

Crossroads of Knowledge

Lanei M. Rodemeyer

Lou Sullivan Diaries (1970-1980) and Theories of Sexual Embodiment

Making Sense of Sensing

 Springer

Crossroads of Knowledge

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For Lou

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Introduction

The spirit of Lou Sullivan¹—however you want to understand it—transformed this project. Originally, it was meant to be a highly philosophical analysis examining that muddy intersection of “the body” and “discourse,” in other words, how our experiences of our own bodies may or may not be mediated by our cultures, our belief systems, our institutions, our power relations, and our words. It began, more overtly, as a response to the rapid rise of queer theory in the 1990s as well as the increase of political and academic activity on the part of transgender persons. I “met” Lou through his diaries during my early archival work. In fact, I think I fell in love. If one can fall in love with someone she can never meet. Not to mention the fact that, since Sullivan was a gay man, he never really would have been interested in me anyway.... In any case, the project morphed—more than once—and now Lou Sullivan’s writings are a major contributor to this project. His life story is too compelling to be used simply as an occasional reference for theory, too provocative to be set aside.

So now this book is a cooperative effort between Sullivan and myself. I still try to negotiate how our bodies engage discourse and how discourse engages our bodies, but now, in a sense, Sullivan and I are working alongside one another. Sullivan offers insights from his diaries written between 1970 and 1980, presented here—nearly in full—in Chaps. 1, 3, and 5. These entries focus on Sullivan’s experiences with his own embodiment and transition and his relations to several lovers. I did not edit much within the diary entries included here, allowing for Sullivan to speak in his own voice, to make his own mistakes, and to speak as loudly, crassly, sensitively, and humorously as he desired. Chapters 2, 4, and 6 are written by me, with introjections from Sullivan excerpted from his diaries. These chapters contain analyses of embodiment from philosophy, sexology, psychology, phenomenology, queer theory, and transgender studies. While I could not take on all positions on the question of embodiment nor all texts that address trans experience, I try to negotiate between

¹Given that Sullivan identified himself as a man and saw himself as always having been male, I will be maintaining consistent use of the masculine pronoun in my discussions of Sullivan and his life.

the main lines of debate in the humanities in the 1990s with the rise of both queer theory and transgender activism. In doing so, I look back to some original texts that influenced certain lines in the debates, and then I turn toward more contemporary responses in trans studies. Sullivan's interjections provide insight to the analyses at hand, while I work through the details.

Sullivan's diaries are divided between Chaps. 1, 3, and 5 merely for coherent chapter size, and they move chronologically through Sullivan's diaries from the beginning of 1970 to the beginning of 1980. During these ten years, we see Sullivan struggling with his identity as a gay man and attempting to fit himself into a discourse that excludes him by either omitting his existence or denying it outright. Meanwhile, he celebrates the sexual revolution with several lovers and in his relationship with Tom.² Tom, however, is not very supportive of Lou's male identity, which not only troubles their relationship but also leads Lou to vacillate between presenting himself publicly as male and at other times as female. In 1979 and the beginning of 1980, Lou and Tom end their relationship, and Lou finally begins to take hormones to transition to the male embodiment that he has desired for so long.

The theoretical chapters proceed as follows: In Chap. 2, I explain the main positions of Michel Foucault and then Judith Butler as two primary inspirations for the movement of queer theory. Looking at the line in queer theory that argues that the body is completely discursive or socially constructed, I then turn to transgender studies in order to analyze how this position has been both appropriated and criticized by trans theorists. In doing so, I seek to acknowledge embodied experiences that seem to arise in spite of the discourse that surround them, as well as those that arise through discourse itself. In Chap. 4, I explain the influence of *The Kinsey Reports* (Kinsey et al. 1948, 1953) on how homosexuality was understood in the USA leading up to the sexual revolution of the 1970s (during which Sullivan was writing the diaries presented here). I then turn to Harry Benjamin's *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (1966) in order to examine how his text influenced professional (and personal) attitudes about transsexuality and transgender. Once again, I turn to transgender studies in order to elaborate on the critiques leveled at the professional regimentation of transsexuality as well as the limitation of resources for trans persons seeking a variety of professional assistance. Finally, in Chap. 6, I introduce Edmund Husserl's phenomenology—specifically, a series of his analyses of embodiment (Husserl 1989)—in order to demonstrate how a lived, sensory body grounds our embodiment as social, discursive beings. Rather than rejecting the position from queer theory that I take on in Chap. 2, I seek to adjust it in order to allow for a sensory embodiment that substantiates those experiences that arise somehow beyond or in spite of the discourses at hand.

The analytic chapters are not meant to address any specific diary selections or chapter. Rather, while the diary chapters proceed chronologically, the analytic chapters follow their own flow, and they build upon each other in their own way. However, the shifting movement between diary writings and theoretical analysis is meant to

²I have changed the names of most persons involved with Sullivan in this project, giving alternate names for those who appear frequently and giving initials for those who are mentioned only briefly.

reflect the fluctuating ways in which we can approach our own embodiment as well as the mutual influence of personal experience and theory. Our theoretical—and discursive—attitudes about the body filter into how we are embodied; at the same time, embodied experience grounds—sometimes even rises up against—the discursive senses that constitute our bodies.

A note on my approach: This book was meant, originally, to be a basic introduction into queer theory, to the historical texts from Alfred Kinsey and his associates, and Benjamin, and to phenomenology, along with Sullivan's diaries. It has become a much more complex book along the way. Now, Sullivan offers his own commentary to my analyses; transgender studies—which was just establishing itself when I began this project—has become an essential component to the discussion, and my introduction to Husserl's phenomenology addresses an analysis that is not usually mentioned in general overviews of his work. It is no longer just an introductory text. Those who choose to use this book for pedagogical purposes—or for your own personal gain—will find that the analytic chapters tend to move from a more introductory stance to a more academic and critical stance. In doing so, this book now attempts to address beginners to these areas, readers for personal interest, and scholars—for better or for worse.

A note on terminology: As a cisgender woman—a woman whose gender assigned at birth aligns with her lived embodied experience as well as how she presents herself to others—I recognize that I am on precarious ground in my employment of terminology that is meant to describe gender. I have been, and remain, humbled by the courage of trans writers whose experience is the basis of their theory and terminology usage. In fact, the history of trans experience is also a history of terminology taken up by—and assigned to—those who identify as trans or have been identified in that way. As such, I have struggled with what might be the most appropriate terminology to use in this book. Lou Sullivan identified ultimately as transsexual in the diaries published here, since that was the term that was available to him at the time, but today he might have chosen transgender, trans, trans*, gender variant, or one of many other terms. Or he might have stuck with “transsexual.” In writing about Sullivan and about historical texts addressing trans experience, I have tried to maintain a balance between terms in use at the time and some of the terms available today. When I use the term “transsexual,” then, it is usually in the context of a historical discussion relating to a specific definition at that time—in most cases, presuming a binary transition between male and female or the reverse. Or I am referring to specific authors who self-identify or theorize with this term. When I use the terms “trans,”³ transgender, or “gender variant,” I intend these terms as inclusively as possible and usually within the context of more contemporary discussions. Occasionally,

³ Having followed some of the online discussions for and against the use of the term “trans*” (with an asterisk), I find that “trans*” does not seem to add much meaning to that of “trans” (without an asterisk) and thus have opted to use “trans.” This is not meant as a proclamation on my part that one term is preferable to the other; rather, in having to choose one for the sake of simplicity of the book as a whole, I find that “trans” is capable of acting as an inclusive term when qualified as such.

I will also refer to “transgender” in reference to the rising academic area of transgender or trans studies.

Other important terms may be common to some, but not to others: *Gender identity* refers to the sense of gender to which one feels one belongs, if any. Usually, a person will feel male or female, and usually this will align with the anatomy we associate with male or female. In the case of trans persons, the senses of gender and embodiment are often not lined up in the same way, to varying degrees and depending on the individual. In the case of intersex persons, such alignment can also be called into question, because a person defined by medical professionals as “intersex” might be assigned a gender that does not fit with that person’s gender identity. *Gender assigned at birth* refers to what we usually think of as “birth anatomy.” Based upon visible sexual organs, we usually proclaim an infant to be a boy or a girl. But the parameters for “boy” and “girl” have been constructed by society in general and the medical community in particular. The term “gender assigned at birth” emphasizes the social aspect of gender assignment over the presumptions we have that our bodies are “naturally” male or female (exclusively). *Sex or gender reassignment surgery (SRS or GRS)* usually refers to the surgery (or surgeries) that can be performed to alter a person’s body—including sexual organs—so that it aligns with that person’s gender identity. Not all trans people undergo such surgery, however. While surgery only on the genitals is often colloquially referred to as “bottom” surgery, some trans persons may opt just for “top” surgery—enhancing or removing the breasts. Others might choose hormone treatment, and still others might identify with their gender primarily through dress and comportment. And, of course, these modes of presenting one’s gender identity to oneself and others can be combined with each other and with other options in a variety of ways.

