new language, but that comes later.

Davina: You say that “Passing means the denial of mixture.” By this do you mean that passing is the same as conforming to sexual stereotypes?

Sandy: Yes. By “denial of mixture,” passing means that we cannot present ourselves as partly male, partly female, or partly anything else, to use the traditional way in which that would arise in transsexual discourse. What passing means to me is denying parts of yourself in order to pass yourself off as the person that you want to be.

Davina: I don't understand passing quite in the same way. To me, passing just means that I can walk out on the street and be perceived as a woman, but at the same time, I don't feel that I have to deny masculine aspects of myself, which I don't. I think that most people perceive me as a butch lesbian. So I feel that I pass, but I don't feel that I am denying mixture.

Sandy: I support that absolutely. When I say “passing,” I'm referring to the older transsexual idea, and in the spectrum of transsexualism, the extreme end of the spectrum that says, “I deny my male history. I was terribly unhappy as a man. There was nothing good about it. Now I've become a woman, and there's nothing male about me. There was never anything male about me. I was simply in the wrong body.” That's what I'm referring

to when I say “denying mixture.”

Davina: Well then, do you see the definition of passing as changing from what it used to be?

Sandy: If what you're describing is passing, then yes.

Davina: Well, I don't know if it's what most transsexuals think of as passing, but it's what I think of as passing.

Sandy: Well, I'm certainly happy to embrace that. I think that's a very productive definition. I don't know what that says for transsexuals who still need to deny. They're certainly still going to use the word “pass” and use it in a different sense.

Davina: You say that “transsexuals who pass seem able to ignore the fact that by creating totalized, monistic identities, forgoing physical and subjective intertextuality, ... have foreclosed the possibility of authentic relationships.” Are you're saying here that it is necessary to be out to everyone to be able to have any kind of authentic relationship with anyone?

Sandy: No, I think that would be suicidal. Everyone must choose -- because the world is a big place -- how much and to whom they reveal themselves.

Davina: So, then what I understand you saying, is that to have any kind of authentic relationship, you have to be out with those particular individuals with whom you want that kind of relationship.

Sandy: Yes, and that it's your job as a human to expand that circle as far as possible, but I don't expect people to go around wearing t-shirts that say, “I am a transie.” I mean that the quality of life improves with self-revelation -- mutual, caring self-unveiling as it feels appropriate and graceful. And of course, that's true for everybody, not just for transies.

Davina: Do you think that there are other ways that transsexuals can gain the kind of visibility you're advocating other than deliberately not passing? Is there some kind of middle ground we can pursue?

Sandy: Oh, there are all sorts of ways. There could be something like a transsexual anti-defamation league or a transsexual media organization that deliberately set out to encourage positive portrayals of transsexual and transgendered people in the media, which is really how popular taste is formed. If, by some miracle, there were a number of positive portrayals of transgendered people in the media, there would be some flash point at which, all of a sudden, it would be hot to be a transie, and then it would die down, and it would simply be okay. I think that there have been a number of breakthroughs in that area, but they didn't reach the flashpoint. One of them was the transie in *The World According to Garp*, which was very well done. And if I think for a minute, I'll come up with some others ...

Davina: *The Crying Game*?

Sandy: I think *The Crying Game* was a very interesting and problematic case because the person in question was preoperative and wanted to interact with the protagonist as a preop, and that was very positive. I think the way the character was portrayed was very positive. The reason that I prefer the character in *The World According to Garp* is that I thought that character was portrayed in a more ambiguous way -- as a mixture of elements. And that just tends to be, or tended to be at the time, my personal sense that this was the right way to do public education. But it doesn't necessarily have to be. The person in *The Crying Game*, insofar as she represented a positive portrayal of transsexualism with which the audience could identify and with which the audience could mobilize some empathy, was good.

Davina: You say that "A Posttranssexual Manifesto" is about "telling the truth about gender," and you call on transsexuals to be out and to not create "plausible histories," so isn't this agreeing with Raymond's contention that transsexuals who become part of the women's community, and who don't immediately reveal themselves to be transsexuals are deceiving nontranssexual women?

Sandy: Yes, but what about nontranssexual women who join women's groups, and don't reveal themselves? I'm not saying that people should reveal themselves immediately and unquestioningly in every circumstance. Everyone needs to be context dependent, and to move forward as they feel comfortable, but I also feel that everyone needs to take bigger risks. Now, of course what's happening in the feminist communities is that the situation there is changing, and it's easier to reveal oneself as a transie within the women's community than it was a few years ago. It's still not unproblematic, but it's definitely easier.

Davina: But you don't feel like you have to announce yourself, which to me seems what Janice Raymond is saying transsexuals should have to do?

Sandy: Well, I would put that back to her this way: Suppose every woman who walked into a group of women had to immediately say, "I am an alcoholic" or "I am a victim of childhood abuse," or whatever else the case may be. That would be something that women might not feel is everybody else's business right away.

Davina: Some transsexuals are now saying that all transsexuals have an obligation to be out and have felt justified in outing other transsexuals against their wishes. How do you feel about that?

Sandy: I think that that's exactly the same as going to a tupperware party and announcing that another person in the room is a member of an A.A. group.

Davina: You say that "We need a deeper analytical language for transsexual theory." Do you see that happening, and could you give an example of it?

Sandy: Yes. I think the word *transgender* is a good example. That was a tremendous breakthrough. It's hard for me to give specific examples, because so much is just now being produced, but when I say a deeper language I'm talking about the kinds of analyses I see now in which the issues are not so simply drawn. I would have trouble saying exactly what I mean without taking a long time. A good deal of it turns up in fictionalized form in my novels, where the women speak a language in which gendering (and other things) works differently. That language is based on some work that I and a colleague of mine did in the '70s — the fantastic, quite fictive, but at the time immensely powerful idea that there was an essential common language that we had forgotten and that could be "remembered", and that could, through its descriptive power, transform the world. It was a heady time...for instance, Adrienne Rich had just titled her new book *The Dream of a Common Language*. Almost certainly she meant nothing so literal, but what happened around our attempt to recreate such a language was so fantastic and so dangerous that I was able to mine it for a whole series of novels... but that's another story. So let me just say that the issues of male/female, of man/woman, of genetic things, of social performance, of behavior, of self-image, of psychology, of the law -- all of those things are now being seen in much more complex ways just as feminism has become so much more complex and deeper.

Davina: You conclude "A Posttranssexual Manifesto" by saying

that "perhaps it's time to begin laying the groundwork for the next transformation." How do you envision that transformation?

Sandy: I think the transformation that I envisioned at the time was in part the articulation of transgender, and partly it was the posttranssexual moment of transies taking responsibility for all parts of their lives. The transformation which would bring that about would be the making of space in society for transsexuals to live openly as transsexuals -- to have fulfilling lives and relationships without having to deny parts of themselves, and not only to just not have to deny, but to be able to affirm — which is quite different from not denying — to be able to say "Yes!", to be able to make love and music and high art and high writing with other people -- with nontransie people, with every bit of themselves, with the male, with the female, with the neither, with the both, with every bit of themselves, without being afraid, without being the least hesitant.

Davina: Do you think that transformation has already begun to take place?

Sandy: I think it has just begun to be underway, and I think it's incredibly promising. I think this is a moment of high promise, of deep and wonderful promise, and I, for one, am joyful and proud to be alive and to be writing in this moment.

Davina: In the footnotes to "A Posttranssexual Manifesto" you say that you hope that Judith Shapiro's work will supersede that of Janice Raymond as the definitive statement on transsexualism by a genetic female academic. I think that you could probably make just as strong a case that Anne Bolin's work has already done that. Would you agree or disagree, and why or why not?

Sandy: Yes, I would. At the time I wrote that, Anne Bolin hadn't yet published anything. Subsequently I've had some wonderful conversations with her and I do agree. I've mentioned certain ways in which I think she totalizes, in which I think she can slip over into treating transsexuals as a uniform class with uniform characteristics, and I think she's become a lot more conscious of that, and I don't know that she does it anymore.

Davina: What do you think about Deborah Feinbloom's work?

Sandy: I'm not yet that familiar with her work to be willing to say.

Davina: In the introduction to the re-issued edition of *The Transsexual Empire*, Janice Raymond claims that Judith Shapiro appropriated a lot of her critique about transsexuality while trying to simultaneously dissociate herself from it, and I do see a lot of similarities between Raymond and Shapiro. What are some of the crucial differences you see between their understandings of transsexuality?

Sandy: Well, first of all, I think that's a bit of Raymond's ego showing, because what Judith Shapiro was doing -- from my point of view -- was adopting a discourse that was more common among some of her colleagues, some of whom were publishing and some of whom were not. I don't mean that she adopted it whole-cloth, but she took parts of it that made sense, and she built on that a fairly coherent structure. I don't think she got most of it from Raymond. Raymond was working the other side of the street. In other words, they both got foundational material for their theories of how gender and sexuality work from the same sources, from the same broad network of feminist theorists. What Raymond did was to use that for her own purposes, to take her theoretical grounding and apply it to her deep hatred and loathing of men, and to come up with her particular theoretical framework. I think that Janice Raymond's original contribution to the 1970s

was not *The Transsexual Empire*; it was demonstrating that one can cloak a radically conservative position in liberal language. It's the sort of thing that's become commonplace now... "pro-life" is a good example, an excellent case of spindoctoring to give a positive, upbeat, "yes"- oriented sheen to an extremist conservative belief system.

Davina: Both Raymond and Shapiro say that transsexuals generally are very conformist in their ideas about masculinity and femininity. Do you think that stereotypical transsexuals are still the rule or have they become the exception?

Sandy: Well, that's hard to say, but my hit is that if transies of the old school are not currently in the minority, they soon will be.

Davina: Raymond and Shapiro seem to agree that "addressing gender issues through sex-change surgery is a bit like turning to dermatologists to solve the race problem." Could you comment on that?

Sandy: I didn't agree with Judith on that, and I still don't, but I think that she's changed since then. That was a paper she had written in the late '80s, and you have to understand that that was a time when a lot of analysis regarding transsexualism and transgender was just beginning to be done in serious ways. Up to that point all that there was was Green & Money and Benjamin and a few other books, and Raymond, and then Catherine Millot. So for someone of Judith Shapiro's insight and stature to be writing a paper -- even a paper which had lots of problems -- was still a huge step forward. Today we see that paper as terribly retrogressive, and definitely dated, but at its time, was quite nice.

Davina: So what you just said would also apply to Shapiro's statement that "what we see in systems of institutionalized gender-crossing is the maintenance of a society's gender system through detachment of gender from the very principle that provides its apparent foundation." Is that correct?

Sandy: Yes, though I haven't spoken with Judy Shapiro recently. I'm inclined to think, knowing her and knowing her sense of the issues, that she has changed her position quite a bit now. Of course, I can't speak for her, but that's my impression.

Davina: How do you respond to Janice Raymond's criticism that "A Posttranssexual Manifesto" mystifies and distracts "from the real material and political questions of surgically turning men into women?"

Sandy: Well, that's her radical conservative, right-wing, fundamentalist streak re-appearing. It's the underlying basis of her entire work, and she can't shake it. If she ever shakes that, she'll be a different person. Of course, Janice Raymond's particular distorted way of seeing these issues doesn't have anything to do with what's actually going on. I don't think it's a real issue. It's a total red herring. There was a time way back when, as a red herring, it was a more important red herring than it is now, but now I think it's completely irrelevant to everybody -- the doctors, the patients, the lawyers, the psychologists -- everybody is very clearly aware of those issues.

Davina: How do you respond to Raymond's contention in the introduction to the new edition of *The Transsexual Empire* that "the language of sexual conformity as sexual rebellion has come to dominate the public field?"

Sandy: I'm inclined to think that it's a misperception. Again, I think she tends to see things with a particularly skewed viewpoint. I honestly, simply don't think that's what's happening, and I don't want to put much energy into finding

counterexamples.

Davina: In an interview you did with the magazine *Mondo 2000* you said that you think that transsexuals invented virtual reality. Could you elaborate on that?

Sandy: [laughs] Yes. Transies were on the scene at the beginning of V.R. Several of us were, but I don't know that they're out yet, but you may know some of the people I'm referring to, some of the people who wrote some of the very basic theory of the electronic systems that we use now are transies. I was back at the beginnings of a lot of activity regarding virtuality. That's one way, quite directly, in which transies invented virtual reality, but more to the point, the traditional transie has to generate a virtual reality in which he or she is and always has been a man or a woman. And that's about as virtual as it gets.

Davina: Also in that interview you say "How much oppression can you learn?" Do you mean by that that you think that male-to-female transsexuals can never really understand what it means to be oppressed as women?

Sandy: It was in the context of saying that there is a limit to how closely a transsexual can approach a person who had been raised from birth in the gender of choice. I meant that, as a male-to-female transie, simply in terms of time, one can never learn as much oppression as a woman who was born and raised as a woman in our society because, of necessity, that person has absorbed a lot more information in the form of oppression and other things than you or I could absorb. Now, in practice, that might not mean very much because after a while you could asymptotically approach some limit of how much absorbing oppression actually affects how you move in society.

Davina: The author of the *Mondo 2000* interview said that the first time she saw you that you were being carried on a palanquin by four sturdy dykes. Why were you being carried on a palanquin by four sturdy dykes?

Sandy: [laughs] That's total fantasy! Apparently back in the '70s she had run across me. I have no memory of that, but she might very well have. But I was never carried aloft on a palanquin by four sturdy dykes. Actually it was five sturdy dykes. Just kidding. [laughs]

Davina: You're working on a book called *Transgressions: Adventures at the Edges of Identity*. What's that going to be about?

Sandy: It's had a change of title. It's now called *The Gaze of the Vampire*. It starts out with a thought experiment, and this experiment represents the concluding chapter of my book that will be out in May, that will not be about transgender, but it acts as a link to the next book. I'd actually been doing this work for a number of years -- but my hit was this: The vampire Lestat is a very interesting person in and of himself. He's a liminal character in that he lives in the boundaries between many worlds -- French and English, life and death, adult and child, even to a certain extent man and woman. He sees humans, whom he calls mortals, from a position simultaneously outside and inside. He participates in humanity in that he walks among people and looks like them, but he is not really human. He feels at times like a mortal, but he isn't. This both-neither simultaneity is the nature of both a liminal creature and also of a cyborg. Cyborgs are very interesting and problematic. They are, by virtue of their ability to disrupt traditional categorization, tremendously promising creatures. I saw Lestat in that way, and I saw that the way he viewed mortals was very useful to my work. So what I did was

to conduct a thought experiment with Lestat. I sent him to a university, and I got him two degrees -- one in Cultural Theory and one in Anthropology. And possessing those degrees -- in other words, changing his epistemic frame -- has changed his visual apparatus, which is to say, changing what he knows changes the way he sees. So he now sees humans not only trapped by time, but also trapped by subject position, that is, by their belief system regarding who they are. That doesn't just refer to gender. It also refers to the basic sense of singularity, of us seeing ourselves as individual, single identities. That sense of singularity may be an artifact of the political system in which we live and the webs of power that that political system produces, as well as what in Art Theory is called the "apparatus of visual representation," which is to say the way in which we learn to interpret our world and the objects within it. And that's a very difficult thing to grasp. Now, when Lestat -- I mean the anthropologist and cultural theorist Lestat -- gives the Dark Gift to mortals, they are not only freed in time, but they're also freed from fixed identities. I call that liquid identity, or seeing one's chosen persona as a boat which is only momentarily at anchor in a vast sea of possibilities. That's a bit metaphorical, but what it means in the real world is that real self-knowledge frees us to move beyond a single identity to be all of who we are, in complex, multiple ways -- to come to use all our identities, not necessarily simultaneously, but perhaps serially, or in various combinations.

Davina: And so, you see this as analogous to the situation of transsexuals?

Sandy: In part, yes, but it also plugs into other debates and other forums regarding multiple personality and regarding another postmodern idea called fragmentation, which is about recapturing and recovering our personal sense of multiplicity in ways that have nothing to do with gender necessarily, but just have to do with selfhood.

Davina: When is that going to be published?

Sandy: Probably in early 1996.

Davina: Weren't you at one time writing a book called *In the Belly of the Goddess: "Women's Music," Feminist Collectives and the Cultural Arc of Lesbian Separatism*?

Sandy: Yes, that's a chapter in *The Gaze of the Vampire*.

Davina: And is that about your experiences at Olivia?

Sandy: It's partly about the Olivia collective, but it's also about the cultural arc of lesbian separatism in a broader sense because there was a time there when lesbian separatism reached a peak, and is now declining. And there were also a series of stages in the development of that analysis that were quite interesting that raised useful questions. For instance, why it was almost exclusively a movement of Caucasian women, and so on and so forth.

Davina: In the interview with *Mondo 2000* you said that your book *Khtamet* was written from "the perspective of a cyberspace-surfing transgendered polysexual Jewish Neopagan hacker." Surely you couldn't have identified as that back in 1967, could you?

Sandy: I would have to cross off hacker because... No, I would have to leave hacker in too because I had been at M.I.T. already at that point, and hackers did exist. Jewish? Yes. Pagan? In the sense of contemporary Neopaganism, no. But in the sense of exploring for some alternative spirituality that I couldn't quite define, one that involved some sort of Earth magick or mysteries

of that kind, I would say yes to that. Transgender? I was certainly in the midst of my personal battle with transgender at that time, but I was not living openly as a transgender person, so in that sense, that would have to go.

Davina: Well, back then did you identify as transsexual?

Sandy: Well, in '67 I knew about Christine Jorgensen and several other people, but my personal childhood with regard to the transsexual issue went like this: I used to have dreams, and then later, waking dreams, of doing things with girls, but they were not traditional girl things. They were adventuresome things like swimming rivers and climbing mountains -- things that later I actually got to do with women -- but at the time it was not the kind of thing that girls would do. So I didn't so much start off thinking of myself as a girl in the more traditional sense, but I definitely started off thinking of myself as a girl. Why I thought of girls in a completely acontextual, unheard of way of being adventurers, I don't really know, but I definitely thought that I belonged, somehow or another, that my way of moving in the world was as a girl rather than a boy. I didn't use the word *transsexual* consciously, but all of that imagery has been present.

Davina: How long have you been involved in Neopaganism?

Sandy: I started to have that consciousness about the time that I started living as a woman, but it didn't necessarily come from talking with other women at the time. It did shortly thereafter.