Why Phenomenology? Why Husserl?

This is not the first attempt to introduce phenomenology into the area of transgender studies (or, historically speaking, into studies of transsexual embodiment). Almost twenty years ago, Henry Rubin (1998) argued that phenomenology could be an extremely useful tool for transgender studies, stating that:

Phenomenology provides a framework for making sense of transsexualism. With its emphasis on the body as a point of view on the world, phenomenology accommodates a transsexual awareness that bodies significantly shape experience of the world. (Rubin 1998, 270)

Rubin suggests that phenomenology can be employed as a type of corrective for misreadings of Foucault that—especially in the 1990s—led to severe criticisms of transsexual embodiment from the feminist perspective, on the one hand, and valorization of transgender as a symbol of fluid gender,⁴ on the other. For this reason,

⁴Rubin refers to Bernice Hausman’s *Changing Sex* (1995) with regard to the former and the queer theory movement arising out of Butler’s work with regard to the latter.

Rubin (1998, 279) argues that phenomenology and genealogy (as influenced by Foucauldian discourse analysis) “are complementary methods that augment one another’s strengths.” This is a sentiment with which I agree, although my analyses in this book might appear to lean on the side of phenomenology.

Much more recently, Gayle Salamon (2014) echoes Rubin’s claim that phenomenology is a useful approach for trans studies, saying that:

Phenomenology can also be understood as receptive to trans in its gendered sense, through insistence on the importance of embodied experience to understanding the nature of self, others, and the world. (Salamon 2014, 153)

But, as Salamon’s short article shows, very few have taken up Rubin’s call. With regard to book-length projects, only two texts seem to have made notable impact, namely, Sarah Ahmed’s *Queer Phenomenology* (2006) and Salamon’s own *Assuming a Body* (2010).

In *Queer Phenomenology*, Ahmed (2006) begins with one of Husserl’s first analyses in *Ideas I*, using his “writing table” as a launching pad into a discussion of orientations both spatial and sexual. However, her book veers quickly off the path of phenomenology and away from Husserl, as she admits in her introduction:

Although I follow the concept of orientations in this book, it is important to note that I start with phenomenology. And yet, even at this starting point I seem to lose my way. [...] My writing moves between conceptual analysis and personal digression [...]. Once I caught sight of the table in Husserl’s writing, which is revealed just for a moment, I could not help but follow tables around. [...] So I followed Husserl in his turn to the table, but when he turns away, I got led astray. (Ahmed 2006, 21–2)

Husserl and his method, for Ahmed, are motivations for analyses of a different type, and thus her book is not quite the introduction of phenomenology into queer theory that its title insinuates—at least, not from a Husserlian phenomenological perspective. It is a queering of phenomenology—which in itself is a valuable project—but it is not an application of phenomenology to queer theory in a way that would be helpful here.

For example, in addressing how Husserl describes our perception of a table, Ahmed shifts significantly away from his project in order to move in her own direction:

The table’s sameness can only be intended. Husserl then makes what is an extraordinary claim: *only the table remains the same*. [...] The table is the only thing that keeps its place in the flow of perception. This already makes the table a rather queer object [...]. We can take what is powerful about Husserl’s thesis of intentionality and suggest that the sameness of the table is spectral: the table is only the same given that we have conjured its missing sides. (Ahmed 2006, 36)

In the beginning of this citation, Ahmed’s description corresponds very much with Husserl’s phenomenology. However, when she takes “what is powerful about Husserl’s thesis,” she does not merely modify, intensify, or select an aspect of his discussion; rather, by claiming that “the sameness of the table is spectral” and that “we have conjured [the table’s] missing sides,” she is actually claiming the very *opposite* of Husserl’s position. Husserl is very clear that our experience of perception

is not one of “conjuring” nor is it “spectral” in nature. For Husserl, the other sides of the object, the multitude of aspects that make the object a unity rather than a mere image, are *co-given* with the perspective that is directly before me. It is this co-givenness that distinguishes Husserl’s position from idealism, and it is the foundation for many of his analyses of perception.

Now, it is not essential that Ahmed be “true” to Husserl in her project of queering phenomenology. In fact, “queer” analyses are often meant to read “against” the intentions of an author. And, as mentioned, her project is valuable in its own right. The point here, though, is that her project does not engage phenomenology as a useful methodology to address questions of gender, as Rubin suggested nor is phenomenology even employed as a position “receptive” to trans issues, as Salamon suggests. In fact, while *Queer Phenomenology* focuses on questions of sexual orientation and “queering,” it is not directed toward the experience of being trans. Ahmed turns to her own (cisgender) experience as homosexual, making this perspective a primary focal point in her discussions of sexuality. For these reasons, her book is not especially helpful for a project that wishes to make use of phenomenology as a method in order to work through issues important to trans experience.

Salamon, in her *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality* (2010), explicitly introduces phenomenology into the area of transgender studies through her discussion of Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s notion of “flesh.” Her understanding of “flesh” is problematic, though, as I discuss in Chap. 2; moreover, while she appears to introduce “flesh” enthusiastically as a term useful for transgender theorists, her discussion of this notion is limited to her second chapter, and it is not mentioned again in any of her subsequent chapters on trans embodiment. Salamon’s overall argument is to establish the body as wholly socially constructed. In doing so, she understands the material body as dense matter, creating a necessary dichotomy between this dense matter and the much more nuanced socially constructed body for which she argues. However, this dichotomy forces transgender theorists either to accept the total social construction of their bodies or to appear as ultimately naïve and stubborn in their references to various material senses of their embodiment. In spite of her apparent sympathy for trans experience, her argument appropriates very pointed claims that trans theorists make about their own embodiment, employing them in her critique, rather than taking these descriptions up as a starting point for consideration. For these reasons, I would argue that Salamon’s attempts, first, to bring phenomenology into discussion with trans theory and, second, to take the descriptions of embodiment offered within transgender studies seriously, fall short of success.

Nevertheless, Husserl is probably the last phenomenologist (or even philosopher) to come to mind when broaching the subject of the sexual body—and especially transgender embodiment. In fact, although Rubin (1998) and Salamon (2014) refer to Husserl as the founder of the contemporary phenomenological method, Rubin turns to Jean-Paul Sartre (1956) and Merleau-Ponty (1962) to carry out his analyses, and Salamon turns to Merleau-Ponty and Lefort (1968). Salamon also cites Martin Heidegger, Simone de Beauvoir, and Frantz Fanon as promising sources for trans studies, mentioning only that, “[e]ven Husserl, for all his abstraction, has been usefully mobilized by Sarah Ahmed” (Salamon 2014, 155). And we must

admit that the suspicion of Husserl (and phenomenology in general as arising from his work) is not without reason. Husserl's works often presume a stable, unified person in a "lifeworld" of rational, empowered people. Such presumptions do not fly in a philosophical world that is much more attuned and sensitized to the multidirectional flow of power; institutionalized racism, misogyny, homophobia, ableism, and other prejudices; and the fluidity of embodiment and sexuality. As Rubin (1998, 267) notes, "phenomenology has thus been justly criticized for reproducing forms of domination encoded in educated, financially secure, white, heterosexual, masculinist, and European subject positions." But Husserl's later work—and even some of his early work that has rendered this impression of him as stodgy and old-fashioned (Husserl 1982)—focuses exactly on several of the tensions that we see in contemporary theoretical discussions: the tension between my own embodied experiences and a social, conceptual understanding of them, the interplay between appearances and their shifts in meanings, and even the fluidity in my own identity as constituted by myself and others. For this reason, I would argue that Husserl should be an important player in many philosophical discussions today and specifically in transgender studies.

There are additional reasons for holding this position as well: Given the self-reflective stance and the focus on embodiment taken up in many texts by trans theorists, phenomenology seems to be a highly appropriate method for work in this area. This is not to say that trans theorists have been lacking in method or that their analyses somehow fall short in any way; rather, it is to suggest that phenomenology might offer some methodological tools and terminology that could assist in substantiating certain claims, fleshing out some analyses, or developing particular arguments. Husserl (1989) in particular—as I elaborate in Chap. 6—carries out extensive analyses of the body, and some of these analyses lend themselves well to theoretical discussions about embodiment in general and trans embodiment in particular.