Davina: So you mostly came to Neopaganism through the feminist movement?

Sandy: Yes, I would have to say so. Not entirely, but the ideas that were being put forward at that time were what we would now call ecofeminism.

Davina: You also encountered some opposition within the Wiccan community because of your transsexuality, didn't you?

Sandy: Yes, but that was partly because I thought that my correct entry point into the larger Pagan community was through the Dianic tradition, and so I blundered in on Z. Budapest and got chopped up for it. That was [laughs] an interesting adventure, but not one to recount now. Both Z. and I have considerably changed our positions since then.

Davina: There seems to be a very large number of transsexual women who are involved in Wicca or in the larger Neopagan movement. Why do you think this is so?

Sandy: I think that probably if one has thought deeply enough to think about one's personal identity, one has also thought deeply about other things -- things like what's happening to the world around us, and what's happening to traditional religions, and certainly ecofeminist Neopaganism is one of the viable alternatives. Once you start examining those issues, it becomes clear that your identity might not be the only thing that's problematic. But it's also possible that ecofeminism is, at least in the United States, the main way that many folks experience Paganism. So transies who first begin to investigate the women's community -- which I think a large proportion of male-to-female transies do -- sooner or later encounter Neopaganism as well.

Davina: In closing, what advice would you give to the transsexual feminist movement?

Sandy: You're all beautiful. Keep it up. There's nothing we can't do if we keep going in the direction we're going now.



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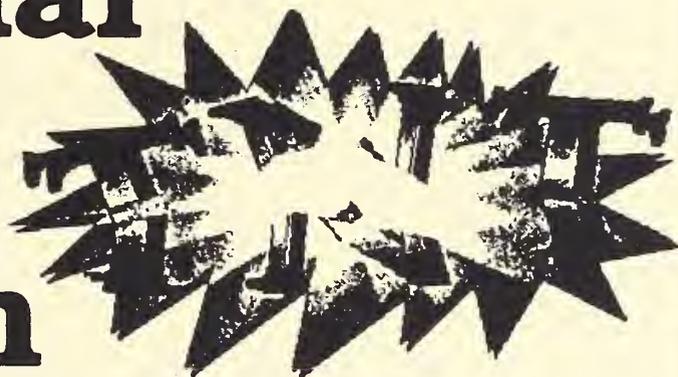
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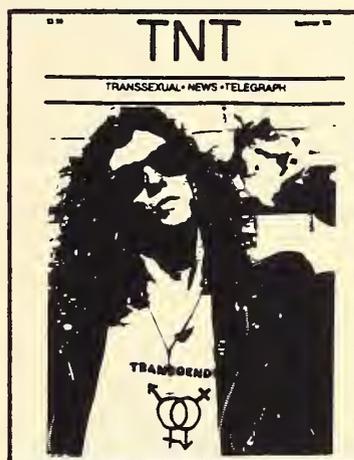
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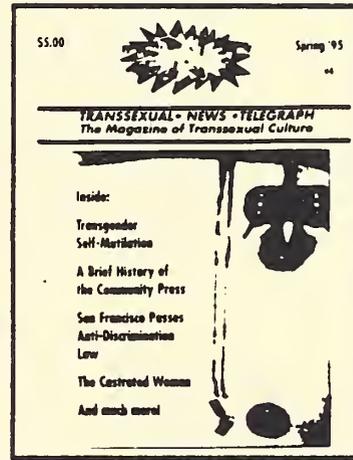
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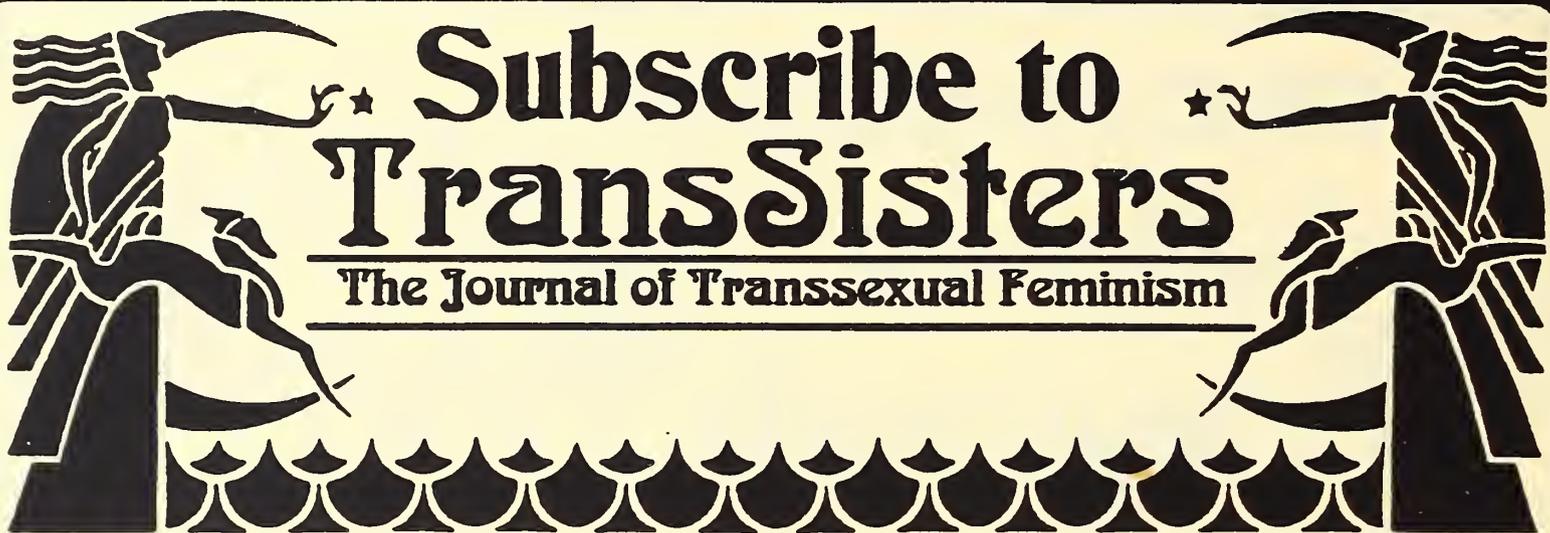
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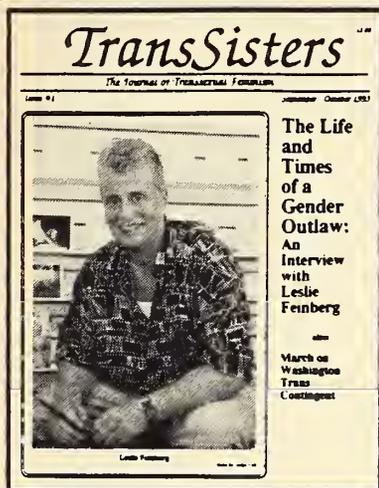
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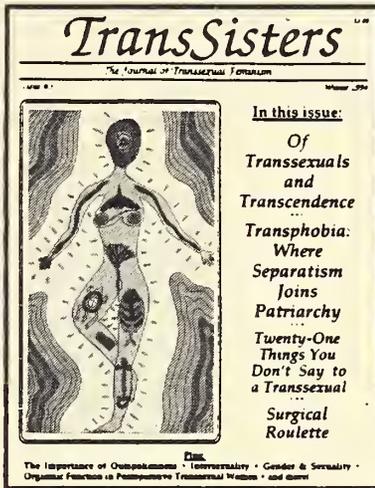
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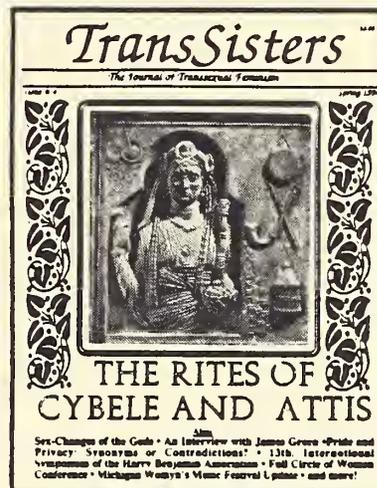
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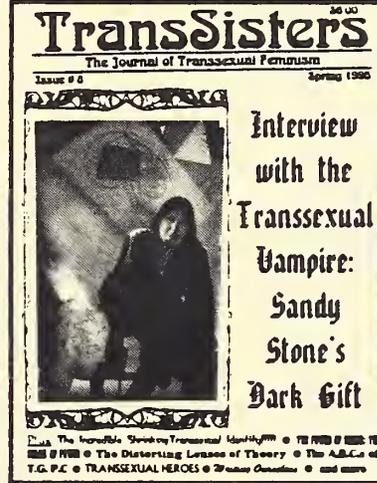
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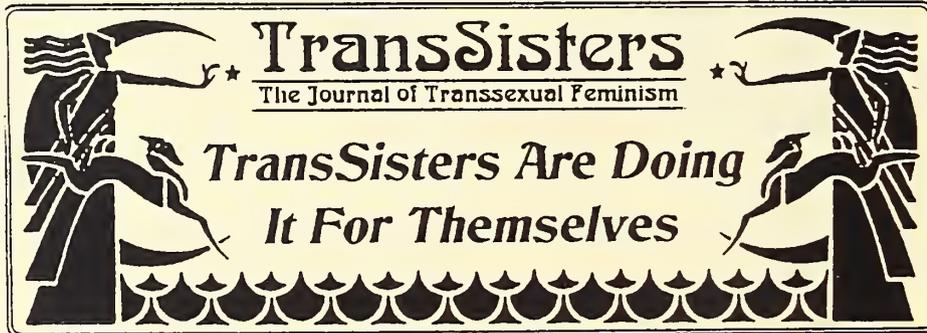
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Introducing Adrienne Davis

(Editor's note: Beginning with this issue, *TransSisters* is both pleased and proud to add Adrienne Davis to its lineup of staff writers. The following is her own self-introduction):

"One is not born a woman, one becomes one."

-- Simone De Beauvoir

In the process of becoming the woman I am constantly in the process of re-inventing. I came across this quote in a woman's journal. This has become my mantra these last few years of this journey. But a little more on that later.

Let me begin by saying that I'm a twenty-eight year old lesbian of African descent. I'm a cyberpunk -- both as a novelist and writer of fiction, and as a stance in space and time. I've never known a world without computers, digital telephone switches, satellites, bio-engineering, and multi-national corporations.

I'm a womanist -- Alice Walker's term for a feminist of color -- specifically black feminists. For a day job I work at a non-profit organization that provides Internet connectivity to other non-profits doing peace, social justice, gay rights and environmental work.

Philosophically, I am all over the map. The

path I took to get to this point of my life -- of being able to proudly claim my womanhood, my blackness and my lesbianism -- took me from Christianity, through the darkness of atheism and into the world of advanced math. There I discovered the strange looking world of quantum mechanics, relativity and chaos theory. It was chaos theory, with it's fractal patterns and strange attractors that oddly enough, led me back to a spirituality.

This process, of reclaiming my True Self, has been for me a spiritual process first and last. More than anything else, a belief in Something larger than myself, and that my Ancestors watch over me has comforted me to the point of sleep when I questioned the existence of morning.

A few more boring biographical bits and then I'll be off. I'm from a small family. We're Southerners, although my sister and I were raised in Northern California. I live with my cat, Diva Touche Flambe, in a small studio. Your feedback is always welcome, write me here or you can reach me at my Internet address: ajdavis@igc.apc.org.

It's good to be here, I'll leave you with this, Sisters:

"Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender" --

Alice Walker

"The Function of Freedom is Free someone Else" --

Toni Morrison

In sisterly spirit,

-- Adrienne Davis



Adrienne Davis

What is Rite of Passage?

Rite of Passage is a small group of postoperative male-to-female transsexual persons. RoP's primary function is to conduct an annual retreat at which those who have recently had surgery and those whose surgery was years or decades ago come together. The experience is spiritual -- some would say magical -- as women from all across the United States enjoy the rustic setting with others who have shared their marvelous journies. (Female partners of participants are also welcome to attend.)

The Conference culminates with a ritual in which the attendees celebrate that which they all share -- their blood sacrifice.

For Information About Rite of Passage,

write to:

R.O.P.

P.O. Box 67 South Berwick, Maine
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In Sisterly Spirit: A Personal View

by Adrienne Davis

My journey, of which my transition has been only one leg -- a surprising leg at that -- has been a deeply spiritual one. It is both the path and my way of being on the path -- what is called Tao. A way -- I reject the concept of THE way as being too simplistic, narrow and unidimensional for an experience as fractal and magical as life. This journey -- one that leads me to being ever more awake and aware -- towards being a crone, began for me as a conscious process June 6, 1986 at 2:08 in the morning, at Mercy Hospital in Sacramento, California. It was at that time that William, my son, was born.

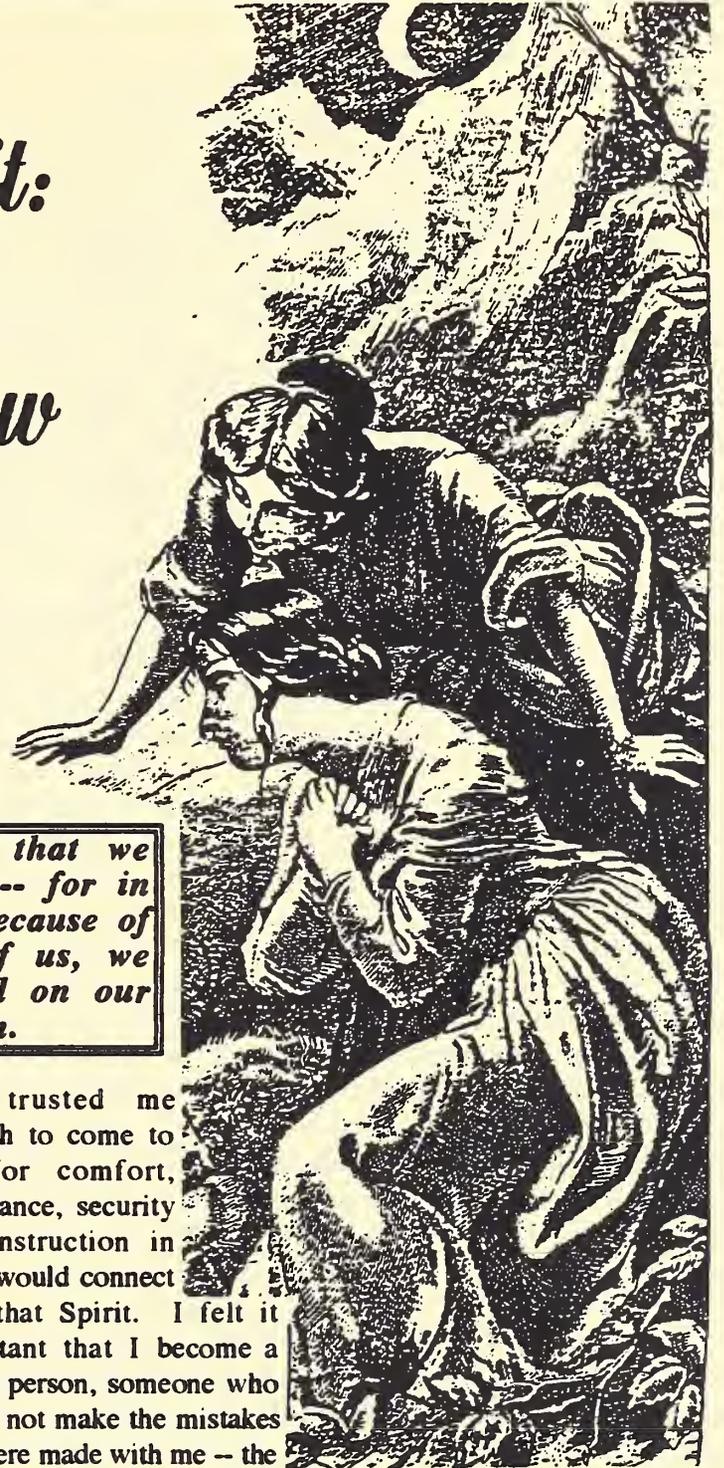
As the Harry Chapin song, "Cat's Cradle" says, he came to the world in the usual way. Which is to say that at nineteen, two kids who had no idea what an awesome thing they were doing started a family. Ten pounds, fifteen and three-quarter ounces of baby was pulled from his biological mother's body by a surgeon after fourteen hours of hard labor. Insightful and intelligent child that he was, William had caught on very early, and so was reluctant to leave the simplicity of the womb -- Terri, his mother, had a Cæsarian section. I mention this, because it gave us both an experience that will forever mark us. Terri was unconscious after the operation, so I spent William's first fifteen minutes with him alone. I was his first bond.

As I stood holding his tiny hand in mine, marveling at just how truly good and great Spirit was that such a thing as this was possible, I promised him that no matter what came, we would always have one another. His broad face was scrunched up into a crimson wrinkle, his eyes closed, his breathing soft against my chest. If you have never held a newborn, I suggest you do -- in that moment I knew that there was a Spirit. Not necessarily the Jehovah, God of the Israelites, that my parents, grandmother and sister found so comforting -- I had lost faith in the belief in him and his son a few years earlier -- but there was most certainly Spirit. No coldly rational scientific explanation could begin to account for something as perfectly beautiful as my son. At that time I was in the process of healing from Christianity and the teachings that had, in my mind, destroyed the integrity of my soul. Yet, I knew that there was a Spirit, and for this tiny soul

It matters greatly that we nurture something -- for in that process, and because of what it requires of us, we are pushed forward on our evolution as women.

that trusted me enough to come to me for comfort, nurturance, security and instruction in life I would connect with that Spirit. I felt it important that I become a whole person, someone who would not make the mistakes that were made with me -- the mistakes that I saw as scars and striations on my internal landscape.

I had no idea that William would prove to be one of the most powerful teachers in faith and belief that I have been blessed to have. I became aware of this during his first flu. Lying in his crib, he looked at me with his eyes -- blue like the sky on a cold winter day -- his face showing confusion, uncertainty and terror at the horrible betrayal his body was undergoing. His cries were filled with a pleading for me to fix him. He was waiting for me to make it all go away. There was no doubt for him that if I cared to, I could make it stop. Didn't I dispel all hunger from his belly and discomfort in the diapers? As I loomed over him in as close to the stature of a deity as any human can be, I realized that this was what faith was, and that faith could and would be tested. I also had to have faith, for Fear looks very much like your child



with the flu when he is only six months old. I still had not gotten over looking at him occasionally just to make sure he was still breathing yet.

My next major lesson came when he was learning to walk. I am convinced that if, for some sadistic biological reason, humans didn't develop the muscular strength to walk until adulthood most adults would crawl and look up at the walkers and wonder what special gift they possessed. William learned to walk because he saw that it was possible and so never thought that it might not be. He never stopped trying and ultimately, of course, his persistence paid off. If you think that learning to walk is no big deal, next time you have to go to the bathroom think about walking as you try to do it. It's quite a complex process involving both muscle control and spatial sense. We do it naturally because we are both hardwired to be capable of it and after awhile it becomes second nature. It is ubiquitous to our experience, but so is riding a bicycle once you know how. The summer of eighty-seven, I sat in my living room and watched William work out this problem. I bandaged the boo-boos and marveled at how quickly he picked himself up and was off again after a brief rest.

It is because of that experience that now, as my strength and stamina is tested, that I am able to pick myself up and move on when I get tired and worn out. Children help their parents grow up as much as we help our children.

William is now eight years old. The last time we lived together he was three and a half. The last time we saw one another he was five. His biological mother did not want to tell him when I began transition three years ago -- she was one of the first people I told because of the importance of what this would do to our child. Not wanting to scar him by creating a major family drama, I quietly waited knowing that eventually William's questions about my whereabouts would move her to tell him. She has, and now I have my son back in my life. At the time of this writing we have only spoken on the phone, he has yet to see me, but already the lessons begin again.

The first, is in being honest and unashamed of who I have become. It would be shallow and too easy to say that I see no reason my transformation should cause William no distress. That would also be expecting him to be more than human. I understand that this will disturb him greatly. I am, to him, his father. The strong male presence in his life. How do you explain to a young child, only now beginning to be inculcated into the world of gender that it is more complex than boy and girl? William must live in the real world, with real people, most of whom will never know what you and I know about. I would be doing a great disservice to him to tell him something far too complex like "gender is simply a social construct with no objective personal meaning." I would be doing an equal disservice to myself, for if gender is irrelevant, why have I undergone such a dramatic transformation as this? Gender, for me, is very relevant. It is not static, unchanging and immutable -- like gravity. Rather it is dynamic and mobile, forever being defined and redefined with each new day. This I can help my son understand, in time he will see from the example of my life.

I spoke with him the other night, and he asked me what he should call me. The word *mother* came up as far as my tongue, but then I stopped myself -- the question wasn't really about what I wanted to be called, but what he would feel comfortable calling me. Calling me Dad wouldn't work for either of us. So I'm Adrienne. No qualifier, just Adrienne. Now he has a name to put with the voice. Soon we'll have our first visit together, and he will see the transformation I have undergone.

My hope is that I can, as his queer parent, give him a sense of how wonderfully multi-hued and fractal even one individual life can be -- how much more so all of us in our collective generational drama! His generation will never have known a world without desktop computers, the Internet, the Cold War, genetic sequencing, AIDS, and miracles and wonders beyond my overactive imagination. Just as mine took for granted corrupt politicians, space travel, and meaningless, murderous rampages by teenagers with nothing better to do than try to kill one another. And like myself before him, he will grow up between cultures. Perhaps of all the things I can give him, it is a living model of how to bridge social gulfs. William is African and European American. Like most mulatto children, he is gorgeous. He can also pass, more or less, for white. It would be wrong for me to deny him the African-American culture which is my legacy to him -- nor can I deny him the Lesbian culture that is my inheritance. Yet, he will spend much of his life living in a home mediated by white working-class mainstream cultural values. He will grow up in a heterosexual household -- one with strong gender boundaries. When he comes to visit me this summer in my world it will be one filled with strong, independent women. He will meet the men in my life, the men I work with, the men who are my Brothers. We will celebrate Kwanzaa, the Solstices, Beltane and Halloween as days of celebration, joy and dedication. My world -- my queer, politically chaotic, multi-ethnic, economically impure, spiritually rich world may, at times, be an exciting get-away or a terrifying unknown. Probably it will be both. Regardless, unless he chooses not to know me, this is the world that he will also come to know as he grows into manhood. I can only trust in Spirit, that together he and I can come to understand what it means to live partaking of many worlds, and never truly ceding ourselves to one.

In giving him my story, my life as I have lived it, I create for him a framework. He will take that framework into adulthood. There it will be his choice as to what parts fit into what he understands, and what parts are no longer valid for him. My job, as I see it, is to provide as much as I am humanly able to in order that he should have at least the essential tools he will need -- an open mind, a willing spirit, and the ability to deal with change, hardship and uncertainty. He will need to believe in himself, his ability and his inner knowing. These are the things that it is my joy and sorrow to teach him. Joyous, for what could be more special than knowing that you create the future? Sorrow, because I must ultimately let him go and be his own person. How much I would like to forever hold on to my precious little boy! Ultimately the most I can give him is my humanity in all of it's imperfect and wondrous unfolding. *(continued on page 48)*

THE POWER OF SHAME, THE SHAME OF POWER

by Renee Chinquapin

I don't walk around wearing a t-shirt or button proclaiming my transsexuality. I could; I might; perhaps I should. Because sooner or later shock waves hit me when people realize or hear about my male past. They feel tricked and misled. They feel foolish and angry. Their responses overwhelm me, sucking me down into a swamp of self-questioning I know only too well.

They take me for an impostor, reassess me and find me very "other." They respond as if I had bathed with them and not disclosed my leprosy, or as if I had shared a steak supper with them and then offhandedly mentioned that I'm a vampire. They are ashamed for me, ashamed of me, and treat me as a pariah. They often act as if they then have something "over" me, as if they'd unearthed a family skeleton that might be useful for blackmail.

I would like to stand above this downward pull. I would like to show compassion for their disorientation, to empathize with their confusion, to laugh it off like the town drunk's antics. In fact, I don't want to buy into their perceptions at all. But I care about people, I'm connected to them. I pride myself as somewhat of a psychic and a healer; how could I not feel their discomfort? To stand above it is to deny my sisterhood with them.

This pain recurs, and seems ineluctable. Of course, life is full of suffering, as well as joy. No one escapes that reality. This wave of shame that washes over me from others' projections, and that resonates with my own doubts and biological/social history, can feel like a tidal wave sometimes. It can't be talked away, it *is*.

What separates my shame from that of the homeless person, of the heroin addict, of the church-going child molester? I submit that it is that others believe they see us more clearly than we see ourselves, that we are somehow deluded, like the mental ward inmate convinced he is Napoleon. I have abandoned my given identity for what seems like a very far-fetched one that only I am fully convinced of. This makes me seem very loony indeed.

I think for others it is almost as absurd as if I were to be convinced that I'm really a giraffe, started acting like one, and then gone and added insult to injury by expecting everyone to treat me like one and to feed me savannah food.

I've turned my life over to anima part of me, the part that formerly lay hidden in shadow. Might this not radically threaten the ego structure of others? Might my example not incite their



own inner animals/alter egos/ghosts to a prison riot? Does not dealing with me raise the spectre of dealing with their own shadow energy that might at any moment rise up and engulf *them*, as mine has?

I openly acknowledge the paradoxical within myself, at enormous cost, and endlessly realign my life in accordance with it. This smacks of the sort of hocus-pocus, Witchcraft/alchemical processes relegated to the world of pulp fiction and horror movies. Heavens, who would actually boldly *live* that sort of reality?

When I allow my (male) persona to dissolve into that of my (female) anima, when I turn myself over to a part of me previously kept in check, I unleash tremendous creative and spiritual energy within myself. But this very energy not only confuses but often terrifies others. Indeed, if my gender is truly something alterable, what remains solid in the personality? As a wizard of transformation, as a human chameleon, I live magic, and moreover, I insist upon being taken seriously. I refuse to be brushed off as deviant or deluded, I stand my ground. What's one to do with somebody like me?

Shame is the ultimate tool of control. I forego personal power when shame grips me. But I'm only human and, like any sane, socialized person, share such a rich and deeply engrained worldview with everyone around me, how could I ever hope to isolate this one critical taboo from all the others that I myself live by, and still share a common reality?

No one escapes the diminution of shame, neither as a child nor as an adult. It's as much a part of my life as food and movement. It hurts, yes, it lames, yes, but I cannot fully elude it. Like a shark, it lurks within me and without warning can rise up and lame me with doubt and self-judgement. That's what shame is, the sense that "everyone" is looking askance at us. It takes courage to live with this pain no less than of the adult child of an alcoholic, or the woman molested by her father, or the grown woman unable to forget her (*continued on page 39*)

"As a wizard of transformation, as a human chameleon, I live magic, and moreover, I insist upon being taken seriously. I refuse to be brushed off as deviant or deluded. I stand my ground."

Writing Ourselves

by Dallas Denny



hundreds of hours reading those books and articles so that I could intelligently annotate them, stayed awake late many nights entering titles into the computer, and spent more than a year in eager anticipation of the publication of the book, and yet *I did not realize until the very eve of publication that I was*

the first transgendered person ever to have produced such a work!

But this really isn't an article about my book, and how great it is, even if it has to this point sounded like a press release. It is an article about self-deprecation. My most recent epiphany is this: Had I been sufficiently proud of being transsexual, I would have realized far earlier what an important thing I was doing. And were others in our community sufficiently proud of themselves, I would not have been the first to do such a thing.

I can't imagine an America in the 1990s in which straight people would exclusively define homosexuality, while gay men and lesbians were silent. I can't imagine an America in the 1990s in which white

Americans would even attempt to describe the black experience. And yet it is not only commonplace for nontransgendered persons to write about us -- it is almost unheard of for us to write about ourselves in the scientific literature or even the popular press. We read error-ridden and even exploitative articles, and we not only keep silent about it, we are proud to be mentioned!

It has been more than 40 years since Christine Jorgensen's sex reassignment in Denmark, and *it is high time that we speak for ourselves*. No one is going to invite us to do so; we must initiate it. We must no longer be passive, no longer grateful that national magazines occasionally deign to devote two or more pages to us. We must no longer pretend that transgender and transsexual credentials are less valuable than academic credentials when it comes to defining and describing us. We must learn to write ourselves, to claim our expertise, to tell the world that by damn, we are the experts because we have lived and continue to live it. We're a long way from that now. We don't even believe it ourselves. Just think, for example, about how quickly we lionize nontransgendered persons who write books about us, inviting them as special guests to our conferences while we ignore our own people.

Our community has some immensely talented writers, yet for the most part we are the only ones who read them. People like Leslie Feinberg, Kate Bornstein, Jason Cromwell, Sandy Stone, Kim Elizabeth Stuart, and James Green have produced some very

"We must no longer pretend that transgender and transsexual credentials are less valuable than academic credentials when it comes to defining and describing us. We must learn to write ourselves, to claim our expertise, to tell the world that by damn, we are the experts because we have lived and continue to live it."

Last February I had an epiphany, one of those little revelations that somehow make the world seem a more sensible and orderly place. It came the morning after a wonderful speech by Phyllis Frye, in which she spoke about our need as transgendered persons to claim our place in the world. I was lying in bed, musing on what she had said, when it suddenly dawned on me that I had done something very extraordinary, something that had never been done before, and that I had never even realized that I was doing it! What had I done? I had put together a book (because it is a bibliography, I did more compiling than writing). I was the first person with an acknowledged gender issue to ever produce a major reference work about gender issues. Not an autobiography or a memoir, not a how-to book for the community only, or a book to educate the lay public about transsexualism, not a popular press book, not a novel, but a mainstream press reference book which collects and digests the world's literature about our condition-- thousands of citations in 650 pages. Think for a moment about the significance of that: not that I had managed to produce a major reference book, but that it has taken so long for there to be such a book authored by a transgendered person.

The work I am talking about is *Gender Dysphoria: A Guide to Research*, an extensive annotated bibliography which lists *thousands* of books and articles about transgender issues. It is published by Garland, a respected publisher of scientific books. Being a reference work, it's not inexpensive, and you're not likely to find it on the shelves of your neighborhood Walden Books, but it will certainly find its way to the shelves of university libraries and gender clinics throughout the world. It is without doubt (if I do say so myself) at 650 pages the definitive listing of transgender materials in the world.

I worked on *A Guide to Research* for four years, painstakingly collecting titles from every conceivable source. I spent many evenings and weekends in libraries, photocopying journal articles, and in used bookstores, scouring the shelves for anything which belonged in the bibliography. I spent many

powerful works. Some, like Leslie and Kate, are reaching out to the world via fiction and memoirs, telling the world in forceful and poignant ways what we are all about. An earlier generation of writers like Christine Jorgensen, Canary Cohn, Renee Richards, and Jan Morris reached out by telling their personal stories. But the best is yet to come, as we begin to write the textbooks and novels, we author the magazine and newspaper articles, and we, rather than nontransgendered persons, come to be recognized by both ourselves and others as the experts. And we are the experts. Many of us have professional credentials, but we are transgendered, and those are the credentials which are most important. In ten years, in twenty, whose voices will be considered the most authoritative when it comes to defining and describing us? Yes, ours.

So rejoice with me now, not so much that I have had a book published, but that we have reached a milestone in our evolution, the first time that one of us, out of the closet, is the acknowledged expert, the first time one of us has braced the professionals in their own territory. Tell your friends and families about the book, and mention it in your newsletters. Don't do it for me; do it for yourself and for your transgendered brothers and sisters. And for goodness sake, buy the book and donate it to a library, or at least ask your librarian to purchase a copy, for I made sure it was a book which would give a positive message and contact information to transgendered persons who might chance across it in their search for wholeness.

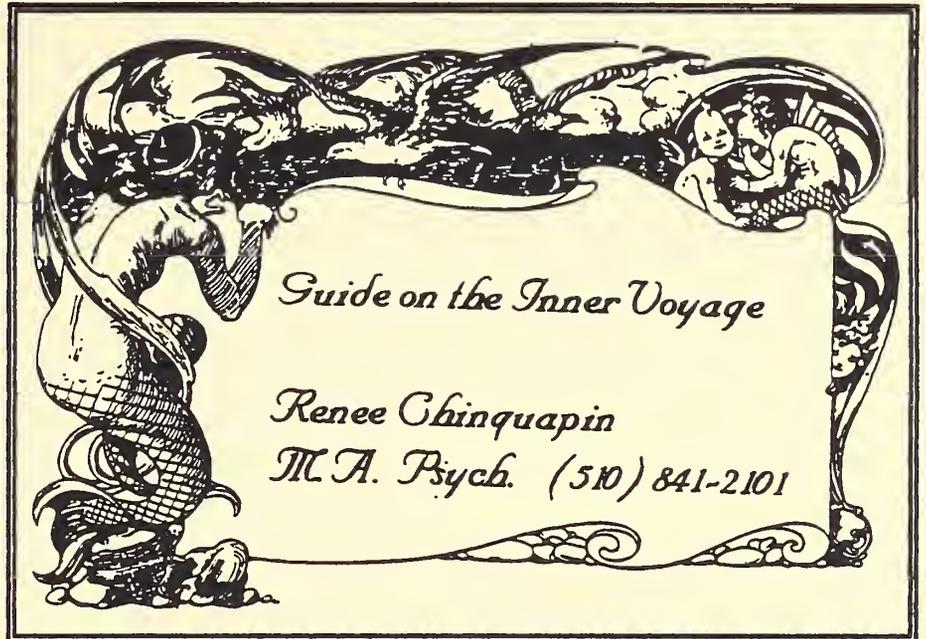
It's not *my* book-- it's *our* book, and just the first of many authoritative books to come by transgendered authors.

Gender Dysphoria: A Guide to Research by Dallas Denny is published by Garland Publishers and is available for \$99 + \$3 S&H from AEGIS, P.O. Box 33724, Decatur, GA 30033 [Phone (404) 939-0244].

Dallas Denny is a Licensed Psychological Examiner and a member of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, Inc. and of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sex. She is founder and executive director of the American Educational Gender Information Service, Inc., a national clearinghouse for information about gender dysphoria, publisher of Chrysalis, and founder of Atlanta Gender Explorations. She has been previously published in many magazines and a number of peer-reviewed professional journals. Her books Gender Dysphoria: A Guide to Research and Identity Management in Transsexualism were published in early 1994.



Dallas Denny



Guide on the Inner Voyage

Renee Chinquapin

M.A. Psych. (510) 841-2101

The Power of Shame; the Shame of Power
(continued from page 37)

childhood humiliation at black sabbaths.