My conception of phenomenology is informed primarily by Husserl's work. Beginning with experience, the phenomenologist carries out analyses that reveal the structures that underlie it. These structures, depending on the type of phenomenological method employed, might be essential, ontological, psychological, sociological, anthropological and/or existential. But regardless of the direction of the analysis, these structures are, by definition, more enduring than the experience that reveals them, and, further, they exist in a different realm—as ideal, as Being, as psychological structures, or as intersubjective, gendered, or raced ways of being. Usually carried out through some sort of reflective stance, phenomenology follows clues as we describe our experiences in order to identify those structures that are essential to the experience itself.

As you will see in Chap. 6, Husserl's phenomenology of embodiment allows for a sensory ground to the social construction of our bodies—as well as for the eruption of our sensory body into our discursive embodiment. At the same time, though, it does not promote a reduction to materialism, as it addresses how each layer of embodied experience plays into the constitution of the others. As Rubin (1998) suggests, then, I find that a phenomenological grounding in sensory embodiment complements and balances out our understanding of our bodies as socially constructed and/or discursive beings.

A Bit About Lou Sullivan

Lou Sullivan is rather an icon in the trans community, and his influence in the history of trans men is still recognized and celebrated. For example, in 2014, artist Rhys Ernst created a video art piece entitled “Dear Lou Sullivan,” in which he points to trans man history as well as Sullivan’s own participation in developing a community for trans men. In addition, in 2010 Sean Dorsey Dance presented a suite of dances choreographed by Dorsey, entitled “Lou,” as part of Dorsey’s full-length concert, “Uncovered: The Diary Project.” In addition to artistic works, Transgress Press lists a forthcoming book on Lou Sullivan, *Yours in Liberation: The Queer Life of Trans Pioneer Lou Sullivan*, by Brice D. Smith. Several different societies also exist due to the influence of Sullivan: Sullivan was involved in founding FTM International⁵ as well as the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society (now the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Historical Society),⁶ and there is another society named after him, the Lou Sullivan Society,⁷ whose focus is to continue Sullivan’s activist, community, and education work. Finally, Sullivan published several articles and books, most notably his *Information for the Female to Male Cross Dresser and Transsexual* (1990b). This handbook was—if not the first—one of the first of its kind in the USA, offering information for trans men on medical and psychological definitions as well as advice on how to dress, converting clothing sizes, voice, successful male presentation, and even sidebars about various historical figures who were born as women and lived as men. As Susan Stryker (1999) writes:

Sullivan has been posthumously lionized by the transgender movement that took shape in the years since his untimely death at age 39 – and rightly so. [...] If he were alive today he would undoubtedly be one of the leading voices on transgender issues. (Stryker 1999, 62)

Sullivan was born on June 16, 1951, and was raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He received his first diary when he was about 10 and wrote consistently in diaries until dying at the age of 39. As a child, Sullivan wrote about wishing he were a boy. This struggle intensified in his late teens and early twenties, complicated by his love for his long-term boyfriend, Tom. This desire was further confused, however, by the fact that Sullivan’s attraction was to men—particularly to gay men. Sullivan (1989, 69) later recognizes the difficulty in this, asking: “But if a female is attracted to men, wouldn’t life be easier if she just remained a heterosexual woman?” One would think that it would!—but not for a gay trans man.

Sullivan ultimately made the transition to a gay man. He began calling himself “Lou” when he first started cross-dressing as male, because of his infatuation with and his emulation of Lou Reed. Later he maintained that name, not only because it had become part of who he was, but also because he had had a grandfather named Louie (see diary entry 11/8/1979). After much struggle with Tom (the long-term boyfriend), and ultimately the end of their relationship, Sullivan began hormone treatment. Later, he did go on to undergo surgery, both mastectomy and genital

⁵<http://www.ftmi.org>

⁶<http://www.glbthistory.org>

⁷<http://www.lousullivansociety.org>

reconstruction surgery. Sometime in the early 1980s,⁸ Sullivan contracted the HIV virus. Ironically, he felt somewhat validated; living with AIDS made Lou feel more authentically associated with the gay male community. Sullivan is quoted as saying: “I don’t feel too bad about the AIDS thing because it kind of proves that I was successful, that I really did live as a gay man and I was able to do it, so I kind of feel almost okay about it.” (Coleman and Bockting 1988, 78).⁹ During the 1980s—both before and after he learned that he had AIDS—he was a staunch activist and author on behalf of trans people. On March 2, 1991, Lou Sullivan died of an AIDS-related illness at the age of 39.

Because of his own experience, Lou became an advocate for trans people. At first, he had simply researched literature, biographies, and medical texts for any evidence of trans people and especially of gay trans men. Of the latter, he found almost nothing. With regard to the former, though, Lou found novels and biographies about various persons who lived as members of the “opposite” sex for different reasons. He published book reviews of several of these texts and then became more explicitly activist by publishing several articles addressing feminism, homosexuality, and transsexuality. Most of these were published by the Gay People’s Union (GPU) newsletter (a Milwaukee publication), with one, “Looking Toward Transvestite Liberation” (1979), being republished in several newsletter/magazines and one anthology.¹⁰ Another, “A Transvestite Answers a Feminist,” originally published in the GPU newsletter (August 1973), is reprinted in *The Transgender Studies Reader* (Sullivan 2006). Lou continued to write privately and publicly during the later part of his life. Although he is best known for his *Information for the Female-to-Male* (1990b),¹¹ he also wrote a lengthy biography on Jack Bee Garland, who lived the last forty years of his life as a man (1990a). In addition to his written work, Sullivan became an advocate and public speaker. He argued for a distinction between gender identity and sexual orientation. As the subject of a case study that was published in the *Journal of Psychology & Human Sexuality* (Coleman and Bockting 1988), he became the grounds for a similar argument within the professional psychological community, and the authors suggested assessment devices that would better recognize the complexity of and distinction between gender identity and sexual orientation. In more than one way, then, Sullivan contributed to, and assisted in creating,

⁸Probably in the summer of 1980. See Stryker (1999, 75).

⁹Sullivan also repeats this sentiment in an interview, the clip of which is presented in Rhys Ernst’s video art production, “Dear Lou Sullivan,” (2014) mentioned just above. Stryker (1999, 74) also cites from Sullivan’s diary entry on January 7, 1987: “My whole life I’ve wanted to be a gay man and it’s kind of an honour to die from the gay man’s disease.”

¹⁰According to Sullivan’s vitae, “Looking Toward Transvestite Liberation” was also published later in *Gay Liberator* (Detroit, Sept/Oct 1974); *Shocks: The Androgyny Issue* (San Francisco, Momo’s, 1976); *Female Impersonator* magazine (Neptune Productions, 1974); and *The New Gay Liberation Book* (Palo Alto, Ramparts, 1979).

¹¹*Information for the Female to Male Cross Dresser and Transsexual* was published in at least three editions, in increasingly expanded form (the first edition being a small brochure and the third being a book including multiple photographs and an extensive bibliography). The third edition was published with Ingersoll Press, through the Ingersoll Gender Center, in October 1990, and is now out of print.

terminology and descriptions that aided not only medical communities but also trans people as they communicated about trans experience. As Stryker (1999) notes:

It is ironic that Sullivan died not knowing that by his example he had helped inaugurate a transgender political movement that would present a far more radical challenge to the social-scientific establishment than anything he ever seemed to have imagined. (Stryker 1999, 79)

Sullivan donated his diaries, along with all of the literature he had collected about trans people, to the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Historical Society in San Francisco, California, when he died. Much of this collection is currently held at the San Francisco Public Library, where it can be accessed on site. However, prior to this publication of his diary entries between 1970 and 1980, Sullivan's diaries have not been published, except as occasional excerpts or in artistic renderings, such as Dorsey's "Lou" (2010). The publication of Sullivan's diaries during this time span, then, not only makes Sullivan's life available for its possible engagement with academic and scientific discussions about sexuality, gender, embodiment, etc. It also makes available to the reading public—and especially to trans men, for whom there is not much recorded history, as Sullivan noted—the life of one very important figure in trans man history.

A Bit About Lanei Rodemeyer

I am not trans, as I indicated earlier. I am not even very queer—although I have had my moments (some more extended and dramatic than others). When I began this project, it was admittedly—and I am still ashamed as I reflect upon this—one that intended to employ “the” transsexual as evidence against certain positions that troubled me within the overwhelming movement of queer theory that began in the 1990s. Along the way, I learned: I learned from Sullivan. I learned from queer theorists. I learned especially from trans theorists who took the risk of theorizing from their own, lived positions. And then I learned more from two insightful, gentle-yet-firm, critical anonymous readers who—for all my attempts at recognizing my position(ing) in this book—pointed out how I continued to remain invisible to myself as a cisgender person and the assumptions I was making about trans experience and about the possible readers of this book. Even though I am a phenomenologist—where the method is one of self-reflection in order to reveal those structures that remain invisible to us in everyday life—I have struggled with theorizing from my own position: I actually backed out of a project on miscarriage in the past, because I felt myself incapable of theorizing from my own experience of a miscarriage.¹² And I still struggle with how blind I am to my living as a white, able-bodied,

¹² Someday I hope to gather up the courage to write that article. In the meantime, I can only extend my apologies—once again—to the editors of *Journal of Social Philosophy's* special issue, *Miscarriage, Reproductive Loss, and Fetal Death*, 46:1 (Spring 2015), Ann J. Cahill, Kathryn J. Norlock, and Brian J. Stoyles.

middle-class, cisgender female in a relatively affluent society. I can only hope that I learned some lessons along the way and that I will continue to learn.

What this project became, well, you can see for yourself here. For me, it became a work of passion—a passion to share Sullivan’s life with others as I believe he wanted it to be shared. A passion, too, in the belief that archival research into some of the original texts that changed the discourses about sexuality and transgender could provide insight into how we understand our sexual embodiment today. And finally, a passionate belief that phenomenology offers not only a methodological tool but also important terminology for assisting us in describing our sexual embodiment and how we live it.

It is my hope that you feel some sense of that passion as you read this book, engaging in Sullivan’s life and these theories. And possibly, you will fall in love with Lou, too.

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Chapter 1

Lou Sullivan Diaries: 1970–1973

11/22/1970

A long time ago, I saw the Gay Liberation Front recommend the reading of several books on homosexuality, which you know I have always been strangely attracted to. One of the recommended books was *The Gay World* by Martin Hoffman. It was real good and it recommended *City of Night* by John Rechy, a story of a male hustler, a male prostitute for homosexuals. I got it immediately.

The whole story was so sad and lonesome and my heart and soul is with the “drag queen.”

“...And, oh, do you believe in God?” she asks me abruptly, and I answered it’s a cussword. “Oh, yes, my dear,” Miss Destiny said, “there is a God, and He is one hell of a joker. Just—look—” and she indicates her lovely green satin dress and then waves her hand over the entire room. “*Trapped!* ... But one day, in the most lavish drag youve evuh seen—heels! and gown! and beads! and spangled earrings! – Im going to storm heaven and protest! *Here I am!!!!* I’ll yell – and I’ll shake my beads at Him... And God will cringe!” [p. 116]

And how can I help. This last week or so, I’ve wanted to go and leave everything and join that world. But where do I fit in. I felt so deprived and sad and lost. Last Monday, I came home on the bus alone (Tom had a late class), and I was so, so close to “cruising” Brady Street and trying to get picked up. So damn close. I think it was Wednesday nite Tom and I lay in bed, not able to fall asleep, talking. I cried and told him I was so restless, so unfulfilled, and starved for excitement. I tried to make him see what I’d been thinking of, but only feeling him out cuz I didn’t know how he’d react. I told him maybe he shouldn’t marry me cuz he’s taking an awful risk cuz I don’t know what I’m thinking, which way I’m going (thinking, as I spoke, that what can become of a girl who’s real desire and passion is with male homosexuals, *that I want to be one*, that I fancy him to be one and I pretend I’m a man when we make love). He told me he doesn’t want me to feel trapped and that for him ideally he wants our relationship to be a totally free one, to come and go as we please. Not to,

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say, go somewhere only cuz the other person is going there, he wants a relationship where “everything goes....” I was silent, thinking what he would feel if I had got picked up on Brady Street but afraid to ask, but he continued as if reading my mind: “...except probably unfaithfulness.” I almost sighed in relief. That is what I had been yearning to hear for so long from him. Our love is so real that there is already a sin such as adultery in it. I was so happy, and this craving in me stopped. But still, still what can I do to help those to whom my heart and soul reaches out?

Oh, what can I say? I don’t want to marry becuz I’ll then forever be deprived of many of those beautiful compliments and I’ll never be sought by another. I still yearn for that world—that world I know nothing about—a serious, threatening, sad, ferocious, stormy, lost world.

1/13/1971

I guess I really need someone to shrink my head cuz I am truly fucked up. I want so badly to quit my job, go to Boston, and shack up with some male homosexual and get in with the real folksy people and maybe even learn to play my dulcimer really well. These are my big dreams right now. Sounds completely fucked to me. I don’t know—maybe some of it might happen in 1971 yet. I’d even be happy with parts of this dream. I’m just trapped cuz I can’t get my mind on anything else I could do to achieve happiness. Sunday, Tom and some friends went to see one of Mick Jagger’s films called “Performance.” Jagger played a bisexual male living with two bisexual lesbians. Jagger got attached to a straight male. But the role Jagger played turned me on so—I could **identify with a bisexual** male; that’s how fucked I am that I had possibly the most satisfying sex contact with Tom that nite I’ve ever had. There’s so much written about all kinds of sexually weird people, but a female who imagines herself a bisexual male is way beyond anything I’ve ever read. And so how do I cope with myself.

1/26/1971

So many new things are going on. I’m really making a lotta personal changes. When I finished reading *City of Night* and was really getting into it, I was so depressed cuz I wanted so much to be a boy and I really started dying. Then I realized that I can’t, so I might as well face it.

New things: I got rollers and have turned up my hair, scented bath oil, and have been wearing sheer nylons when I usually wear black tights. I talked to Ma ‘bout getting an appointment for me at the eye doctor’s to try and get contact lenses; I bought a pretty lacy full slip and garter belt, few new clothes, and a purse and wanna get an electric shaver for my legs. Last but definitely not least, I’m gonna try and get birth control pills.

All these things I’m doing for an ego lifter. I know I can be attractive if I try. I know I can keep Tom’s attention if I try. And if I can make myself *like* being a god-dam girl, maybe I’ll feel a whole lot better.

2/10/1971

So Monday was a weird day. I met my first “queen” today in drag. We had attended the Russian class together last summer and even then I noticed he dressed and moved a bit girlish. But I guess he’s decided to “come out” and came to say hello to me (he has off and on) with eye makeup, earrings, nail polish and a girl’s pant suit. I was pretty freaked out, but played it cool. I asked if he was in a theater class and he said, “No, it’s just me.” He said stuff like he wanted to get an operation to complete the transition. Then I asked if he went to any gay lib meetings and he said, “No, he’s not gay.” He said he has a bisexual roommate. He seemed pretty pleased with himself and he felt good to talk about it, and I told him to stop and see me again cuz I’d like to “see him.” I still, after 2 days, haven’t gotten over it yet.

7/20/1971

We went to *R*’s garage where we helped him fix up his Fiat car. I waxed the car myself and cleaned it out. I really liked it, working with the guys as a guy. *R.* and *T.* were teasing me as usual. There was an article in *Kaleid* by some girl who complained how males shouldn’t call females “chick, baby, or *girl*” (?) cuz they were derogatory expressions (women’s lib stuff), and so *R.* and *T.* always refer to me as “female human being” or “unequal of man.” I got all grungy doing the wax job but did it real good. So after that, we went for pizza all dirty as we were. I really like it—I mean, it’s like an extension of when I used to play “boys” when I was younger. I like to play “boys” now. I know how to be one of the boys; I never knew how to be a *chick* and I’m *glad*! Yet I think I can still be one of the guys and keep my identity as a girl, I hope, to make a pleasant combination.

4/14/1972

Saturday, I made my second attempt (first one was last year) to pick up a guy. I was kinda relieved when it didn’t work out.

When I told a couple of my friends, they just about died. The way I felt about my approach to him—I just wanted to lay it on the line, get an answer, and split. I was so nervous. I didn’t have any confidence to flirt my way to getting him to my place. *J.* said I just can’t take the male role like that. That you have to come on real easy and relaxed and not like a bomb, like make flirty eyes and strike up a petty conversation and maybe say, “I got some real good weed at my place, wanna come over and smoke some?” (Guess I’ll have to keep a little weed around.) I asked if it was OK to go up to a guy and offer to buy him a drink. Nope, that’s the male role again, but I can share my drink with them! It’s so hard to play these roles. I asked Tom if he’s sure he doesn’t mind if I have sex with someone else and he said no. I really hope not. I guess I just have to get the confidence that if I do flirty eyes and stuff, the guy isn’t gonna throw up.