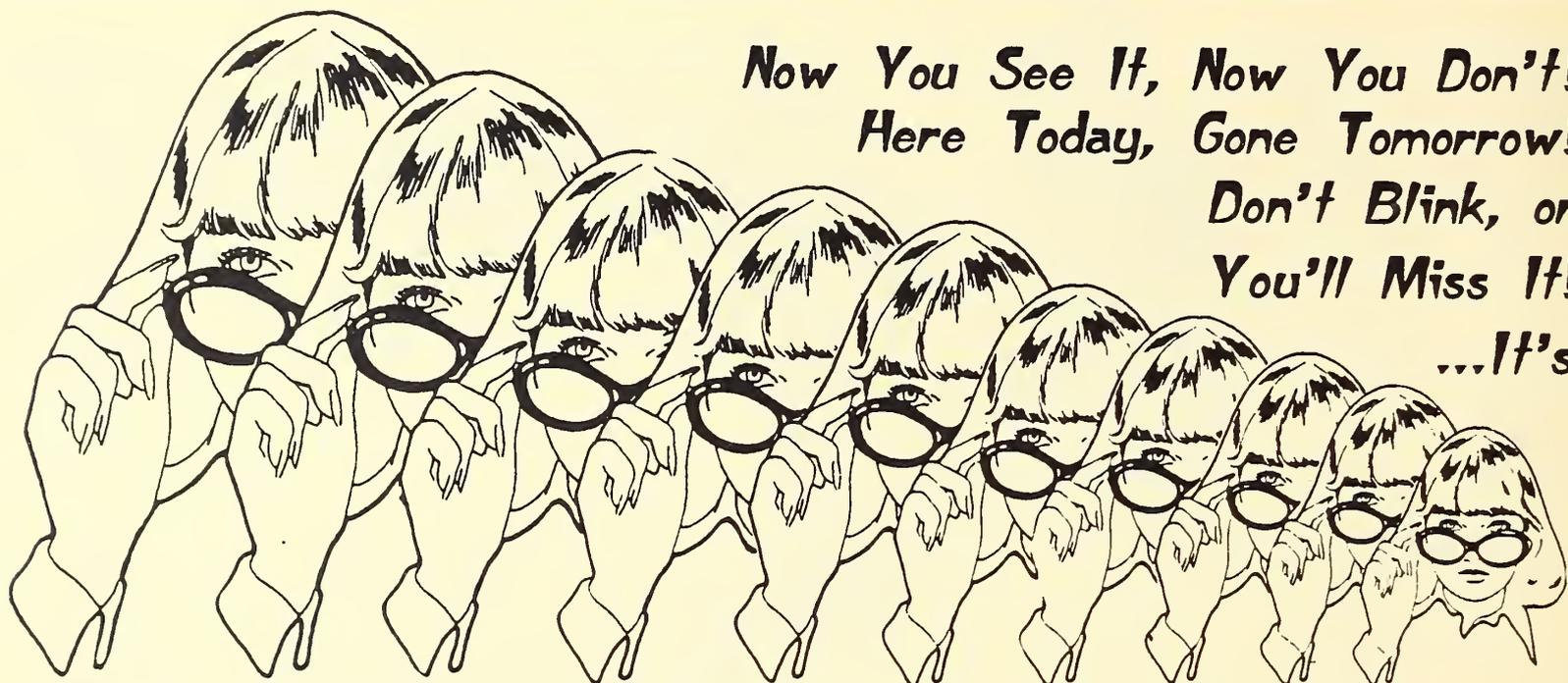
My shame is different, but it is shame nonetheless. My vulnerability is my own, but not all that different from theirs. My need and opportunity to speak what in the end remains a totally valid human truth differs in one way from theirs. I can only speak from my own pain; to deny it would then indeed render me an impostor. Only when I can feel compassion for myself as well as for others suffering from the ravages of shame, then might I have something worth teaching.



Renee Chinquapin

photo by Davina Anne Gabriel

Renee Chinquapin welcomes clients to her counseling practice who wish to examine the deeper, spiritual aspects of transformation. She works in Berkeley, California, and by telephone at 510-841-2101.



Now You See It, Now You Don't!
Here Today, Gone Tomorrow!
Don't Blink, or
You'll Miss It!
...It's

The Incredible Shrinking Transsexual Identity!!!!

by Davina Anne Gabriel

The question of the appropriateness of the usage of the term *transgendered* as an umbrella term encompassing transsexuals, transvestites and transgenderists has recently arisen within the transsexual community. Two opposing viewpoints on this question were presented in the previous issue of *TransSisters*. With such widespread usage of this term seemingly already a *fait accompli*, it would seem that there is little to be gained by continuing to debate this matter, as the proponents of such usage contend.

However, I feel that this is a question that has not been given adequate consideration by the transsexual community and that has, in fact, been accorded virtually no debate whatsoever. So even though it would seem that such usage is irrevocably institutionalized and irreversible, I believe that it is not only neither futile nor too late for a more thorough examination of this question; and that there is, in fact, a great deal of value to be gained from precisely such an examination.

Those of us who identify as women and/or as lesbians (which I feel it is probably safe to assume constitutes the overwhelming majority of the readership of this publication) have all experienced the phenomenon of the *collapsing of identity* whether we

recognize that phenomenon by that particular terminology or not. The collapsing of identity occurs when the identity of one group of individuals is conflated into the identity of another (usually larger and/or more powerful) category. Probably the most easily recognizable example of this phenomenon is the usage of the term *gay* to refer not only to homosexual men, but also to lesbians and bisexuals (as well as sometimes also to transsexuals, transvestites and transgenderists). The feminist movement has also made us aware of this phenomenon in the usage of the terms *man* and *mankind* to refer both to men and to women.

"I, for one, am already beginning to sense the immanent spectre of jackboots in the tone of those very same transsexuals and other transpersons who are presently demanding of me that I get with the transgender program."

The inevitable result of this collapsing of identity is the invisibility of the group or groups which are conflated into the identity of the larger and/or more powerful category. Thus *lesbian* identity is rendered invisible by its consequent reduction to merely that of *gay* identity; *bisexual* identity is rendered invisible by its consequent reduction to merely that of *gay and lesbian* identity; and the identity of *woman* is rendered invisible by its consequent reduction to merely that of *man*. In the process, everything that is unique to each of these smaller (or less powerful) groups of individuals is elided and appropriated by the larger and/or more powerful group.

In the early days of what was then called the "women's liberation movement," feminists realized that their identities and experiences were being appropriated, subsumed and elided by such

terms as *man*, *mankind*, and *brotherhood* when they were used to refer to both men and women, and began to demand the usage of terminology which did not have the effect of rendering them invisible; thus, the more widespread usage of more appropriate terminology such as *persons* and *humanity* to refer to men and women collectively. Similarly, in the mid-1970s -- several years into what had then become known as the "gay liberation movement" -- lesbians realized that the usage of the term *gay* as an umbrella term encompassing them had the effect of rendering their lives, their identities and their culture invisible; and began to demand that the term *lesbian* be accorded equal stature to that of *gay* in the name of that movement.

It is in that feminist tradition of demanding that our lives, our identities and our culture not be subsumed and rendered invisible by a larger group, that I now call upon the transsexual community to re-examine the appropriateness of the usage of the term *transgendered* as an umbrella term encompassing transsexuals.

As transsexuals, we very easily recognize the collapsing of our identities when gay culture appropriates our identities and conflates them into the category of *gay*. Examples of this are references to the film *The Crying Game* as a *gay*, rather than a transsexual, film; or the frequent practice of some gay male writers to portray such people as the *Berdache*, the *Gallae* and the *Hijra* more as the cultural equivalents of gay men rather than of transsexual persons.

The above examples are easily recognizable examples of the phenomenon of the collapsing of identity. However, in the wake of the nearly universal usage of the term *transgendered* as an umbrella term encompassing transsexuals, transgenderists and transvestites, very few transsexuals seem to recognize that what has happened here is just as much a case of the collapsing of identity as the examples cited above; specifically the collapsing of transsexual identity into that of transgendered identity. The inevitable result of this process has been the virtual invisibility of a uniquely transsexual identity; thus rendering the entire phenomenon of transsexuality and everything that is distinct about it to nothing more than just another variety of crossdressing. A perfect example of the collapsing of transsexual identity into that of transgendered identity was illustrated by a news article in the October 1994 issue of *Gay Community News* (p.4) reporting on the expulsion of transsexual lesbians from the National Lesbian Confest in Brisbane, Australia last year, in which it was reported that lesbian *transgenderists*, rather than transsexuals, were expelled from that conference.

However, transsexuality is neither synonymous with or merely another variety of transgenderism unless one chooses to view these phenomenon from the vantage point of the most reductionistic perspective possible. To be *transgendered* means that one's sexual identity and/or sexual expression is in opposition (or perceived opposition) to one's anatomical sex; whereas to be *transsexual* is to bring (or to desire to bring) one's anatomical sex into a state of congruity with one's sexual identity. Thus, not only is transsexuality not the same as or merely another variation of transgenderism, but is very nearly the

opposite of it.

It is for this reason that I never refer to myself as transgendered, and whenever anyone refers to me as such, I always correct him or her by replying that I am not transgendered, that I am transsexual. Whenever I have occasion to refer to transsexuals, transgenderists and transvestites collectively -- as I recognize there is occasionally a need to do -- I use the more appropriate terms *transpersons*, *transpeople* or simply *trans*.

A cardinal rule in the usage of umbrella terms is that they should never also be the name of one of the groups that that term is meant to encompass. To do so inevitably has the effect of rendering invisible the other groups subsumed under that term. The examples cited above of the use of the terms *man* and *gay* illustrate this point precisely. It is for this reason that the term *transgendered* is especially inappropriate as an umbrella term encompassing transsexuals.

The term *transgendered* is derived from the word *transgenderist* which was coined in the late 1950s by Virginia Prince specifically to describe the phenomenon of individuals who change their gender expression, but not their anatomical sex. Thus, the conflation of transsexuality under the umbrella term *transgendered* has the inevitable effects of signifying that transsexuals don't really change sex; that changing sex is merely another form of gender expression; that having a sex-change operation is not qualitatively different from crossdressing, and thus rendering transsexuals as just another variety of crossdresser. This line of reasoning ultimately leads one to the inevitable conclusion that there really isn't any difference between a transsexual woman and a man who wears a nun's habit and calls himself Sister Vicious Power Hungry Bitch, or that any difference is merely a matter of degree; and thus, that such an individual can accurately and adequately represent the issues, concerns and perspectives of transsexual women.

These are, of course, the exact same assertions that lesbian separatists who want to exclude transsexual women from all women-only space (or even to "morally mandate [transsexuality] out of existence") have been making for over two decades now. It is no accident that those individuals who most ardently advocate the usage of the term *transgendered* as an umbrella term encompassing transsexuals (i.e., ICTLEP, which has been at the forefront of the promotion of such usage) have explicitly stated those very things: that transsexuals do not really change sex, and that sex-change operations are merely cosmetic.

Of course we all realize the inevitable result of declaring any kind of surgery merely cosmetic; that is, that it is becomes considered to be unnecessary and usually frivolous. The inevitable result of such a re-classification of transsexual surgery will be to make it even more difficult for persons who are genuinely in need of such surgery to obtain it, and to make it available only to those who have the financial means to secure it.

I concede that if one chooses to view transsexuality and sex-changing as merely cosmetic, that it is certainly one's individual right to do so. However, it is quite another thing to mandate such a viewpoint onto transsexuals themselves. Yet that is *precisely* what has happened. It is very significant that the usage of the

term *transgendered* as an umbrella term including transsexuals did not originate among transsexuals themselves, but very significantly, arose under the pretext for the need for unity, among persons who identified as *transgenderists*.

I am not suggesting here that everyone who advocates the usage of *transgendered* as an umbrella term encompassing transsexuals does so out of malevolent intentions or because they have hidden agendas -- I fully recognize that the vast majority of individuals who advocate such usage do so only out of the best of intentions -- but simply that all of the implications of such usage have not been given adequate consideration by transsexuals themselves. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us, as transsexuals, to ask ourselves precisely what we stand to gain and what we stand to lose by the usage of this term as an umbrella term, and that we need to do so among ourselves without the interference of nontranssexual persons. I would further suggest that if the loss of the distinctness of our unique identity is the price that we have to pay for unity with transgenderists and crossdressers, then the cost of such unity is too high of a price to pay, and is not really in our best interests.

I find it quite puzzling why transsexuals would be so eager to embrace a term that was derived from a word coined by someone who is not only virulently anti-transsexual, but likewise extremely sexist and homophobic. And make no mistake about it, other than Janice G. Raymond, the one individual whom I can think of who has done more to malign transsexuals and to attempt to discredit the entire phenomenon of transsexuality altogether is Virginia Prince. Prince has openly referred to transsexuals as "losers," and constantly extols the merits of transgenderism over transsexuality. In an article entitled "Testosterone and You" (which is literally an unapologetic panegyric to the wonders of testosterone, describing its effects in the most glowing of terms and as a virtual fountain of youth from which all good things in life flow), in issue # 48 of *Cross Talk* (October 1993), Prince compares the way that postoperative transsexual women typically dress unfavorably to that of crossdressers (as if we somehow had to justify the way that we dress to her); accuses transsexual women of having no plans or goals in life other than achieving sex-change surgery; claims that postoperative transsexual women have little or no sex drive; portrays them as inferior to crossdressers because of their lack of testosterone, describing them as "hormonally ... marooned on a desert island;" accuses transsexual women of imagining that surgery will transform them into the "Queen of May;" and claims that whatever advantages they may derive from surgery come not from the surgery itself, but from the opportunity to live openly as women (but of course neglecting to explain why their "gender dysphoria" is not then alleviated by conducting the real life test). Can you say *testosterone poisoning*, boys and girls? ... I knew you could.

And this is just the tip of the iceberg of the distorted and

invidious perspective of transsexuality that Virginia Prince has promulgated throughout her career. It's quite obvious to anyone familiar with her writings and opinions that Virginia Prince agrees all too well with Janice G. Raymond's contention that transsexuality should be morally mandated out of existence. In light of this, I find it nothing less than astounding that transsexuals would so readily allow themselves to be subsumed under a term derived from a word that was not only coined by someone who has practically made a career out of slandering transsexuals, but one that was actually intended to *distance* herself from them. It is the ultimate irony that a term that was originally intended to create a distinction from transsexuality should ultimately end up subsuming it.

Current advocates of the use of the term *transgendered* as an umbrella term argue that this term no longer has the original meaning ascribed to it by Virginia Prince, but that it has been thoroughly redefined to refer to anyone who transgresses societally proscribed gender boundaries. As an ardent advocate of the term

queer, I recognize that the meanings of words are not absolute; that words can be redefined to take on new meanings over time. However, I also recognize that there are limitations to this process. I don't go as far as to agree with the proposition espoused by Humpty Dumpty to Alice in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* that words mean "exactly what I want [them] to

mean, exactly that and nothing more." I also recognize that the meanings of words are derived from a shared consensual reality and that; therefore, any process of redefinition of words is not accomplished by fiat, but through a process of negotiation; and that that process inevitably places limitations on the plasticity of words. Therefore, the meaning of words is neither absolute nor absolutely relative. Thus, I do not believe that it is possible for the term *transgendered* -- or for any word, for that matter -- to become entirely devoid of meanings found in the terms from which they were derived.

Furthermore, it is also quite apparent that *transgendered* has *not* been entirely redefined to such an extent as to have lost all of its original meaning as is evinced by the fact that a great many persons who identify as transgenderists still use that term in the sense of its original meaning. And while some advocates of *transgendered* may claim that the distinction between *transgenderist* and *transgendered* is clear, such an opinion ignores the fact that it is not possible to entirely redefine the root meaning of a word simply by changing accompanying suffixes or prefixes. As the example from *Gay Community News* previously cited illustrates, the potential for confusion is simply too great.

However, even if it were possible for *transgendered* to become so thoroughly redefined as to lose all of its previous connotations and to acquire only the meaning that advocates of its usage attribute to it, then that term would also necessarily encompass gay men, lesbians, bisexuals (as well as many heterosexual men and women). In fact, one of the foremost

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advocates of the usage of *transgendered* as an umbrella term, Kate Bornstein, readily concedes that she also interprets that term to apply to those groups.

However, gay men, lesbians and bisexuals are not about to accept the term *transgendered* to encompass them. There is already a word which includes gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, as well as transsexuals, transvestites and transgenderists; and that word is *queer*. And even if a lot of individuals within those various groups still object to the use of that word to describe themselves, it is still a whole lot more widely accepted than is *transgendered* as an umbrella term. In fact, I know of absolutely no gay men, lesbians or bisexuals who interpret the meaning of the word *transgendered* to include them merely because they are homosexual or bisexual, including a great many who also happen to identify as drag queens or as butch dykes. So what good is an umbrella term that is rejected as such by the overwhelming majority of the people for whom it is intended to apply?

The usage of the subclassification of *transgendered* within the larger category of *queer* also has the unintended effect of the grouping together of individuals with persons with whom they may have less in common than with persons with whom they have more in common. For instance, as a transsexual lesbian, my identity as a transsexual is secondary to my identity as a lesbian; thus I feel that I have more in common with nontranssexual lesbians than I do with either transvestites or transgenderists. Yet, by referring to me as *transgendered*, the deeper and more meaningful similarities that I share with nontranssexual lesbians in terms of values and ideals are elided in favor of superficial similarities that I may share with transvestites and transgenderists, but which are actually based more on perception than on reality.

Moreover, the usage of the term *transgendered* as an umbrella term encompassing transsexuals is based upon another entirely unproven, and frequently contradicted assumption; that is, that transsexuals desire to change their anatomical sex solely because of dissatisfaction with their societally prescribed gender roles, and that their dissatisfaction with their anatomical sex derives not from dissatisfaction with their genitalia itself, but from what that genitalia represents. While this may in fact be true for many persons who undergo transsexual surgery, it is very far from proven that this is true for all such persons; and there are, in fact, a great many examples of transsexual persons whose lives tend to contradict this assumption. My own experience provides just such an example. I never intended or expected to conform to societally prescribed gender roles for what a woman should be. Even well before undergoing transsexual surgery, I strongly identified as a feminist and expected to become a liberated and unconventional woman following surgery. And while I can't deny that I definitely did internalize some aspects of societally prescribed female gender roles (as do all women), in the nearly sixteen years since my surgery, I have steadily discarded them to such an extent that I am now generally regarded as a butch lesbian (even though I don't really identify as such). However, my identification with having a female body remains as strong and resilient as ever. The thought of going back to having a penis is

nothing less than horrendous to me. Clearly, it was the desire for a female body, rather than the desire to conform to societally prescribed gender roles, that was my primary motivation to undergo surgery. In all likelihood, dissatisfaction with societally prescribed gender roles is probably one factor in all transsexual persons' decisions to undergo surgery; however, it does not therefore follow that this is the sole, or even the primary reason, that all, or even most, persons who undergo transsexual surgery decide to do so.

Likewise, if the assumption that the only reason that transsexual persons desire to change their anatomical sex is because of dissatisfaction with their societally assigned gender roles were true, it should be expected that male-to-female transsexuals would invariably have typically feminine interests and that all female-to-male transsexuals would have typically masculine interests. This was not so in my case, and I personally know of a great many other individuals for whom this is not true. One such example is provided in another article later in this issue, in which Lisa Rose describes growing up with typically masculine interests and retaining them even after surgery, yet consistently possessing an inherent identification with having female anatomy.

Thus the usage of the term *transgendered* as an umbrella term encompassing transsexuals, transgenderists and transvestites attempts to reduce us all to a lowest common denominator, which in fact, is not even really a common denominator at all. What we *do* have in common is that we all cross *something*; however, it is not at all the same boundary that we all cross. We all cross different boundaries, and thus are all entitled to our distinct identities. Thus, the term *trans* serves as a much more accurate umbrella term to describe us than does *transgender*.