4/21/1972

So where do I start? Friday the 14th, I went out drinking with *J.* and to a party. Lotta jerks. One good-looking boy. So when he borrowed a cigarette from *J.*, I snatched it outa his mouth, asking what he'd give me if I gave it back. He laid back on the floor supporting himself on one elbow and named all kinda things, like a world of people without minds (told him we already have that), and everything he offered I said I didn't want. He asked what I did want. I said, "You." He said OK, you got me and I thought bargain deal. So I gave him the cig and we talked about cats bout 5 mins and he got up and left, talking to some blonde chick. I thought fuck you. He didn't come around the rest of the night (ditched me like the last guy, I thought), so I left. Figured that's as cute and flirty as I can get and if that doesn't work, too bad. So Thurs the 20th walking to *S.*'s after my piano lesson, someone yells to me from a parked car on the other side of the street, "Hey, do you like cats?" I yelled, "Yeah, why?" and then recognized the same guy. I just about shit. He said do you remember me from the party and I said, "Yeah, and you ditched me." He said, "I did not," and I said "BULLSHIT." He asked where I was going, then I told him, and he said he *was* gonna go to a meeting, but the guy he was going with didn't show up. I asked if he wanted to come to *S.*'s for a hamburger, and he said "That sounds good," and I said "Or we could go to my place." He asked who's there and I said no one. He said OK real eager! So when we got inside, he began plunking on the piano and asked if I'd play something. I told him I didn't want to. He asked what I wanted to do and I said "Kiss." He said OK, real eager again. So we stood in the kitchen and began kissing and he began lifting my skirt and blouse. So I pulled his shirt out and in about 2 seconds we were all apart. I said "We're moving" and took him into the bedroom. He laid on top of me and rubbed his dick on my cunt and came on the bed in a few minutes. He asked if I had anything he could wipe it up with and I said, "What for?" He seemed amused, relaxed, nervous, and everything at once. Couldn't tell what he was thinking. I just giggled thru the whole thing I was so glad it was all happening at last! He said he didn't know if he could "come alive" again and I said, "Well, we can try," but it's OK if he doesn't. So he just laid down and I got on him nibbling, licking, kissing, panting a lot, and getting sporadic hip thrusts, and he said he didn't want me to have a heart attack (?). I told him what a fine way to go tho and took him in my mouth. He was lovely and smooth and had soft hair on his soft legs and whiskers on his chin which were fun cuz Tom doesn't have those. He just laid there real quiet smiling thru the whole thing (a lovely boy smile) and then he "got alive" again and began rubbing again. I asked if he could come in and he said yeah. I said good. He had strong arms and he thrust real good—I like that a lot. I laughed and bounced on him and he smiled and I don't know if he came or not, but we were done. So then, he asked if I had any tea and I teased him about how much sugar he used. When I went to make it, he went into the bathroom for real long (washing?). So I sat bare drinking tea and he put on all his clothes and drank a little. I would've liked to have sat there for a while bare with him (we did sit after fucking a while and I couldn't help touching him), but he seemed to want to go. So I dressed and he drove me to *S.*'s and said goodbye and thank you (?). I said thank *you* and that I'd like to see him again and he said OK like he wanted to, too.

I was on Cloud 9, still am. I'm so glad. I feel so *pretty* or something. I told Tom all about it and he was SUPER interested and got every detail outa me and wanted to know how he rated. I told him he's definitely a better fuck, since that guy didn't *do* very much on his own. So Tom talked and talked to me, being almost nicer than usual, and when we went to bed, he fucked me real good and long, asking was he handsome and was he good at making love. He's got a wonderful dick, told him so too! I really feel happy!

4/28/1972

Yesterday was my first week-a-versary. I certainly wouldn't mind take two of last week, heh, heh. Tom came to my place last nite acting half dead, depressed, and sad. He said he feels bad cuz he can't stay with me here anymore. I asked why not? Says that if he's gonna at all be able to socialize with people and change, he has to get away from me, cuz he comes to me and is all secure and I protect him and he doesn't feel like a "man" with me, but like a "boy." I told him I don't know the difference, that men and boys are the same to me. He said he feels real at ease talking to males and females he regards as males, but not when he has to talk to someone "feminine." I told him not to make all these distinctions, that people are people, not girls or boys, women or men. Then he got mad and said he's not gonna talk to me if I'm gonna be ludicrous. That pissed me off and I let him know—I said I'm not; I'm perfectly serious. He said he still feels like an adolescent with me and he's just beginning to see what it feels like to "be a man" (Jesus Christ!).

10/30/1972

Sunday was B.'s baby shower. I felt like a young man in disguise there, sure wasn't into the cute little baby clothes scene like everyone else there. *Bore!* So today 'bout 6 pm, I'm walking to the store and this really good-looking guy comes walking the other way, and when we pass each other, we both look twice and he asks, "Where ya going?" I said the store and asked where he's going. So we plan to meet outside the store in 15 mins. We go to my place; my heart was racing. We ate, put a record on, and sat on the couch. He really was fine-looking, even stood like a beauty. We talked about nothing. His name was Shawn. So I began telling him how good-looking he was, and we began kissing and making out and took off our clothes and off to the bedroom. I felt kind of funny, cuz like that guy from 4/21, he didn't seem to have that much fun. K. said that guys are freaked out when the girl admires them and touches and tells them how beautiful they are. Guess that must be it. So when we were thru, we laid there for a while and all of a sudden he gets this hard-guy line, "Never turn down a Southern man." (He's from Florida.) I said well I won't if it's you. So he jumps up and has his clothes on in about 5 seconds saying he has stuff he has to do. I said well thanks a lot! He was a hard guy from the end of the fuck till he left. Asked me for 55¢ for cigarettes and I said brother! and he said I didn't have to give it to him if I didn't wanna. Told him that's OK, I like the criminal type. When he asked what I meant, told him it's my secret. He said next time it might be \$20 and I said it'd be worth every penny. Asked if I'd be round tomorrow and I said maybe. Told me he'd put the 55¢ on the door frame if I wasn't. And he left. He was a beauty,

too. How come they have to leave in such a fat hurry? Hope he comes back tomorrow. He's nice to look at!

11/5/1972

Saturday, I took myself to the lakefront and was sure feeling lonesome. A girl came walking by. We said hi and she sat next to me and we talked. It was so easy to talk to her for some reason. We have a lot in common, like feeling more masculine than feminine. She was real at ease and at peace with herself. Didn't seem to have the stormy feeling I've had lately. We walked on together and went to a bar and she bought me a drink. She suggested we buy a quart and spend the evening, so we did and went to my place. She's 27 and told me how she'd been married and had a child who died. I really liked her a lot and got a lot of lesbian (yich, I hate that word; I'll just say homosexual) feelings from her that I didn't find unpleasant. When she left, told her I'd stop by sometime and she told me I was welcome anytime.

11/13/1972

Thursday, Tom came to my place to stay over and 'bout 2:30 a.m. I hear a faint knock at the door. Asked who it was. "Shawn." Jesus Christ I almost shit! Threw on a robe and opened the door. There he was with another guy. I said, "Oh bad night." Said he'd stop back tomorrow. Tom didn't even wake up to ask what happened. I was so glad he came back!

The next day I went out, and when I came back, in about 10 min Shawn was at the door. He sat on the couch in the living room and asked me to give him a body rub. We began making out and landed in the bedroom again, but he couldn't get it on and he said he wasn't a very good lover today cuz he's got a cold. We ate and drank rum (I love freaking people out by taking shots). He really liked my cowboy boots and said I should wear my hat, too. His friend crashed out on the couch and Shawn and I made love in the bedroom. This time he really got it on and fucked *real* good. He tried to come in my ass, and I told him I never did that before and he said, "OK, we won't do it tonight then." I'd really like to learn to do that. (I like to make love like a man. I want to be a beautiful man making love to another beautiful man.) Then we slept. Woke early and for 2 hrs just lay awake looking at Shawn sleep. He was so, so lovely. He smelled like a bar of soap, his body is so firm and hard and smooth, and his golden curls were all over the pillow.

I don't feel a betrayal of Tom either. The entire thing between Shawn and I is physical. I just want to lust over him. I feel this is the only thing I would want, my freedom from Tom to experience. and I've told him this already, that all I'd want would be to have extra physical relationships. Tom knows nothing about him yet. I think if Shawn's intending to be around for a while and if Tom does ask me anything 'bout what I did such and such a nite and I had just been with Shawn, I'm just gonna tell him I met some guy and he came over and I've been seeing him for a few weeks (or however long it is) and leave it at that. I'm not gonna fill in any details if possible. When Tom and I decided to go out with others, we felt the best policy was to tell all. Now we've realized it only makes things worse and to know as little as possible is best. We can each keep our experiences in our hearts and relish them for

what they mean to us and not torture each other becuz it only forces the other to fabricate all kinda horrid fears that have no basis.