Moreover, the assumption that transsexuals desire to change their anatomical sex because of dissatisfaction with their societally prescribed gender roles is one of the very cornerstones upon which Janice G. Raymond's *The Transsexual Empire* is based. To assume that this is invariably the motivation behind changing anatomical sex is to say that if oppressive societally prescribed gender roles ceased to exist, then transsexuality itself would likewise cease to exist. And since it is pretty difficult to argue with the proposition that repressive societally prescribed gender roles should be morally mandated out of existence, it therefore follows that transsexuality itself should likewise be morally mandated out of existence.

Likewise, the usage of the term *transgendered* as an umbrella term has had the unintended effect of negating a lot of the very hard work that all three groups currently subsumed under that umbrella have done over the past several decades to educate the general population about the differences between them. The cause of transsexual liberation is not advanced by further confusing the distinctions between transsexuality, crossdressing and transgenderism in the public mind. While blurring the differences between transsexuality and crossdressing may very well benefit crossdressers and transgenderists, it is quite likely to have quite the opposite effect on the lives of transsexuals. It is certainly not going to make it any easier for transsexuals to win the right to

transition on the job or to gain acceptance into women-only space, and in fact, it is quite reasonable to expect that it will have precisely the opposite effects.

It is really quite amazing to me that transsexuals have so readily acceded to the collapsing and redefinition of their identities with hardly a word of protest or even debate among themselves regarding the appropriateness of such terminology. It is even more amazing to me to witness transsexuals themselves becoming the enforcers of this collapsing of their own identities and consequent rendering of themselves as invisible, a perfect example of which was provided by Christine Beatty's article "Toxic Thinking, Part One: Elitism" in the previous issue of *TransSisters*.

In this article, Christine castigated an individual who wrote a letter to the *San Francisco Bay Times* praising that publication's decision to use *trans* rather than *transgender* as an umbrella term for transpeople, and stating her objections to the use of *transgendered* as an umbrella term. Christine characterized such objections as "elitist," and attributed a number of sentiments and motivations to this writer which, in fact, she did not actually express. However, Christine's characterization of such a position as "elitist" has about as much validity as does Newt Gingrich's characterization of public broadcasting and the NEA as "elitist," and in fact, is used precisely to the same accord as is Gingrich's; that is, to enforce a particular political doctrine and to intimidate any opposition into silence.

Christine also falsely accused this individual (with whom, incidentally, I also happen to disagree with rather vehemently on quite a number of issues) of stating that she had nothing in common with transgenderists and making "value judgements" that transsexuals are somehow superior to other transpeople, and even of wishing to morally mandate transgenderists and crossdressers out of existence, when this individual actually made no such claims, but merely asserted that transsexuals are *different* from other transpeople, and thus, deserving of their own appellation. The individual who wrote this letter specifically stated that she did not object to there being an umbrella term encompassing transsexuals, transvestites and transgenderists, as Christine claimed, but merely questioned the appropriateness of *transgendered* as an umbrella term.

Christine went to accuse anyone who objected to the use of *transgendered* as umbrella terms encompassing transsexuals as "sabotaging our campaign for rights," calling them "the kinds of people who would have snippily rearranged deck chairs on the Titanic instead of keeping a lookout for icebergs," and in a separate response to this letter -- also published in the *San Francisco Bay Times* -- even invoked the immanent spectre of jackbooted fascists kicking in our doors in the wee hours of the morning if we didn't all agree to this terminology. This kind of rhetoric deserves to be called exactly what it truly is, and that is nothing less than hyperbole of the highest order. I, for one, am

already beginning to sense the immanent spectre of jackboots in the tone of those very same transsexuals and other transpersons who are presently demanding that I get with the transgender program, and who would deny me the uniqueness of my transsexual identity by insisting that it must somehow be tossed into a Waring blender with those of other people with whom I may only have the most superficial aspects in common. Christine's warning of immanent fascism is akin to saying that the recent rise of the religious right wing must have come about because lesbians rejected the use of the term *gay* as an umbrella term back in the 1970s.

Christine's analysis also engaged in the very same tactics and displayed the very same prejudices that she accused opponents of the usage of *transgendered* as an umbrella term of engaging in, accusing them of being "ready to throw stones at anyone who publicly disagrees with them," when this was, in fact, exactly the very same thing that she was doing to anyone who had objections to the term *transgendered* as an appropriate umbrella term, and even accused them of "wallowing in the same

"...if the loss of the distinctness of our unique identity is the price that we have to pay for unity with transgenderists and crossdressers, then the cost of such unity is too high of a price to pay, and is not really in our best interests."

mindset found in the ranks of separatists and terminally-rednecked." This kind of argument also deserves to be called exactly what it is, and that is mere name-calling and nothing more, pure and simple, and is entirely lacking in any kind of intellectual substance or merit whatsoever. At another point in her essay, after first citing "looksism" as a form of elitism within the transsexual community, Christine referred to one group of individuals who disagree with her position as universally "butt-ugly," as if -- even if it were true -- a person's looks somehow have some bearing on the merit of what they are saying, (talk about value judgements!) and then went on to point out how good she looked on a certain television talk show.

But most importantly, Christine's analysis relied entirely on the unfounded assumption that to consider oneself different from someone else necessarily means that one likewise considers oneself superior to those persons, which is obviously not the case. To make such an assertion is to say that the only possible reason that lesbians could have had for insisting on being referred to as *lesbian* rather than as *gay* is because they must consider themselves superior to gay men; or that bisexuals and transpeople who do not consider the term *gay and lesbian* as inclusive of them must therefore necessarily consider themselves superior to gay men and lesbians.

Personally, I am rather puzzled as to why Christine would even find it necessary get her bowels in such an uproar over this letter in the first place when she later went on to say that we don't all have to agree on labels, since all that person was doing was disagreeing about the appropriateness of a particular label. But I find myself even more puzzled as to why Christine and persons who share her perspective are accusing transsexuals who reject the term *transgendered* of "elitism" are not also accusing gay men, lesbians and bisexuals of "elitism" because they likewise reject

that term. And why aren't they also accusing of "elitism" the drag queens who insisted on the distinctness of *drag* identity from that of *transgendered* identity during the controversy last year over the naming of the commemoration of the Stonewall Rebellion? And why aren't they also accusing of "elitism" such persons as Virginia Prince, who not only continually reviles transsexuals in terms that are equally as insulting and demeaning as those used by Janice Raymond and who continually extols the superiority of transgenderism over transsexuality? And why aren't they also accusing of "elitism" all of the other transgenderists such as Danielle Bruzesse and Wendy Parker, who claim that transsexuality is just another form of sexual conformity, or their supporters such as Gordene MacKenzie whose book *Transgender Nation* expresses the same thesis and even adopts the very arguments of Janice Raymond to support it? And why didn't Christine react similarly to, not just one, but an entire series of letters -- also in the *San Francisco Bay Times* -- by a self-identified crossdresser characterizing transsexuals in the most derogatory and insulting of terms and extolling the superiority of crossdressing over transsexuality? This kind of selective castigation reminds me of all of those self-righteous animal rights advocates who oh-so-bravely toss blood on the fur coats of wealthy suburban white women, but who sure as heck aren't about to march down to the nearest biker bar in a state of high dudgeon and toss blood on some Hell's Angel's leather jacket.

I am not opposed in principle into entering into coalitions with other transpeople to achieve common objectives. In fact, I think that it might very well be in our best interests to do so. However, I am much more inclined to enter into a coalition with someone who does not demand of me that my identity be collapsed into theirs. It is not even necessary that our identities be reduced to a lowest common denominator for us to work together. However, I am I am presently feeling very *disinclined* to enter into any such coalition with transgenderists or crossdressers (though there are definitely individual transgenderists and crossdressers with whom I have no problem entering into coalitions), not only because of this very demand, but likewise because of the newly emergent transgender party line that defines transsexuality as a form of sexual conformity and adopts the very arguments of its most vehement opponents. (I've got news for all such transgender folks: Janice Raymond and Co. don't like you any more than she likes transsexuals. Check out the new introduction to the recently re-issued edition of *The*

Transsexual Empire if you don't believe me.)

In her article "Writing Ourselves," also in this issue, Dallas Denny calls upon all transpeople to begin to define themselves rather than to let nontransfolk define us. I would only add to that sentiment that it is equally important that we, as transsexuals, define ourselves, rather than allowing other transpeople to define us. At present, that is not what's happening, and it can't begin to happen as long as we are subsumed under the label *transgendered*.

Transsexuality is unique; it is not merely another form of transgenderism, but at the rate that transsexuality is presently becoming collapsed into that label, transsexuality as a distinct identity is rapidly becoming an endangered species. Save the transsexuals!



Davina Anne Gabriel
Booting Up

photo by Fran Windler

Davina Anne Gabriel is a forty-one year-old, fifteen years postoperative transsexual lesbian feminist Witch, the founder, editor and publisher of TransSisters: the Journal of Transsexual Feminism, a former editor of two queer newspapers in Kansas City, Missouri, and a long time activist for queer, feminist, transsexual and other causes. She has been involved, for all three years of its existence, in the protest against the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival's "womyn born womyn" only policy and was one of four transsexual lesbians expelled from that festival for defying that policy in 1993. She lives in Kansas City, Missouri.



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The A.B.C.s of T.G. P.C.

by Mustang Sally

"Who dealt this mess, anyway?" Yeah, that's an old card-players' term. But you'd be surprised how it can be turned around and applied to transsexual politics. What I mean is, who created this system, this supposedly feminist (i.e., *woman-identified*) system, in which not only does somebody give a shit that some other folks want to sit in a hot tub and agree that SRS was a significant event in their lives, but they have to get their ideological tit caught in a ringer about it, too? That such a specialized event as NWC (ROP, whatever) should be held up as collective property of the transgender community is the type of thing that raises my suspicions. Those suspicions were confirmed for me as I read the debate in *TransSisters* # 6.

It seemed all the critical articles weren't really about NWC -- they exploited the pseudo-controversy of the postop focus with the intent of (a) seizing control of public policy in order to (b) enforce a particular political dogma. It's a rather fluid tactic -- either people cry that an event "oppresses" them by being too inclusive, in order to enforce more rigid identity politics (e.g., to get bisexual and/or transsexual women out of a lesbian event), or they claim the focus is not inclusive enough, in order to co-opt it for another agenda (e.g., using calls for examination of race or class dynamics of a lesbian feminist conference to derail its focus and reshape it along "radical" or "progressive" lines).

In other words, the dispute here wasn't about who gets to go to NWC. It was all about *political correctness*.

The telling comment for me was Denise Norris' riff on surgeons drawing lines between us, that *sans* SRS "we" would all be gender rebels--defining as "we" all TS *and* TG people, and Goddess only knows who else. It suggested an agenda that we should all identify as gender rebels anyway (instead of MTFs

identifying as women, period?). As Davina Gabriel pointed out, Denise came close to suggesting we should not have surgery because doing so is colluding with the medical industry. Actually, if surgery divides us, then surgery is privilege. And we know what happens when something's defined as privilege, don't we? The next logical step is the call for those with privilege to renounce it. Ergo, no transsexual should have surgery, right?

But maybe all this would be solved if we go back to something broader, something that makes whether surgery equals success moot. If passing is privilege, as Kate Bornstein contends, then we should morally mandate electrolysis for transsexuals out of existence. It's classist anyway, since it costs so much money. Five o'clock shadow as the great equalizer! I can see it now.

When Christine Beatty said "the community" is getting sick of "postop elitism," what did she mean by "the community"? I suspected, and a subsequent essay confirmed, that she was conflating us not just back into the larger transgender community, but back into the "gender community" along with het crossdressers. Hello? If I write for a "Journal of Transsexual Feminism," of what community

do I envision myself a part? Hint: from what music festival in Michigan am I honked off about being excluded? When I went to the Camp Trans benefit in New York, which movement/ideology did I applaud for taking on gender issues? Telling me I'm in "denial" (another PC buzzword!) about being part of the "gender community" is another way of saying I'm in "denial" about biology being destiny: it's saying I'll never be just a woman, no matter what.

Christine's delineation of a purported hierarchy of transgender strikes me as being one more demand that I be a gender rebel instead of insisting on my right to identify as a woman and change my physical sex to match. Wow, it's a 70s revival, just like the Brady Bunch movie: I seem to recall being told back then I should be a challenge to gender roles *instead of identifying myself as a woman*. It was the argument of those who didn't want me to challenge their dogma on who's who, who gets to be what -- the whole "woman-born woman" trip -- by claiming to be a woman. What, then, makes the new transgender political correctness any different from lesbian feminist transphobia?

Another sign that this whole NWC brouhaha was about



"One of the features of PC is its passive-aggressive tactics for putting control into the hands of spineless weenies who would rather whine about their oppression than take action to liberate themselves."

setting standards of political correctness is all the whining about postops supposedly thinking we're better or "more complete" women than other trannies. One of the features of PC is its passive-aggressive tactics for putting control into the hands of spineless weenies who would rather whine about their oppression than take action to liberate themselves.

I remember my first rap group at the Stanford clinic -- so long ago they still called it a "grooming session." There was a postop woman there who held herself out as the expert on transition and post-surgical life. I remember thinking, Goddess, if I end up like her, with nothing going for me except success at getting through surgery, please send someone along to slap me silly. Anyone whose sense of self-worth comes from being a transsexual role model (whether in the clinic or the sex industry ghetto) is in need of a life. And anyone who worries what people like that think of them is *seriously* in need of a life (hint: start with learning the difference between a real community and Palookaville). The problem is not that postops are elitist; the problem is that some people with ambivalence about surgery are big wussies.

Surgery was very important to me -- a matter of life or death. There was no way I was willing to live the rest of my life with alien genitals. And it wasn't postops who made me feel "incomplete" -- I felt that way myself when I had to explain to would-be lovers that the body they'd see was different from what they'd envisioned. We have a high suicide rate not because people are shamed by failure to get surgery but because that penis makes a mockery of our most intimate selves; it denies us the authentic expression of our sexuality.

I walked a fine line with my sexuality when I was (there's that word again!) preop. I was limited to lovers sufficiently bisexual not to be disgusted by my genitals yet not so enthused about them that I felt exploited as an exotic treat. I was dependent on the understanding of others, and lived in fear of rejection by those who might otherwise long for me. Now my sexuality is a joyful thing, my aroused body a profound wonder. I'm glad people feel much more OK about preop sexuality; we need to replace shame with self-esteem. I do distinguish, though, between this and transgender or "chick with a dick" sexuality -- the drive to have genitals match gender is a characteristic of people like me, people for whom surgery is critical. Instead of telling the world surgery is not important to transsexuals, we should say it is important to our well being but some may decide against it because of the physical risks or the tremendous resources necessary (like the FTMs who choose metiodoplasty over phalloplasty). Nonops make a very tough decision, but there is a difference between them and transgenderists.

I think Christine Beatty was disingenuous when she claimed her opposition to NWC came from a feminist antipathy to hierarchy. NWC has never claimed to be representative of transsexuals and therefore the arbiter of who is or isn't. Moreover, she set herself against a much more important feminist

principle: self-determination. Since when do we postops have to justify our surgery, or its importance to our well being, to anyone? Hell, we might as well give up and agree with gay men that we only want the operation because we're afraid of being faggots (though in my case, it would be fear of being a straight man -- indeed a scary thought!).

The NWC/ROP is women getting together to discuss common experiences. Seems to me that's a very basic feminist principle, that of the CR group. And if this is the reaction to NWC, perhaps we need CR groups to support each other against our oppression by those otherwise transgendered folk who would have us love our birth genitals as much as those we choose. Accusations of "penisphobia" are irrelevant (I know of only one class of people who say there's something wrong with you if you don't like penises: men). Some of us, after all, are lesbians -- we have every right to think penises are gross.

But all this begs the second question, that of who is a real woman? Believe it or not, what other transsexuals or transgenders think doesn't mean squat,

whether what they think is based on surgical status or TG PC. The real question is whether someone has credibility as a woman among the so-called "nons." As I have written before, I believe this is less a matter of whether someone knows you're transsexual as it is of whether you present yourself as a transsexual or as a woman (and just mouthing the words doesn't cut it).

At different times in my adult life, the lesbian communities in which I have lived and hung out have either known in general or not known in general of my transsexuality. At all times, I have presented myself as a woman; at no time have I been an "out transsexual" in the lesbian community, that is, at no time have I presented myself as having an identity as a transsexual. Even when I was trashed, or bounced out of a lesbian group, those women who stood by me (and they did, in significant numbers) did so not so much because of any political principle of transsexual inclusion but because of their trust in the woman among them struggling through transition, their belief in me as woman and sister, and their anger at the attempts to remove me from their company. And so, despite their not caring about my background, they fiercely guarded my privacy outside our tribe, to try to keep me from getting hurt again. They did this because I stood with them as women and lesbians, not as a transsexual making a point about inclusion.

Lately, I've been running into a number of women who recognize me as having been, along with them, part of the nascent lesbian feminist scene/community/movement at the end of the '60s, whether we had been particularly close or not. Interestingly enough, now that it's over 20 years since I was a walking controversy *du jour*, what has excited them about running into me again is chatting about old times with another of those early activists. Oh, and their take on my having gotten trashed was that it was one of those unfortunate excesses; more than anything else, they're curious about the different paths we all took once the

"I know of only one class of people who say there's something wrong with you if you don't like penises: men. Some of us, after all, are lesbians -- we have every right to think penises are gross."

Lesbian Nation of our dreams failed to materialize.

(Are we discerning a theme here? Might it be of some relevance to following up on the declarations of Minnie Bruce Pratt, Amber Hollibaugh et al. that gender is a concern of the feminist movement? Could it be there's an invitation to be part of the tribe by standing with them as women and lesbians? Woo, woo! Here comes the clue train! All aboard!)

These *recherches des temps perdus* stand in stark contrast to a less fortunate retrospective of late: the attempt by another transsexual to recast my public identity and history as that of a crusading transsexual activist (much like her image of herself, curiously enough). I don't want to give her publicity for her writing career by mentioning her name (heh heh, heh, heh heh) or aid her quest to become a movement "star" (nyuk, nyuk, nyuk).

Instead, I'll just point out that her attempted rip-off of my personal experience and good name strikes me as being the epitome of transgender political correctness. She has reduced my 25-year involvement with the lesbian community to the reaction some dykes had to my transsexuality over 20 years ago, ignoring the fact that women in the know have been giving me serious props for years. As a matter of fact, she's claiming that I wanted to be an out transsexual in the lesbian community all along, but was prevented by transphobia! As if! If there's ever been anyone who just wanted to get on with her life as a happy little lezzie, it's been yours truly (and I've done it, too, which probably pisses her off even more).

Now this is someone who, the one time I met her three years ago, swapped horror stories with me about how difficult it could be to leave our medical histories in the past when dyke separatists wanted to be sure none of us snuck back into the community. We spoke of the joys of being known simply as lesbians, and not as transsexuals. (I have witnesses to this afternoon-long conversation.) I told her then I had no desire to be known publicly as a transsexual -- never did, never will. She knows of my writing in *TransSisters*, and has seen me go to great lengths to preserve my privacy even when it was under public attack. So why has she made statements about my intent that are contrary to my direct statements to her, as well as actual practice of which she has knowledge?

Yo, it's gotta be da PC. That put yo sex change in they face thang. That making sure everyone knows you're a sex change thing -- so if you fail miserably at being part of your local lesbian community, you can blame it on transphobia instead of your own inability to mainstream, if such is the case. That being queer instead of really finding meaning in being a woman thing.

I'm not interested. I'm so over my transsexual background it's not funny. Ask me about going to NWC and I'll yawn -- I'm sorry, but when I feel like talking about stuff in my life as a woman, I just call up a woman friend -- T or not -- and say let's grab a latte and chat. And I'm still waiting for more transsexual feminist analysis and less of this gender community who's who wank-a-rama.

I'm less concerned with my transsexuality as an identity as I

am with figuring out what part it played in my getting emotionally shattered when I watched the second half of *The Boys of St. Vincent*, a movie about a child sexual abuse (and cover-up) scandal in a Newfoundland orphanage. I am convinced from having looked over my life years back after a similar experience (watching the made-for-TV *Something About Amelia* and finding the lead character's emotions and reactions uncannily, frighteningly familiar) that I was not abused myself. And yet, the feelings of violation and internalized shame shown by the grown-up survivors in this award-winning Canadian film resonated in me to the point of physical discomfort.

Is it from the shame I felt at knowing, as I grew up, that I was a freak, a girl forced to try to be a boy? Is it from the violence done to my psyche by watching helplessly as I went through the wrong puberty, deprived of the milestones of female adolescence (as incest survivors have been robbed of exploration, on their own terms, of their budding sexuality?) From knowing people identify me with an experience forced on me, just as they hang the fact of abuse on the abused, and objectify me with their morbid fascination?

These things are what I experience as a transsexual in my daily life. And I believe they are issues and experiences transsexual feminism should be addressing -- instead of the non-issue of lack-of-penis envy. So wake me up when the transgender political correctness fad is over and we can get down to the real business, OK?

Mustang Sally is a nineteen years postoperative transsexual lesbian and has been actively involved in the feminist and lesbian movements since the late 1960s. Her work has been widely published, and she is also a regular staff writer for Transsexual News-Telegraph.

In Sisterly Spirit: A Personal View (continued from page 36)

Each of us, in our own way, nourishes the future. Each time that we take into our hearts someone and treat that person as precious and a gift we nourish them. When we think about them, where they will be, what we can give that they can use, we help create their future. It doesn't matter if the person is a child of our own body, or of another's. It doesn't even matter if the child is an adult, but perhaps a newcomer to some part of the path we are on -- when we take the time to listen, to hear, and to act from a space of deep concern and abiding compassion we nourish that person and help her to grow. It matters greatly that we nurture something -- for in that process, and because of what it requires of us, we are pushed forward on our evolution as women. Sometimes kicking and screaming, but forward we go, for no longer is our life about merely ourselves and our desires, but on our children, and the children of our children, and so on until the last of days.

HERAS

by Candice Hellen Brown

We need our historic heros. They shine as examples of courage and hope. Without them we give in to confusion and despair. I have modern heroes as well. You may have heard some of these names, but it's unlikely that you've heard of most of them. That's too bad, since these are fine, brave people. I would like to share them with you.

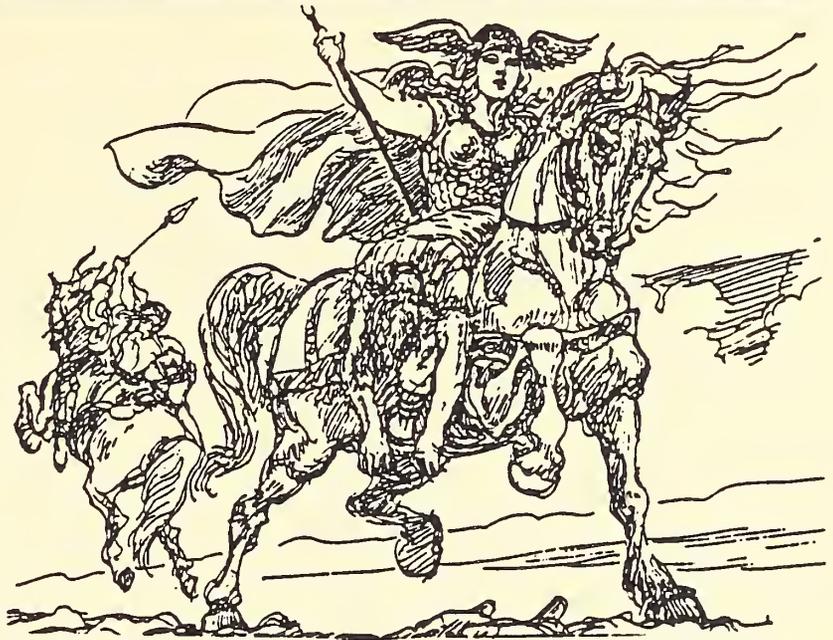
Feminism teaches us that "the personal is political." I feel that "the political is personal" as well. For me to tell you about my transsexual heroes I must tell you about much of my own life. But this will not really be about me, but about the people I met in my life and the real stories that you may have already heard told in "the other side" of the gay press. The gay & lesbian community was (and in many parts of the country still is) not comfortable with the presence of transsexual men and women. It was the bravery of transsexuals who faced personal and political censure from both the straight and gay & lesbian communities who remain my heroes.

I was in high-school, in the early 1970s when I began a quest to understand the gay culture and my place in it. During my last year of school I read of the participation of a transsexual as a delegate in the 1968 Democratic Party National Convention and then of her later being in the Stonewall Rebellion in 1969. Her name was Angela Keys Douglas. I also read about the most famous of all transsexuals, Christine Jorgensen. How could I not come out as transsexual with their examples? If I wanted to keep any of my friends I had to come out soon since I would be eighteen a week before graduation and free to transition.

I first had to get into a "gender dysphoria clinic." Following a series of horrible scenes with my family, I tricked them into getting me into one at seventeen. They thought the place was going to "cure" me! The Stanford Gender Dysphoria Clinic's power and mind-tripping was terrible. I wanted to meet other transsexuals just so I could have a real mentor, someone to hold my hand. Much of the clinic staff could not have cared less. "Bring money" and "conform to the style" were the only messages they wanted to have understood.

I came out to my friends at school slowly, first to my girlfriend. She was very supportive at first, but later tried to convert me to Christianity and to make me "stop sinning." Other friends who I thought would be very cool about it were just the opposite. One of the worst later came out as a gay man. No hero there! There were also a few whom I had not given much thought to while in school. Later these would become my truest friends to this day. So much for my instincts.

I never even spoke with the first transsexual whom I actually met. I found out that he was also a transsexual at our graduation ceremony. I had been threatened with dire consequences by my family if I walked in the graduation procession as a woman. I did



not risk it. But Mark did. He was in the boys' line and even had his new, masculine, name read out as he received his diploma. He caused quite the stir with the dean, almost even came to blows. I had seen him almost every school day for years and did not know that behind the quiet, shy mask of the schoolgirl was a very brave man. *My hero!*

"It was the bravery of transsexuals who faced personal and political censure from both the straight and the gay & lesbian communities who remain my heroes."

Mark must have also gone to the same clinic. They could have told us there was someone else our own age, right in the same school! "No, no, can't have that. We want those PATIENTS to have nothing to do with each other."

I transitioned full time just after graduation. I was going to Community College near Santa Cruz with a tiny remittance from my mother, providing I never showed my face in my hometown. I got kicked out of my first room but found a place in a lesbian household. Only one of the other women knew about me. She was as butch as they come and proud of it. She would be called a transgenderist today, even lived as a man for a few years. It was there that I met a man, a friend of one of my housemates helping her move in, who had been at the '68 convention. I asked him if he had met Angela Keys Douglas. Oh yes, he had indeed! And surprise, he knew her still. She now lived in Berkeley, California. I resolved that I would meet her someday.

I had already been living full time as a woman for six months when I was invited to a symposium at the clinic. There would be other transsexuals there! I did not have the money for the bus fare. But my father lived just under a mile from the clinic. I talked him into picking me up for a visit.

While my father was out I changed into peach colored corduroy slacks and a nice blouse, no sense in giving the wrong impression to the clinic staff! I walked to the clinic that day with all sorts of daydreams. What would the others be like? Could they help me? I was totally unprepared for the reality. First, there were no female-to-males present, just male-to-females, most of whom were much older than I was. Second, most of them were *obvious* and not dressed appropriately. They were all dressed ultrafemme, as if this were some formal occasion! And worst of all, this was expected by the clinic staff! But there were a small number who were dressed as I was, casually, just "plain folks." It became apparent only later that these were postops who no longer had to

bow down to the pressure from the doctors to conform to the '50s image of housewife, secretary, or whore. One of these was to become a true hero. Her name is Sandy Stone. She was tall, with long black hair, turning gray. I was attracted to her as my idealized image of a quietly self-confident, friendly, humorous, gentle, strong woman. I wanted and still want to be like her.

Within a week of that awful symposium (should I say brainwashing session?) I was to meet another hero. Christine Jorgensen was to speak at a community college in Monterey. Along with some of the other transsexuals I had just met, I went to hear her. While she was speaking one of us whispered to the rest of us, "Isn't she beautiful? She's just an ordinary looking middle aged woman!". It was true. She was very ordinary looking, and she was beautiful. It was her spirit, her warmth, her humor, that made her beautiful. I could not help but admire her. If I could just live that contentedly, be that strong. I have kept the ticket stub from that night, February 7, 1976, ever since.

I lived through another six months of uncertainty and poverty, but at least I was getting advice and friendship from other transsexuals. I had many telephone conversations with Sandy Stone. She had been a recording engineer before transition. Of course misogyny kept her from getting work as a woman. I was very interested in electronics, music and video, so we got along. One day she called very excited, saying "I got a job with Olivia Records!" This was great news; she was again a recording engineer. But better yet it was recording Women's Music, which in the late '70s was coming on strong with a powerful feminist and lesbian message. The bad news was that the job was in L.A. I would miss her.

In the summer of '77 I wrote to Angela Keys Douglas. She wrote back inviting me to visit during the weekend of the Gay Pride Parade in San Francisco.

When I arrived at her apartment the day before the parade I found that she was in a regal temper. She went on for half an hour about how pig-headed the women at KPFA were and how ugly the stuff in the lesbian journal *Sister* was. It turned out that a controversy over a transsexual was raging in the lesbian community. Women were calling for the resignation or firing of this transsexual from her job. Her co-workers were defending her. "What job?" I asked. "Her job as a recording engineer at some all women's record company!" "Oh, shit! You don't mean Sandy Stone do you?" "Yes that's the one." My heart sank. Angela kept on raving.

Later her voice was replaced by the tapping of a beat-up typewriter. I peeked over her shoulder while she wrote a letter to *Sister*. It was filled with irony, hyperbole, and dripped with ugly sarcasm. She asked what I thought of it. I told her I thought it was too filled with anger to be useful. She changed nothing, put it in an envelope, addressed and stamped it without a word.

The next morning we drove over the bay to the city. I asked, "Where are we going to watch the parade?" She replied, "We aren't going to watch. We're going to join it." "Which group?" "I don't know. We'll find one." And we did! The Matachine Society invited us to join them on a jeep. It was then that a man, in semi-drag "gender-bender" style came up to me passing out handouts. It was a protest against the parade committee's decision to keep drag queens, transvestites, and transsexuals out of the parade. Damned if I was going to go away; I was ecstatic, surrounded by the cheers of gay men and women, especially the women.

In early 1978 I got kicked out of the apartment that I lived in for a year and a half when the manager found out that I was transsexual. I had heard good things were going on in the transsexual community in L.A. and decided that it was time to move on. I got a call from Sandy Stone, "Hey, guess what? Olivia Records is moving to Berkeley!" "Hey, guess what? I'm moving to L.A.!" I was thrilled that she was still at Olivia. The brave and just women who worked with her stood by her. But I was still going to miss her.

Things were still unsettled for me after moving to L.A. Several jobs, roommates and living situations later, during the summer of '79, I met a transsexual who would become my best friend, point of stability, and sister, Joy Diane Shaffer. She and I became politically active, joined the "Transsexual Rights Committee of the A.C.L.U. Gay Rights Task Force". It was chaired by a very eccentric transsexual woman named Joanna M. Clark. (She later changed her name to Sister Mary Elizabeth.) We sued the army for dishonorably discharging transsexual soldiers, won the battle, still fighting the war. We convinced the State of California to change some of its bureaucratic procedures that hurt transsexuals. We wrote legislation to demand insurance companies to pay for reconstructive surgeries for transsexuals. (The total cost would be two cents per policy. Today insurance has exclusions for it and most transsexuals pay \$10,000+ in cash!)

In 1979 a book called *The Transsexual Empire: the Making of the She-Male* by the feminist author and colleague of Mary Daly, Janice G. Raymond, was published. Raymond used the wrong pronouns constantly and called transsexuals "female-to-constructed males" and "male-to-constructed-females." She accused transsexuals, especially male-to-female transsexuals, of being tools of the patriarchy and the enemies of feminism. She accurately described the abuse of power that the so called "gender clinics" used to enforce stereotypical behavior and patriarchy but then blamed us, the victims of it. She then proposed an "ethic of integrity" that declared by fiat that transsexuals should not exist. But the biggest hurt of all was to read about the events surrounding Sandy Stone. She even quoted, completely out of context, the worst part of Angela's painful letter. It was not even mentioned that it was written as a response to the ugly letter demanding Sandy's dismissal. I know these people. It didn't happen that way. I was there!

Joy Shaffer and I joined a transsexual self-help group that met in the basement of the downtown L.A./M.C.C. For transsexuals to be running their own show was radical. It meant taking back our power. The group was called just that: "The Group". The Group was all ages, status, and directions. We helped each other find jobs, housing, and human company who didn't think of us as daytime talk show freaks. We also took part in the larger gay & lesbian community.

The Group was started by a deceptively quiet woman named Carol Katz. I had read about her years before when she was booted out of the L.A.P.D. when she began transition. The Chief of Police even had choice words about her. (Such an honor!!) Carol also ran security for the Christopher Street West Fair & Parade for several years. She roped many from the Group into volunteering to work security.

When a "Women Take Back the Night" march was organized it seemed natural that Carol Katz should be coordinator of security and traffic control, not to mention liaison to the L.A.P.D. But

ugliness showed up for Carol in the same form that it had for Sandy. Carol could take the hatred of the L.A.P.D. but not from her own community. She withdrew from the coordinating job. When Joy and I got to the march we found Carol frantically yelling into a walkie-talkie. "What's going on here?" "They changed their minds two hours ago. Things are a mess! I'm sorry, gotta run!" *My her!*

Fast forward to 1986. I had finished my undergraduate degree and had a good career as an engineer in Silicon Valley. Joy had finished medical school and was in residency. She had been outed the first year of school and took a lot of snubbing and personal attacks.

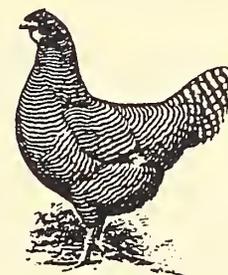
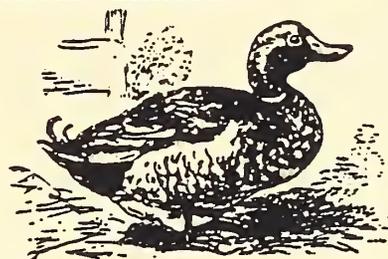
I ran into Sandy Stone again that year at a national level Wiccan gathering, Merry Meet. She was more beautiful than ever, her long black hair streaked with gray. The first day of the gathering was a leadership training class. During one of the sessions Sandy and I were sitting next to each other when she leaned over to whisper, "Do you realize how many there are of us here?" I had already noticed it. Of the thirty in this session there were eight transsexuals. One of the women organizing the leadership training was one of them. There were twelve transsexuals out of 300 total.

The first evening of the gathering Sandy and I were eating dinner when she fell silent and stiff. "What's wrong?" "Over there, the woman with the short gray hair." "I know her, that's Z. Budapest, been circling with her for the past several years." "You've been circling with HER? She was one of the ones who trashed me in '77!! She kicked me out of the womens' circle I was in." That sinking feeling was there again. I noticed Z. blanch when she saw Sandy and me together. I knew that she did not know that I was transsexual. Why should I go stirring up trouble? But trouble was already here. I had to find a way to heal this situation that weekend.

I got my opportunity the next day. A group of gay people, including Sandy and I, decided that we wanted a gay confirming ritual away from the rest of the gathering. I made sure that Z. was there. During the ritual she positioned herself away from Sandy and me. My heart was pounding and my hands shaking, anticipating what I was going to do and say. At one point during the ritual we were calling personalized blessings upon each other. I stood facing Sandy, looking her square in the face and said: "For too long you have been the lightning rod for hate against transsexuals. I take that away from you. I take your place. I am a transsexual." Sandy was crying. Z. was crying and broke circle to cross it. She hugged Sandy and me together.

It has been a fair number of years since these events but things aren't too terribly different. Dr. Joy Shaffer is looking to start her own transsexual affirming medical practice and is working to save Dr. Melanie Erin Spritz's medical career. I have moved to Oregon where I live with my nontranssexual lesbian lover, Kier. We are co-moms of our eight year old daughter Elizabeth. Life is certainly an adventure living with heras all

around. Blessed Be.



Addendum: What walks like a duck, talks like a duck, but is called a chicken?