11/20/1972

Sure am action lady lately. Tues nite, Sean (I found out it's not "Shawn", I'm so embarrassed, wrote him a note once addressing it "Shawn" that luckily he didn't see!) came over late, 'bout 3 a.m. He couldn't get it on again but tried anyway. He's strange; even tho he *can't*, he acts like he *is*. So what. I called into work sick and we got up 'bout 11:30. His dumb friend comes over all the time and sleeps on the living room couch. It was really nice; when we woke, he called, "Hey J.!" from the bedroom in a particularly forced low voice. He really wanted to sound like a big MAN. It seems they kinda play serious hard guy games with each other. That kinda shit turns me on about him, guess it's my asshole femaleness.

12/10/1972

Well, guess who's *living* with me? Sean and his friend J. A week into it, I thought, shit, for all I'm doing for them, he can just fuck me (he hadn't since Monday), so I began playing with the hair on his stomach and stroking his cock. After a while of pretending he was sleeping, he turned to me and came in me and was done in probably less than a minute. He said, "I'm sorry, babes, I just can't help it." (He calls me "babes.") Then he pretended like he was SO tired and said he was SO tired he couldn't even fuck anymore. Boy was I tempted to say, "You never *could!*" He really is thankful for my help and always says so. I enjoy it; at the saloon I told everyone I was "keeping" a man—the ultimate in women's liberation!

Thursday at Tom's house, he was so romantic and loving, and he made love to me like never before, for at the very least an hour. It's such a weird feeling loving him so much and yet wanting the experience of people like Sean. It's so strange. I hope Tom never finds out the nature of Sean's and my relationship. It would really hurt him bad. I love him so fucking much. I really want him for the rest of my life. Without him, everything would be meaningless. With him everything is full of rich meaning, full of life and enriching experiences. I understand a lot more now about why Tom left my place and still loves me very, very much.

12/19/1972

Saturday night, Sean *woke me up* to fuck and he really got it on too for a change. He sure is good when he's in the mood! Sunday went to Tom's. I really love him a lot; he's so shameless when we're alone and he really enjoys pleasing me in all kinds of ways. He loves to undress himself slowly in front of me and pose his lovely body; he knows so many fine things about loving. It's as tho all our time together has made him see that he is as graceful and sexual as anyone can be and he gives me much pleasure. We made love; it's a lot different than fucking. Monday when I came home, Sean had bought \$30 worth of food. That really made me feel good. They aren't living off me! He also brought his dog over. So Sean left and some friend of his, a far-out freaked-out LSD-trip hippie, comes over to get something and invites me to the bar where he's meeting Sean. I refused, told him if Sean wanted me hanging around,

he should come get me. He said Sean doesn't give a shit. I answered neither did I! Told him Sean was just around for my pleasure; he said Sean's feeling the same 'bout you. I said *good!* Jerk says well I think you're a beautiful young lady; Sean thinks otherwise. That kinda bummed me out at first, but after a while, I thought first of all probably, what Sean said was I'm not beautiful (which I admit I'm not) but I'm good-looking, something like that. Second of all, he's not around for his benefit; he's around for mine—cuz I think he's good looking, and since he don't mind, I'm using him. I thought who gives a flying shit anyhow? This turd even went so far as to call Sean at the bar so he'd convince me to come. (I just don't enjoy going places where I know no one and I'm a "chick" and there's 10 other "chicks" there and all the guys making like he-men. I just don't want to associate with scenes like that. Fuck it.)

12/23/1972

So K., Tom, and I went to the saloon to drink and he was beautiful; he gets real feminine when he's drunk and flirts and laughs nervously. As we left, there were two guys leaving ahead of us: one was a tall very thin guy with shaped black hair around his face, and he had tight blue jeans and a black quilted jacket that came to his small waist. He was laughing and hanging on his friend graceful and feminine and swaying his hips as he walked; he called behind to Tom to have a nice night or something, and when they saw us hitchhiking, they offered us a ride. Tom sat right behind him. He turned half way in his seat, so he was half facing Tom. The radio blasted and Tom and this guy sang to each other. The guy used his hands to make the motions of feigning love to Tom, and I saw bracelets all on his wrists. Tom leaned over the seat close to him playing the role of lover. I realized I'd never be able to participate. No matter how I tried, I could never have joined their game. I felt a deep sadness at finally realizing I'll never have my deepest secret dream fulfilled, ever. The guy lowered his eyelids and took Tom's hand as we left the car. I had an urge to lean over and kiss the boy as I left the car, but I knew I could never be a part of the life, and I had just admitted it to myself. I left the car hoping he didn't notice I was female.

I want to make Tom the lovely boy I wish I could be. I want men to desire him and try to kiss him.

12/31/1972

Tom phoned about 10:30 a.m. when we're all sleeping and asked if I'd sew his white pants leg up. I said sure, I'll take the bus right away to his place, but he says well, why doesn't he just come to my place? I said, "You sure you want to? cuz that guy is here." He said, "I don't care." So Sean and J. got up and dressed, Sean asking me if Tom was "the fighting type." I said, "No, he's still an altar boy at heart." I was so fuckin' nervous. Tom walked in and I introduced everyone in the living room. They all shook hands and Sean and J. sat on the couch; Tom sat in a chair and began staring at Sean. Shit, I began fiddling with the pants. J. helped a lot by making small talk with Tom. I tried to stop trembling so I could thread my needle and Sean just sat and petted his dog. After 10–15 minutes Sean and J. left to walk the dog. Tom asked me all kinds of questions, "What's his name? How'd you meet him? Who's J.? Was he staying here too?" It was quiet for a while and Tom asked if I slept with "him." I

shook my head and said no. He asked where they slept then, and I told him they rolled out the sleeping bag on the floor and took turns sleeping on the couch and the floor. I knew it sounded real sleazy, so told him I didn't think he liked me very much and has a billion girlfriends calling him, but it's just something for me to do at the time and kept me busy. I finished the pants and they were good. We kissed, hugged, and said we loved each other. So he left and said if he was doing anything worthwhile on New Year's Eve, he'd phone me. He didn't. Sean came in at 7 a.m. next morn. (I had gone to bed naked and he asked why? I answered "to keep warm" and he said, "You get me all horny doing that." He was on top of me in 2 seconds and in me in one. He came in about 1–1/2 minutes and made little sighs and noises when he came, the first time he ever did *that*. He also kissed my shoulder real gently, a sign of affection he never gave me, and when we were thru, he said, "Oh, that felt good" and smiled, when all he's ever done before is say, "You happy now?" or some one-sided thing like that, like he didn't get anything out of it. It was possibly the best fuck I've had with him, knowing I was desired and he was satisfied.) Told Sean how Tom sure was curious about him. He asked, "Why did he pick me? Why didn't he think you were with *J*?" I smiled and said, "He knows my taste."

1/6/1973

It was all such a drunken stupor. Tom has begun to "come out," how can I explain it so it will have the same beauty as he emits. At *K*'s with him, the three of us got drunk. Tom drank a lot, a whole lot. He wore a black bead bracelet he made becuz, he said, he knew it would please me. He told me he loves only me and what he said the other night was a mistake (he said he loved *S*. and me also and wanted us to go on as three but she doesn't like him. I told him I wanted nothing to do with a threesome anyhow), that his feeling for *S*. is only an infatuation (that's what I told him the other nite!), and his feeling for her is nowhere near his feeling for me. He wants to be with me for the rest of his life and couldn't bear to lose me. I told him I enjoyed the fact we saw others, but we would have to be realistic about our affairs. He told me lately he's been really getting into acting gay (he didn't come right out and say that but it was all said and understood without using the word "gay"), and he used to be afraid of being as feminine as he is but now he's enjoying it and "if the possibility ever came up now, I don't think I could turn it down." I told him how much it turned me on, and he said he knew it did. I told him that's always been my closest guarded secret and he's the only one who knows. When I asked how he could tell I liked it, he said when you're with someone for so long, you just know. He said we can do such wonderful things together, and we'll always be together. "I'll be the woman and you can be the man"—that's what he said. I said yes, yes. It was an insane night. He said he's gonna cut off his facial hair!

I told Tom I knew he had it in him a long time and I loved him so much thinking of it. Wouldn't it be insane if he did get a lover? So fuckin' heavy. He said he thought of wearing lipstick tonight and I told him no, eye makeup for sure! Soon I'll have to do that to him.

I told Tom I wanted to adorn him with jewelry, necklaces, bracelets, and rings. I wanted him to wear a shirt that opens low on his chest.

Saturday, I made a bracelet for Tom from an old broken necklace. The beads are deep green. I haven't seen him to give it to him yet. I hope he likes it.

1/9/1973

Sunday, I gave Tom the bracelet. He looked super embarrassed and giggled nervously. He said it would look nice with his new green sweater. He wore them together Monday. I petted him and kissed him in the drugstore; he blushed and lowered his eyes. I apologized for touching and embarrassing him, but he said he liked me to. I had done such things before and his blushing and lowering of eyes was one thing I always had loved about him, but now he is explaining it to himself.

I think he's still real wary tho. He isn't loosened up as much as I hope he will be later. He is only bold when drunk and shy and frightened when not. He talked to K. Fri nite 'bout having a dress-up party at her place. He wants to "dress up." I want to be a vamp, super makeup, super low neckline if he goes gay.

I think it best that I see him more often now to keep encouraging him so he doesn't lose faith in himself.

1/15/1973

Sean has left. Saturday, I slept at my place and he never came, the first time since he moved in that he's slept elsewhere. Sunday eve, I came to my place and all his stuff was gone 'cept 'bout 3–4 things. Haven't heard from him at all, he left no note or anything. Bye-bye.

I've been with Tom every other nite since Jan 6. He asks for me to. Sean was a lovely dream, a soft-scented youth lying beside me. I'll miss him. I hope he'll grace me with his body again soon.

1/22/1973

Tom went to see Lou Reed, lead singer of the Velvet Underground (an Andy Warhol discovery, Andy Warhol's outasite, his films, his people; they're all fine as hell) Sat nite. He said every queen in town was there, and the audience was more interesting to watch than anything. He said he had the best time he's ever had in a long time. He got together with some guy he thought was "AC-DC" (bisexual) and was buying each other drinks all nite, etc. I was real drunk myself Saturday and went to Tom's place hoping he'd be there; fortunately he came just as I was giving up pounding on the door. We sat up and talked with Tom's roommate. I told them I wanted to dress up in female drag and be a queen, but I couldn't since I AM a female, so I'm frustrated.

I wish I was Tom—he's such a lovely male. I wish I'd have seen him in that crowd. I want him so passionately.

1/28/1973

It's been 2 weeks and still no sign of Sean. Kinda pissed about my money he owes me.

1/30/1973

Well, he finally showed his mug, Sean, that is, to give me back the key to my place. He acknowledged he owes me \$60. I felt kind of like I didn't know how to act, but we kissed goodbye. Said he'd stop by again.

1/31/1973

In "Toby Dammit," Fellini's short film, a TV interviewer asks Toby, "What do you think is the factor that has kept you and Miss ___ together for so long?" Toby Dammit answers, "Well, I'm feminine enough to please her and she's masculine enough to please me."

So it is with Tom and I.

2/8/1973

Tuesday Tom and I went shopping. He bought two bracelets and a ring and I got two rings. He wears the ring and bracelet on one hand, bejeweled, beautiful. There was a "diamond" bracelet, he tried it on, and he wasn't ready for it. There were some beautiful shoes (black, plain, 1" heels), but they claimed they didn't have black in his size, only other colors. That pissed me off. Convinced Tom to go back there soon and make them order a pair for him. He was afraid he would look "too tall" with the heels. Told him an inch isn't gonna make him tower over anyone anymore than he already does. He's driving me mad wearing those sexy clothes and jewelry. I can hardly keep my hands off him. He holds me and smiles and laughs and tells me how much he loves me and how beautiful I am! His jewelry freaks people out (my new image: dress in super masculine clothes and wear a ton of jewelry with it, try to get rid of purse—super femmy to have a purse). He knows he's a beauty; he said he sometimes thinks he is someone special, not like ordinary people. But he only sometimes thinks it—I always knew it; I always know it.

And I wonder how far it will go. He is becoming much bolder; he would never have worn bracelets, rings, say 3 months ago. Only in the bedroom. But now, ah, he is proud! And what can I do for him, to keep him? It seems if I keep praising him, making love to him even in gazes, he is satisfied; he primps for me, and he touches his soft hair with his jeweled hand. I walk around with soggy pants. Would he ever take a lover? (He said once if the opportunity ever came up he didn't think he could refuse it now.) He fulfills my dreams, he is me, and he knows about my secret thoughts.

Would he ever live with me again?

Can I claim him? He likes to tease me and let me wonder if he is only mine. It's hard for me to believe he really wants it the same way I do. That he wants me to be his male lover, kiss his jeweled hands, and stroke his chest. But he does, he does.

2/11/1973

Saturday nite, I went to a bar. I dressed super masculine and wore jewelry; I was me. I touched my hair with my jeweled hands. I was someone special, not like ordinary people. I'm looking for leather jackets. Tom said he wanted one too and leather

pants. (Lou Reed wore leather pants and jacket.) Doesn't he object to my pretending I'm him? He gives me no idea. Should I just keep on, let everything go on like a dream? Or should I ask and talk and try to make reality or sense of it?

2/13/1973

How could I fit into all this? Even if something did happen, what could I do? I could only imagine or wish. Never participate the way I want to.

Told Tom I knew a certain bar was a gay bar. Said he knew that for a long time way before I did and I think he even laughed and said, "Do you think I wait for you to find out about that stuff first?"—or something like that. Then he said, "We should go there to eat sometime" and I said OK; that'd be pretty far-out tho. He agreed and after a pause said we shouldn't go there. "We shouldn't if we're just gonna go for fun or something," I wanted to say..., but I said, "Yeah, I guess yer right." Why does he torture me like that? I *know* I'll never be able to go to a place like that for any other reason. It was a good opportunity to say, "Well we wouldn't have to go there *just to eat*," but I'm afraid of him yet.

Tom. Imagine how mixed-up I am, how I don't even know *what* I want to get, much less *how* to get it. But you have everything open to you.

You could go to the bar any night alone and come home with a beautiful young man.¹ I wouldn't even be welcome into the bar, and even if I got in, I'd be so ashamed that I was a woman that I'd leave quickly, lost, apologetically, and want to cry in desperation. I don't even know if there was anyone that's ever felt as I do, how they coped, or what they did. How do I find out what someone like me does? (I remember writing this same question many diaries back, in probably one of my first ones.)

2/26/1973

We're coming out...
 Out of our closets...
 Out on the streets...
 Yeah, we're coming out! [Lou Reed]

Super heavy scene last Friday nite, one of the best times I've ever had! I wore *P*'s black leather jacket with *real* police handcuffs hooked on the shoulder. ☺ I bought two more rings (six in all now!) and then we went to the saloon. Soon we met assorted others, plus Tom met us bout 10 p.m. Drank quite a bit and some of the guys were teasing me 'bout the jacket. I felt super hard-guy and all drunk and don't know how it all started, but soon I was the big stud guy. I spent a lotta time in the girls' bathroom, and when someone came in, I'd touch their hair and say, "Oh, I'm glad you came in!" and "Could I help you with anything?" I drew a super huge sketch of a super penis coming and a girl sticking out her tongue to get the cum. Once I accidentally turned out the light and said, "Oh, how wonderful!" and started kissing a girl who sometimes waitresses there. She and just about all the other girls

¹This is a term Sullivan borrows from Rechy's *City of Night*. It usually refers to a young, attractive man, often in a gay context.