I have been trying to answer that one for several years. The Right to Privacy PAC in Oregon has a big fundraiser every year that is called The Lucile Hart Memorial Dinner. When I am asked if I am going I indignantly answer, "Not until they stop using the wrong name and gender for one of our heroes! His name is Alan!!"

I first heard of Dr. Alan L. Hart several years ago. He was born in 1890 with female genitalia and raised, unhappily, as a girl. But upon reaching mature, educated adulthood he took steps, including surgery, to live his life as a man, even marrying twice. He made a slow transition while going to medical school then started a practice in Reedsport, Oregon in 1917. He was outed a few months later by a medical school colleague and was forced to move to Albany, Oregon. He later continued his career as a physician. He never wavered from his identity as a man and upon his death his widow also continued to insist that he was a man. Why would such a straight man be called a lesbian by the gay community when today we would certainly call him a female-to-male transsexual?

Is it because he did not call himself that? How could he? The term was not coined until 1949!! He was lumped in with all of the "deviants" and called an "invert." He had "the identity that dared not know its name." Historic labels aside we should not misidentify him today. He was a transsexual, a true pioneer. One who must be seen as a hero by today's transsexual community.

Alan Hart is one of our heroes. Please don't let him be taken away from us by allowing his old name to be used as though it were a badge of honor. At best it is unthinking, and at worst, insulting. My, how it rankles me to hear folks today using the wrong pronoun and name. Yes, his parents may have named him Alberta Lucille Hart, but he named himself Alan! **QUACK!**



Candice Hellen Brown

photo by Kier

Candice Hellen Brown has written a number of articles under the name of Glowing SunBear for various Pagan publications, including Green Egg, Goddess Rising, The Almalthean Horn, Open Ways and Reclaiming Newsletter. She has also recorded one cassette tape entitled After Light. She and her lover Kier are presently in the process of adopting an eight year old girl from the state of Oregon. She is a resident of Portland, Oregon..

The Man in the Moon

by J.L. Phillips

People see what they anticipate seeing. When the world was filled with spirits, every natural object had a soul which could be seen by sensitive eyes. Naturally, those preternatural eyes saw a human being in the face of the moon. Some said it was a man, some said a woman, but when human beings walked on the face of the moon, there was no one there.

People have been seeing what they want to see for many long ages. Janice Raymond has been seeing what she wants to see for a long time now as well. Her book, *The Transsexual Empire*, has been reissued and she still sees men in the constructed female bodies of male-to-female

transsexuals. Of course this is no surprise but her arguments, unlike fine cheese, really haven't gotten any better with age. Her book is hard to classify. It's not so much hateful, although it lapses at times into mean-spirited spitefulness, as merely stupid and wrong-headed, sort of like what might be expected of an

intelligent Rush Limbaugh. She confuses political correctness with reality in a virtuoso display of impassioned preaching to an unacknowledged choir of unreconstructed lesbian-feminists with an axe (double-bladed, of course) to grind. The similarity with the rhetoric of the religious right wing is both astonishing and shamefully self-indulgent. Here one finds the same extravagant theories of conspiracies by an evil empire, the same mealy-mouthed dishonesty of argument, the same *ad hominem* attacks on individuals as exemplars of a whole class of people, and the same cheap verbal tricks, passing off wit as intellect. Spare me, please.

Ms. Raymond has taken the trouble to write an introduction to the 1994 edition which responds to her critics by saying, essentially, *Nyah! Nyah!* She hasn't bothered to rethink her position, which is as untenable and thick-skulled as Rush Limbaugh's on gays. It's a pity, really, to see so much talent and creativity wasted on a subject that is, in a fundamental way, none of her damned business. Her analysis of transsexuals is, like Freud's analysis of women, or Jerry Falwell's analysis of Witchcraft, only extraordinary ignorance and intolerance masquerading as scholarly exposition and insight, absent real insight, absent compassion, absent humanity.

This is not to say that her book is without value. Far from it. The criticisms she levels at the pernicious effects of



patriarchy, as a system, are well taken. Her critique of sex roles is, if not spectacularly original, even for 1979, at least mainstream and thoughtful, but to expand the responsibility for that system to all men, disregarding the many differential levels of oppression within the patriarchal system, while ignoring the responsibility of some women, many of whom are distinctly

culpable in actively and enthusiastically supporting and encouraging the institutions of patriarchy, is mentally lazy and cruel to boot. One would think that the most unregenerate lesbian-feminist would have taken to heart the criticism of women of color, both lesbian and non-lesbian, *vis-a-vis*

that smug stance of maudlin woe-is-us on the part of white women. To paraphrase the famous *bon mot* attributed to Tonto, the Lone Ranger's famous but obsequious faithful-Indian-companion, "What do you mean *we*, white woman?"

The saddest part about her effort, though, is that she blithely discounts or ignores the very real issues of oppression shared by transsexuals and gay people, feminist or otherwise. Make no mistake, many, even most, women find lesbians somewhat less than womanly. Most men find gay men much less than manly. How could it be otherwise? The traditional position is logically unassailable, given the truth of conventional wisdom. For most people, one's choice of sexual partner is absolutely determined to be the opposite of one's own gender and is as firmly based in intellect and psyche as is the physical evidence of genitalia. To many, this distinction, this preference, is seen as divinely ordained and sacred. To transgress those boundaries strikes at the heart of what it means to be gendered for many people and is viewed as inherently wrong in every case and without exception by a clear majority, roughly two-thirds in recent polls, of the general population, slightly more men, slightly fewer women. A lesbian-feminist ethics uninformed by the recognition of this inconvenient fact is sterile.

Ms. Raymond's argument fails this simple test. She appeals to majority opinion and prejudice, although she styles it in a somewhat more flattering light, but lacks the mental agility to

"Her analysis of transsexuals is, like Freud's analysis of women, or Jerry Falwell's analysis of Witchcraft, only extraordinary ignorance and intolerance masquerading as scholarly exposition and insight, absent real insight, absent compassion and absent humanity."

make the leap in viewpoint which would enable her to recognize the essential similarity of her position to the position of the group whose arguments she apes, the Christian right-wing. She talks a lot about the desire of men to become women (and discounts the desire of women to become men as if they had been tricked into this neo-Freudian position by poisoners blowing chloroform under the door) without paying attention to the ambiguity of the word. Although most transsexuals will say words to the effect that they desire to change sex, if asked, that desire is not like the wish, let us say, to be able to swim like a fish or fly like a bird. Few people are convinced in their heart of hearts that they are, in fact, fish or birds. Transsexuals are, in painful truth, convinced by their own experience and inner knowledge that, in spite of logic and appearance, they most closely fit an opposite gender. This knowledge has been imprinted somehow in the brain long before consciousness intervened and makes that desire to change the outside to fit the inside qualitatively different than mere whimsy.

Her informants repeatedly tell her this but she, quite frankly, disbelieves them and proceeds to tell us what they really ought to believe and do. It is specious to argue from the careless use of the word *desire* that it is possible and politically desirable to change one's mind. You might as well agree with Lou Sheldon that, because homosexuals feel desire for persons of their own gender, homosexuality is a lifestyle choice made by perverted individuals for the express purpose of damning their souls to Hell since they could obviously change their minds if they weren't inherently evil. Transsexualism is not a lifestyle in the Christian Fundamentalist sense, although Ms. Raymond seems to labor under the impression that it is, any more than gayness is. Her appeals to nature or mental health practitioners are merely prejudice and opinion reexamined at third hand. Homosexuality has been considered a mental or physical aberration right along with most of the transgendered states and may be again some day. It still is in some places in the wide world. In others, either condition is a capital crime. If her position is unabashedly a matter of personal distaste on the part of Ms. Raymond, she should just say so and save us all the trouble of reading this tendentious book, sparing us the pseudo-intellectual posturing as well. The gay and lesbian community, as a whole, has long suffered from a convenient myopia which fails to see, with a few welcome exceptions, the very real similarities, albeit along a different dimension of the multi-dimensional normal variance of sexual preference and identity, between the oppression of gay men and lesbians in general and the specific oppression of effeminate men or mannish women. While the distinctions between homosexual practices and other forms of gender confusion or sex-role dysphoria may be clear in their own minds, such niceties are lost on the general population. They hate us all, quite indiscriminately.

Her point about the desirability of pushing the gender envelope and forthright honesty about one's sexuality is certainly reasonable and I would encourage her to do so herself, if she desires to put herself in the forefront of the battle. She might well start by more explicitly declaring her allegiance and focus,

say, somewhere on the cover of her book, or in the introduction at least, rather than hiding behind a façade of scholarly and dispassionate inquiry which disguises her true agenda. Although that allegiance is implicit, even obvious, to those who are familiar with the great lights of lesbian-feminist thought, she nowhere makes it plain and straightforward. Where is the honesty there? Many lesbian-feminists consider it nobody's business but their own whom they prefer as sexual partners. Presumably Ms. Raymond allows them that right. At least I haven't heard her advocate the compulsory wearing of identifying badges in the manner of Nazi Germany. She tacitly grants herself and her friends the advantages and comfort of luxurious privacy and discretion while insisting that people she doesn't like, the dreaded transsexual menace, must follow a stricter regimen of scrupulous self-disclosure. She has no right to insist that others do so, to their peril or mere discomfort, without insisting on similar Spartan self-sacrifice from her friends, even though they too might come to harm thereby.

Unfortunately, not everyone has the resources or strength to volunteer as a foot soldier in the war against oppression. This is true in every society and in every underclass. Most blacks sat at the back of the bus and kept quiet during the racial struggles of the '50s and '60s however much they may have supported the struggle in their hearts and raged against the racial injustice of the times. They couldn't afford to lose their jobs or lives. Most women sat demurely at home during the struggle for suffrage however enthusiastic they may have secretly been, and however much they seethed within to hear men disparage the movement. They couldn't afford the loss of physical support that might well have accompanied a sharp break with male tradition. Most gays huddled in the closet during the periodic confrontations and protests of the '70s participated in by a militant few. Same story, different words. It's almost a cliché that transgendered people were in the forefront of the gay liberation movement and there's a very simple reason for it.

Transgendered people are the ones most often singled out for the worst oppression and abuse because they're the most visible. Nelly queers, drag queens, and bulldykes have taken the worst society can offer while their straighter brothers and sisters often stood aside in guilty invisibility.

While Ms. Raymond's point about the arbitrary basis of the narrow stereotypes these individuals transgress is well-taken, she fails to follow through by incorporating this viewpoint into her own outlook, observing gratuitously and often that this transsexual or that was acting just like a man, pushy, arrogant, insensitive, and so on. It would be funnier if she wasn't so earnest about the inapplicability of any such stereotype to women, although women are presumably the other side of the same coin. If men are pushy and demanding, are women receptive and nurturing? Goddess forbid! If men are arrogant, the only contrast would be... modest? Self-effacing? Holy Hecate forbend and protect us! I give up. Whatever you might call it, whether stereotype or only predilection, our society has inculcated a sense of gender-appropriateness into almost every action one can take from movement to occupation to choice of sexual partner. People

whose actions draw the attention of the gender police (almost the entire population of this country, or so it seems) are pressured, often intimidated, sometimes brutalized, into conforming. I would hazard that every gay person and every transsexual person has experienced this intimidation to some degree. The transsexual who can't take it anymore out on the front lines has only one option, if he or she wishes to retire from the fray, and that is to pass as straight. Most transgendered people have rather more difficulty, in my observation, passing as ideal examples of their native gender than doing it the other way around.

For a transsexual man, the only way to achieve the ordinary satisfying human interactions most of us take for granted without unpleasant consequences is to pass as a woman. The only way to pass safely, in an intolerant society, is to mimic the behavior and appearance of the normal people around you or even to go it one better. Just as many gay men take care to project a hyper-masculine persona and many lesbians publicly affect the accoutrements of patriarchal oppression they privately despise, many male-to-female transsexuals project the silly and fluttery femininity so beloved of popular male literature in legitimate fear, even terror, that others might notice them and draw the attention of hostile and violent men, even women. One notes that transsexual criminals have to be protected in special custody, while in prison. A male-to-female transsexual can't be housed in the male population for obvious reasons while they are subject to physical abuse and intimidation by violent women within the female population. Once outed, there's nowhere to hide for these people. The more masculine they are in appearance, the more stereotyped their behavior has to be to avoid danger or embarrassment. Indeed, the surgical selection and screening process discourages anything else. Can you blame them?

The fact that this same technique is used by many genetic females to insulate themselves from the same sort of undesirable attention would seem to indicate its efficacy, however much we all may abhor the necessity for such dissimulation. There is a gritty and unpleasant reality out there that is unfortunately unswayed by ethereal feminist argument. Arguments have to accommodate themselves to reality if they are to have relevance. Reality seldom adjusts itself to fit even the most neatly constructed and edifying theory.

As for her contention that a secret coalition or conspiracy of surgeons and mental health workers has created this problem, the facts don't really bear this out. In general, plastic surgeons and mental health workers make most of their money from women. Women often feel physically inadequate in this society and believe, with good reason, that if they only looked better, or felt better, their lives would improve, and so seek out these specialists waving money and naively trusting these men to save them, just like in the movies. Transsexual women fit right into the genetic female norm, in this regard. They want to look better, more beautiful, more desirable. There's no need to multiply entities in defiance of Occam's razor to create yet another sinister cabal of Machiavellian evil-doers. The conspiracy is right under our noses in the form of an entire society that values achievement and power in men and youth and beauty in women. We can all agree

that this cultural atmosphere is poisonous to women's sense of worth, since the only thing they're valued for is something over which they have little or no control, without recourse to surgery, yet that doesn't change that fact that these women are in a terrible double bind. If they demand acceptance on their own terms, our society determines not to let them succeed, if they acquiesce to the demands of society, they may succeed but are forever barred from feeling that their accomplishments are entirely their own. Ms. Raymond fudges her argument here as well with partisan posturing. Genetic females who seek surgery, the ultimate passivity, surrendering body and consciousness alike, are deluded into a poor self-image and imposed-upon by the surgical establishment while transsexuals who seek exactly the same surgeries to improve their astoundingly poor body image are assertive and stereotypically male. (Anecdotally, the few female-to-male transsexuals I've known were much more rough-and-ready in their attitude toward surgery and shrinks. They weren't happy with the results and were leery (much like any genetic male) of trusting their bodies or minds to the tender ministrations of another man. What would the guys say? I suspect they hide rather better than transsexual women do as well, given the more hostile and dangerous environment they might face if discovered.) It's interesting to note that Ms. Raymond does account for those few individuals, genetically male or hermaphroditic, who were sex-reassigned in infancy and raised as females by allowing as how they are real women because of their history. I beg to differ. The history she makes much of elsewhere included the fear of pregnancy, menstruation, childbirth, and other life experiences that could never be shared by these women. Is this necessary history a sort of menu from which one can pick any three items and pass Ms. Raymond's test? If genetics is the end-all and be-all that she elsewhere claims it to be, these unfortunate women are merely castrati, like the rest of them and will have to be kept out of the DAR as well as the MWMF. If womanhood is a menu, an arbitrary dividing line or taxonomy that separates boys from girls at an early age and influences both history and identity, I beg to point out that many male-to-female transsexuals and transgendered persons have experienced a goodly number of the items on the rest of her list, rape, sexual abuse, degrading childhood experiences which confirmed that they were definitely not members of the privileged class of genetic males, whatever else they were.

I personally feel a great sense of solidarity with separatists, including Ms. Raymond, assuming that this is, in fact, her stance, as seems trivially apparent. I have held this position with fervor in the past and know well, in my own heart, the feelings of rage against men in general, the awareness of the pervasive influence of sexism in this society, the seeming ubiquitousness of male oppression of women, the desire for autonomy, and the commitment to my sisters that prompts one to take that stance. It is a viable option for some, but not all. Few maintain it forever. Even the most dedicated compromise with the real world eventually.

Over the years, I've softened in my attitude and now count among my good friends one or two very gentle men. If you had asked me twenty, or even ten, years ago whether this would ever

come to pass, I would have laughed in your face and made a sign to avert the curse. Surprise, surprise! Is the world getting better or am I? Maybe a little of both. I just wish Janice Raymond could see that she and I have more in common, politically as well as personally, than, say, either one of us has with Phyllis Schlafly, a genetic female, by all accounts, whose unique female history hasn't seemed to lead her into a feeling of solidarity with Ms. Raymond's kind of woman. From her statements, one would have to assume that rotting in Hell would be among the best things our Ms. Raymond could wish for from her tender mercies.

In the end, simple courtesy demands that we accept people at face value. It is not our place to choose labels for others or to out people who may be in the closet, whether gay, or transgendered, or Jewish, or black, to choose a few groups at random whose survival, safety, or prosperity, at one time or another, has been made possible by concealment. The fact that many do take a fiendish glee in outing others doesn't make it right. A transsexual genetic male who chooses the label woman, perhaps radically rewriting the text of the societal construct thereby, has as much right to do so as a lesbian-feminist Jewish woman has to rewrite the millennia-old Jewish tradition so as to allow herself a self-affirming place in it. Should we not allow such a woman to call herself a Jew? In spite of the fact that she defies tradition and culture with her revisionist stance? Should we allow the moral majority to define what it means to be a man, or a woman? Should gay people be forced to pick new genders for themselves, untainted with the narrow assumptions of the majority? Shall we capitulate to the Christian right-wing, the Fred Phelps wannabees of the world, who have, in much the same manner as Ms. Raymond denigrates transsexuals, historically referred to lesbians (and feminists) as "so-called women" and to gay men as "half-men?"

Or shall we insist on our right to name ourselves and, following Monique Wittig's sage advice, invent what we can't remember? Such an insistence, such a creativity, demands a sensitive level of courtesy toward the insistence and creativity of others, even when it gores our own ox. Civilized discourse demands no less. My sharpest criticism of Ms. Raymond's book is finally that it is rude and uncivil to insist on the didactic and ultimately boring pejoratives and quote marks she insists upon when referring to people she doesn't particularly like.

Ms. Raymond makes much of the transsexual co-option of lesbian-feminist issues and is surprised that many (if not most) woman-centered, woman-identified women -- even women who identify frankly as lesbian-feminist -- have no real problem with transsexuals (post-operative) once the situation becomes personal rather than theoretical. At the risk of sounding like a biological determinist, or even a cultural feminist, many women -- especially women unconventional enough to defy popular opinion and moral strictures in the first place -- are open to new ideas and sympathetic to the dilemmas posed by a sexist society on all its members. Is a woman-centered, woman-identified man, many of whom have been horribly oppressed and abused by males (or have come to the feminist position through logic or a feeling of solidarity) and avoid contact and interaction with men with a

fervor that might warm the heart of the most violent separatist, were s/he to take the trouble to enquire, to sit in a closet, speaking to no one, until that bright day dawns which sees lesbian-feminist communities open their ranks to like-minded men? Is Ms. Raymond working toward that sunny day? Does she really think that these issues belong only to nontranssexual females? Or do they belong to every human to whom they have relevance? Does she think people choose their politics like picking out what shoes to wear? Give me a break.

While it's certainly true that a few transsexual lesbian-feminists have made a noisy nuisance of themselves within the community, the same can be said for many nontranssexual females. Even the revered Mary Daly has her detractors and enemies. Should Ms. Daly be encouraged to withdraw from the community for the sake of harmony, as Ms. Raymond advocates that lesbian-identified transsexuals do, or should this particular heavy thinker of the lesbian-feminist community grow up and develop a sense of humor and tolerance? Poor socialization is a thin excuse for bigotry, even though it has been a favorite ploy of bigots from time immemorial. Denying an oppressed class the opportunity to interact and learn socially and then holding their social ignorance against them is a self-fulfilling prophecy that completely begs the question. If, as in some non-Judeo-Christian societies, an honored place were made for people who cross over sex roles, who are spirit-called, would there be such a need for surgery? Perhaps not. But what difference does it make? Real transsexuals and transgendered people in our actual culture have grown up in a society which had no such honored place for them. Why should they alone be forced to act as though they had, however well that this might foster the coming revolution?

In an ideal world, lesbian separatism would be unnecessary and irrelevant as the mere accident of differential genitalia would have no historical effect on life experience other than the theoretical potential for gestation and lactation. The historical experience of each and every one of us tells us that this is not an ideal world and that there are no immediate prospects for radical change. We have to live with what we have. Transsexuals have to live with a present society and a history that has forced them to choose sides just as much as it has forced lesbian separatists to choose sides. In both cases, the choice is a compromise between possibility and desire and I sympathize with all those who have been forced to make these very difficult choices. I wouldn't presume to be able to choose for them. Ms. Raymond wants it both ways. The same harsh logic that leads Ms. Raymond to insist that the place for transsexuals is with their native gender, pushing the gender envelope, however uncomfortable or crazy or dead this might make them, should, I would think, lead her to insist that lesbian separatists remain in the front lines, constantly interacting with men on a daily basis, zealously confronting male oppression on behalf of their straight sisters rather than letting them fend for themselves in a battle made difficult by the bonds of affection and sexual attraction which might tend to muddle their thinking. Transsexual invasions of women-only space would then be a non-issue, since such space by rights wouldn't exist. *(continued on page 57)*

The Distorting Lenses of Theory

by Lisa Rose

I have been reading a new book *The Lenses of Gender* written by the famed sex-role researcher, Dr. Sandra L. Bem (creator of the popular Bem Sex-

Role Inventory, pioneer of the concept of psychological androgyny, etc). This book has been lionized by a number of my friends and overall I feel it to be a thoughtful attempt at deconstructing the androcentric and gender-polarized ways of thinking that plague our culture. As a postoperative male-to-female transsexual, however, I am bothered by the way Dr. Bem handles the topic of transsexualism within her book for a number of reasons. I will mention three of them here.

First, she assumes that transsexuals begin life with "extremely gender non-conforming preferences in activities, playmates, clothing, and the like" (p. 171). From this she hypothesizes that such a troubling mismatch between interests and assigned-gender ultimately compels transsexuals to "convince themselves" they are not really of the gender they were assigned to (reminding me of Festinger's dissonance-reduction theory, or of Daryl Bem's alternative self-perception theory).

Although this (quite popular) hypothesis *seems* elegant and rational, its assumed antecedent conditions do not always occur. My childhood interests (and those of several other MTFs I know) were boy-conforming, including playing war and sports, model-building, tinkering with bicycles, electronics, etc... with male playmates. In fact, my own family was incredulous when I announced my gender-change, exclaiming "but you always liked such *masculine* things!" Like many of us, I was able to fit in satisfactorily as a male. I nonetheless had an inexplicable (almost *instinctual*, without wishing to be too biological-essentialist) desire to be female. Ironically, it is now as a woman that I have conflicts between my interests (female action films, androgynous clothes, following women's competitive sports, etc...) and the "traditional" *female* gender role.

I realize many MTFs do describe having had very "feminine" interests in their childhoods (dolls, sewing, female playmates, etc...). Many of them did. But for some of us, these recollections of early feminine interests become somewhat exaggerated over time as we attempt to legitimize our status as females in the eyes of a culture that is both gender-polarized and stereotype-ridden. Thus, although Dr. Bem posits that feminine

interests lead to self-perception of female identity in MTFs, it may actually be female identity that leads to self-perception of feminine interests.

Second, she suggests society actually *wants* gender nonconformists who won't "straighten out" (p. 110) to have sex-change operations as a solution to the threat they pose for our bipolar gender system. Speaking from my own experience, this really isn't true. My friends and family were mortified at the thought that I would alter my body in such a way. They suggested androgyny, femininity, homosexuality, transvestism, basically anything they could think of to keep me from taking that step.

In fact, I believe our society is horrified by the concept of surgically altering the body's aesthetics for any reason other than better conforming to societal beauty standards for our birth-sexes. Doctors advertise breast implants for natural-born females and chin implants for natural-born males with aplomb. These procedures bring people closer into line with the ideals for their "natural" sexes. But practitioners whose work is contrary or unrelated to this goal (e.g., transgender-support doctors, tattoo artists, body piercing experts) find themselves relegated to the margins of society. We frequently even accuse such specialists of catering to the misguided whims of the mentally unstable (the surgeon who helped Michael Jackson look more "feminine" comes to mind).

Dr. Bem herself pejoratively refers to transsexual surgeries as "mutilating" (p. 108, 171). To me this word represents a dualistic resistance to the idea that the body itself can be a means of cross-gendered expression, as much as any clothing or behavior. Is there anyone truly objective enough to define absolutely what is natural and healthy, versus unnatural and mutilating in the realm of the body? We certainly condone surgical mutilations such as heart transplants, plastic joints, and limb amputations when the purpose is to "save lives" (is it any wonder transsexuals frequently frame their operations as matters of life and death?). When it comes to physical sex, however, the body becomes strangely sacred and surgically inviolable. This double standard I believe actually *reinforces* the bipolar gender status quo by telling gender nonconformists they are not to take liberties with the essential sexes of their births.

Consequently, can Dr. Bem really believe that our society, with these biases toward the preservation of birth-sex, actually *encourages* individuals to have sex-change operations? I assert that the desire for such operations comes from within the passions of transsexuals themselves, not from the needs of society. Transsexuals usually have to *fight* for their surgeries (a fight made more difficult by some of the people she cites in support of her

"Many transsexuals are becoming increasingly angry at being continually cast as the hapless 'victims' of various societal evils delineated by nontranssexual theorists."

arguments, e.g., Janice Raymond with her crusading attacks, and Johns Hopkins with their suspected capitulation to societal "transphobia"). Furthermore, it is we transsexuals, not society, who derive the most pleasure from the bodies we create for ourselves. As a result, many of us find it condescending and inappropriate when social theorists such as Dr. Bem try to place the locus of control for our surgeries beyond us.

This leads into my final point. Many transsexuals are becoming increasingly angry at being continually cast as the hapless "victims" of various societal evils delineated by nontranssexual theorists. Whether we are the hypothesized result of Stoller's nuclear-family breakdown scenario (i.e. dominant mothers and absentee fathers), or of the gender-polarized world that Dr. Bem describes, we are nonetheless portrayed as the walking wounded, those driven to cruel and undeserved fates by social forces beyond our control. Though such attitudes may be expressed by people who truly feel themselves to be sympathetic, they allow us very little opportunity for positive self-regard and are consequently resented. A lot of us love our new bodies, and are quite satisfied with the ways our lives have turned out.

In response, a growing number of us would like to see the desire to undergo physical sex-change officially depathologized and accepted as a life option (in a similar way as homosexuality was removed from lists of psychological illnesses). There might be little for us to lose in such a reclassification except social pity (which may do us more harm than good) and insurance coverage (which rarely pays for these procedures anymore anyway). On the positive side though, theorists might then feel less morally justified in looking at us through the lenses of their own particular gender theories in trying to explain what they apparently will not accept from our own descriptions of our subjective experiences.

Indeed, if our beliefs are, as Dr. Bem writes, "incomprehensible in a modern scientific community" (p. 171), then perhaps science should adjust the prescription of its own lenses, or even remove them, if it is to see us properly. Such lenses often seem polarized themselves to block out and invalidate beliefs based upon intuition, sensation, spirituality, or other similarly "nonscientific" inputs. Many transsexuals map out their paths from such inputs, frequently only to have the labels of "erroneous" and "unhealthy" applied to their destinations by gender scholars who have never personally experienced "transsexual" feelings.

We should remember that psychiatrists who diagnose gender-dysphoria are not the only ones who wield, as Dr. Bem paraphrases it, "priestly power to define mental health and mental illness" (p. 111). It can be wielded as well by academic theorists who, in choosing to view certain alternative lifestyles as the tragic (even mutilated) byproducts of social pathology, disseminate their own implicit definitions of these same two constructs.



Lisa Rose

Having lived secretively in the lesbian and academic worlds for the last seven years, Lisa Rose is slowly trying to re-embrace her transgendered identity and community. She has worked as a software designer, filmmaker, junior high math teacher, and psychology graduate student (and instructor). She and her two cats live in Palo Alto, California where they are rabid fans of Stanford women's basketball and volleyball.

The Man in the Moon (continued from page 55)

Presumably this would be uncomfortable for many but really, what's comfort worth when compared to duty?

I can't talk about this book anymore. I suppose it has an audience. Such stuff always does. Those too lazy to think for themselves (or too self-absorbed to talk to the imagined enemy to find out what they're really like) and prefer their opinions predigested. While reading it, I kept thinking of Rush Limbaugh. Change a few nouns around, dumb it down a little, and throw in a few queers and feminazis and it could easily have been ghost-written for him. To her credit, Ms. Raymond does talk quite a bit about the oppressive nature of sex roles and sees that this contributes to the anguish of transgendered people but fails to see that the primary tool used to enforce those roles is, and always has been, exclusion. It takes entirely too much time to be constantly beating people up all the time to keep them in line, a cold shoulder costs little and is every bit as effective over the long haul. She refuses to admit her own high-minded contribution to, and low-minded complicity in, this oppression. You can't play with us because you're a girl, or act like a girl, is the boyish taunt. Substituting boy for girl easily puts the same speech in the mouths of girlish cliques.

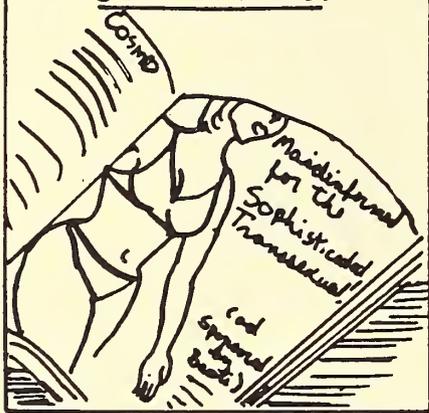
It is surely telling that in the midst of her many diatribes against transsexuals as a sort of perversion of a Platonic ideal of what real women really are, she troubles to note that several have anecdotally not acted enough like real women to suit her while several others have acted too much like women she doesn't like. Either way, she sees just what she expects to see, stereotypical masculine behavior, nasty, brutal, ugly, castrated men that they are, masquerading as women to spy on them and steal their female energy. Gosh. I guess that means they can't come out to play, however bright the moon. And, speaking of the moon, look there! Can you see? There, on the face of the moon? It's a man, isn't it? I can see his adam's apple, clear as day. It must be a man. Mustn't it?

J.L. Phillips is a 48 year-old transgendered lesbian/feminist Witch, a survivor, and a resident of Capistrano Beach, California. Her poetry was published in issue # 3 of TransSisters.

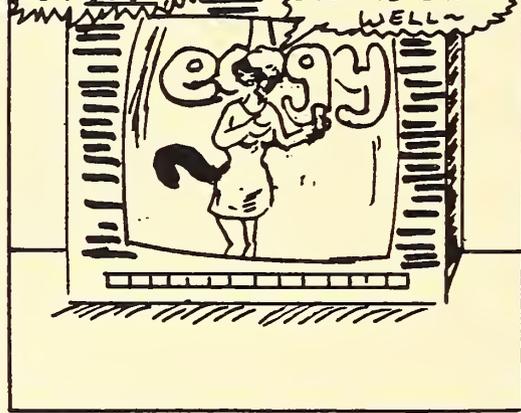
Reverse Endorsements by Diana Green

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 ATTACKS ON SURGERY FUNDING AND SNIPES BY JUDGES GOT YOU DOWN?
 MAYBE IT'S TIME FOR **REVERSE ENDORSEMENTS!**

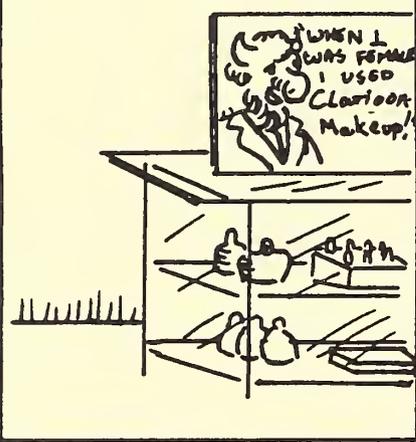
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SNEAKY, UNETHICAL, & UNDERHANDED? YOU BET!



BUT IT'S THEIR SHAME AND FEAR!

LET'S MAKE THEM PAY FOR IT FOR A CHANGE!

DS 7/95



Diana Green
 photo by Pauline Johnson

Diana Green is a forty-one year old, six years postoperative bisexual woman and a resident of Minneapolis, Minnesota. During her commercial art education, she was an apprentice to Reed Waller, creator of Omaha, the Cat Dancer. Her writings, illustrations and cartoons have appeared in Animania, The Madison Edge, Feminist Voices, Gaze and Gay Comics.



Get Submissive!

TransSisters welcomes submissions of original articles, interviews, reviews, position statements, press releases, editorials, research reports, fiction, poetry, artwork or photography dealing with issues of transsexuality and feminism. Submissions dealing with controversial issues or taking controversial stances (short of character assassination) including erotica are especially encouraged. Although the primary focus of *TransSisters* is on issues of concern to male-to-female transsexuals,

material related to female-to-male concerns will also be considered for publication. Material that has been published elsewhere is also acceptable, but please indicate where it has been previously published if it has been.

All submissions are subject to editing by the Domineditrix. Please enclose a brief biographical summary (two or three sentences) with your submission. Submissions written under pseudonyms are acceptable.

TransSisters reserves the right to reprint all submissions. All other rights revert to the individual authors after publication.

TransSisters also reserves the right to refuse publication of any submissions which do not meet our editorial or aesthetic standards or which are contrary to our goals and purposes.

Manuscripts should be double-spaced or neatly hand written. Please number your pages and put your name and the title of the work at the top of every page. Please submit your work on 3.5 floppy disks in either Macintosh or DOS ASCII formats if at all possible.

Artwork must be camera ready. Please enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope if you want your manuscript, disk or artwork returned.

Contributors are also welcome and encouraged to submit photographs (preferably black & white) of themselves along with their submissions, but please indicate the name of the photographer if you do so, so that we can give proper photo credit. Negatives are also acceptable in lieu of prints, and will be returned if you provide a s.a.s.e.

The deadline for submissions of all sorts is six weeks prior to publication of the next issue. Those dates are as follows: Winter: November 20; Spring: February 18; Summer: May 20; Autumn: August 20.

Contributors receive a free copy of the issue in which their work appears. Please address all submissions to: *TransSisters*; Davina Anne Gabriel, editor; 4004 Troost Avenue; Kansas City, Missouri 64110. Submissions can also be sent by fax to (816)753-7816, but you must call first, as there must be someone here to receive your fax.



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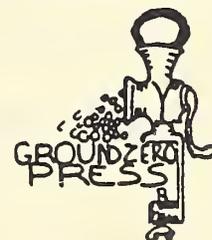
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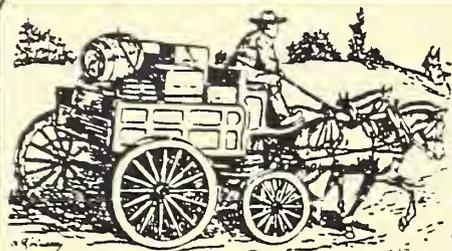
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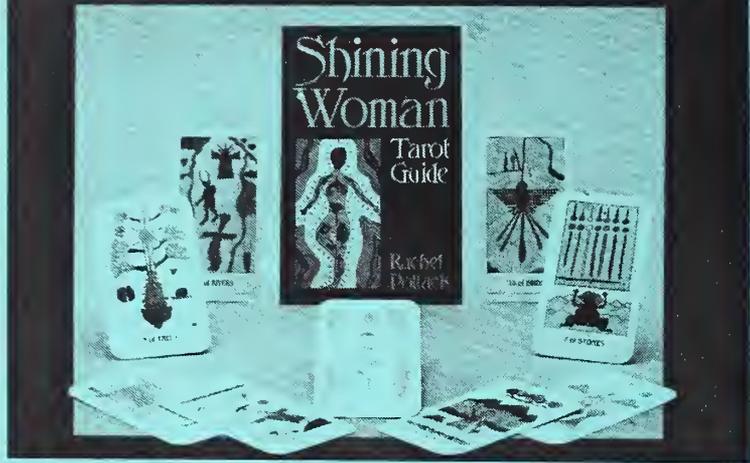
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Shining Woman Tarot



Shining Woman Tarot is a sacred divination pack, awakening in the reader a sense of spiritual power and beauty. It is the result of decades of work with the Tarot, myth, dreams and the spiritual realities of the imagination. Its roots are in traditional Tarot, but it is also a radical departure.

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