there were laughing and having a good time, knowing I was just fucking around. Would return to our table and bitch out the guys to get their hands off my lady. For the first time in public, I was the man hiding inside of me for so many years. Some things *K.* told me I did I don't remember doing. But shit I was real! Shoved around all the men in our crowd calling them "asshole cocks," etc. Some nowhere jerk started acting like he was in our crowd and I began hassling him and asking how he expected to fit in here. The guy was pretty freaked. I shoved a glove down my pants for a cockbulge for a while. Got in a fake argument cuz one of the guys got in my way and I thought 'bout throwing my drink on him for effect, but thought he might be pissed if I did. Later in private, he said he'd have bought me a drink cuz it'd been so cool if I'd done it. Wish I had! So the insanity went on bout 1–1½ hrs or so. I escorted *K.* to the bathroom and was waiting for her inside and this girl came to me and said, "You! I've been wanting to talk to you all night!" I started petting her hair and smiled, "Oh, yeah?" She got freaked and said, "But not in this closed place" (like I was gonna rape her or something!). I said, "But I gotta make sure my lady is OK in here," and the girl pulled me out of the bathroom saying she'll be OK in there! So she began this 20-minute rap on how this is a "straight bar," and I was gonna get in trouble and she was only saying this for my own protection since she can "dig it," that she's bisexual. That there was a "big strong man" at the door and she was afraid he would hurt me. I said, "Where is he? I'll take care of him!" and that I was OK. She was so super serious. She said I had "offended" some of her "little sisters" who didn't understand this all, and I said well that they can't be that little if they're in this bar and maybe it'll raise their consciousness a little so they do understand. This girl was SO serious, she was convinced I was real! A guy I knew walked by and I shoved him and said, "Get the hell outa my way ya goddamn COCK!" and she just about died. "You shouldn't talk to men that way just becuz you prefer women as bed partners! You're really incredible! I've never seen anything like this! He is a *nice* person, and some men are very nice *people*..." I said real disgusted, "He is a fucking COCK!" Then *B.* came up and we began kissing, and this girl kept on lecturing that I had to accept the fact that *I'm a woman!* I said, "Well, that's how *you* see it," and she's sayin', "No, no, you ARE a woman!" and *B.* was saying, "Hey, quit cuttin' him down like that!" This girl was almost beside herself in frustration. It was fantastic! Then three girls came up who I guess I'd talked to in the can and they were giggling, so I began flirting with them and asked how old they were. "18." I said, "Oh, *that's nice!*" Then one of their boyfriends came over and they said something how he should meet me and I introduced myself as Lou Reed. *Too great!* The lecturing girl just left completely frustrated. Going back to our table, one of our friends was talking to two other guys and said, "Oh, there she is." I grabbed him roughly and said, "Don't you call me she! I'm as much a man as you are!" If the people weren't completely freaked with their mouths open, they were laughing at us and having a good time. Shit it was great! I had such a fantastic time! Then found out Tom had left sick. So I got *K.* to drive us to my place. He'd thrown up all over outside. He asked me in a drunken stupor why did I love him. I told him becuz he wasn't afraid to be himself. That I knew he wanted a male lover. He laughed drunkenly. He hardly stopped saying how much he loved me. We slept in drunken heaps.

WE'RE COMING OUT!

2/28/1973

Yesterday, I went to Harley-Davidson Motorcycles and tried on their black leather jackets. Excellent! Hope to get mine by this weekend.

I love to blend female and male—I think of myself as two people finally coming together in peace with each other. Of my other half, I sing, “Nobody loves me but me adores you!”

It’s funny to look at me now in comparison to about a year ago. I think if Tom asked me to marry him I’d definitely say no. In a way I’d like to live with him again, but in another way I like to have these secret adventures (like Sean).

Tom asked me, “How long have we been together now?” “Almost 4 and ½ years.”

I went over to see that woman I met at the lakefront the other nite (11/5/1972) to invite her to supper and had in mind asking her to sleep over if I got those vibes from her again like I did before, but she had plans for the night. Pretty strange, heh?

3/4/1973

Bought a black leather jacket today, for \$25. When Tom saw it, he tried it on and really looked great in it. He really did. I got turned on and he said he got turned on seeing it on me. I’ve got to get my act together to wear it right. I’m still a little insecure. I think cuz it’s all up to me—no one else is in it but me. I have to make up all the rules and I can’t even discuss it with anyone except a little with Tom.

Tom and I saw some old friends who remarked, “Nice to see something that’s lasted.” I said we aren’t going to get married and fuck it up either. Tom’s expression was blank—I watched it to see how he reacted to my confirmation of what he’s wanted all along, for me to quit wanting marriage. I’m together enough to honestly say I don’t want it.

3/7/1973

Well, the hot romance of Tom’s for *S.* has gone kaput. But now he likes some girl who lives in the dorms where he washes dishes. But, he said, he knows now from that experience that he loves only me and could never be without me and he’s sure of that now.

But for the last 3–4 days, I feel like I’ve been walking around in a daze. I think it’s cuz I have a strange identity feeling going on cuz my leather jacket. It’s really great tho. I really love it. I like the feeling of wearing it and the identity crisis that comes with it! I’ve been telling everyone I’m thinking of writing “Lou Reed Fan Club” on the back of it!

3/17/1973

Guess who just appeared at my door—Prince Charming! (Sean). Showed him all my “drag clothes.” Had to explain what “drag” is (“It’s when gays wear what they like...”). I’m not sure he got it. But he laid back on the couch, his hands behind his

head, stretching his body and looking over himself with admiration and approval, waiting for me to first show my desire for him—as always was. I submit to his narcissism. I admire and kiss and undress and lick him eagerly—he leans back and smiles, closing his eyes contentedly. And only after a long while will he lazily begin to undress me. Soon we were off to the bedroom; he lifted me, my legs around his waist, both naked, and walked me in there. We fucked; he came while we were in my favorite position, me on all fours and him kneeling behind me. I am the youth making love to this other lovely youth.

3/28/1973

Well for the past 4 days, I've had the measles—believe it or not. We're calling them “the sleasles” cuz it sure is sleazy I got ‘m.

Saturday *B.*, *K.*, and I went to the saloon for what turned out to be the last time. We were drinking and having a good time like last time. Some jerk heard us and said he doesn't mind girl gays, “But it's those *faggots* I don't like.” I said, “Whaddya think *I* am?” And then I said, “You mean, you don't mind the guys in the girls' can, but you don't like the girls in the guy's can, right?” He got all flustered and said real excited, “Have you ever been in prison, huh? In prison?” “No.” “Oh, well, you don't know what happens there...yeah, those faggots...” he kept mumbling as he left.

March 23rd, Tom and I went to hear a lecture by Christine Jorgensen, the first guy to have a sex change to a woman. It was pretty interesting. It took some courage for me to go cuz I guess I'm still a bit hesitant to admit publicly I'm interested in this male/female thing. Tom didn't let on he was interested till the last minute.

Tom talked to me about dormie. He went for a walk with her and a few times wanted to tell her he loved her. Told him I don't know why he just doesn't relax and have fun and leave “love” outa it. He said he was trying to, but it's so hard. We talked how it was fun being with new people and how the best of it is the fantasies and thoughts you have after they leave. Things are going good. Tom and I are both a lot more together.

4/2/1973

Tom laid two bombshells on me: he told dormie he loved her and she told him she loves him. Said she's so “fragile and helpless” or some jive like that, and he feels she keeps things balanced off, since I'm “so different, not that you're not feminine.” I told Tom, Sean balanced him off for me, since Sean's such a don't give a shit, in it for himself guy, and Tom's so giving and thinking about the other guy. Fuck it. I feel bad he needs to be so in love with every asshole who approaches him. He doesn't even know this nerd and already it's mad love. Sickening.

The second bombshell was he wants to go to Berkeley himself for a while, that it'll be hassle enough going out there without involving “emotional hassles, too” (whatever that means).

Tom told me he thinks he's reconciled the masculine and feminine within himself. Told him I thought I was doing pretty good, too, but there're still minor details that need smoothing over.

4/9/1973

Lou Reed yesterday in Chicago. Started drinking Saturday noon mainly cuz I was so bored. Started to get sick and dozed out Sunday afternoon, but took speed and came around real fast. I couldn't believe how straight the audience was. I was one of the heavies! Small contingent of drag queens, tho. We got the second best ticket bracket, but our seats were in the third balcony which really bummed me out. Could hardly see, was cramped, and couldn't stand. But Lou was beautiful, all in black but silver heels, came on a bit like Dylan (as I'd heard before) but once in a while he'd begin to dance slightly or he'd put his left hand on his thigh while moving his hips sensually and broke his right wrist into a limp rose stem and waved it around, lovely! The crowd didn't seem all that excited, altho on the ground floor kids were dancing. The drag queens were making out, etc., in the dark. I was speeding but felt completely straight which was a drag. Began thinking 'bout what I have to do. I have to go to New York, myself, to find Rechy's FASCINATION lights. It scared me when I realized it, that it had to be by myself cuz anything less would be a cop-out. Began thinking what I had to take with me, which clothes, etc., and where would I start? Which section of town? Which hotel? It would be scary, no doubt. But I have to do it. Maybe this summer.

Spoke to Tom a little Sunday morn about us. Told him how left out of his life I felt, that I didn't think he had any romantic feelings for me and I think sometimes I failed by not being more femmy. That I felt bad I wasn't included on his plans for Berkeley. He said he wasn't even sure of plans for himself much less for me. But that he wanted to be alone there for a while, so he could think things out. Said I don't know why he thinks he'll be able to think there better than here, cuz the same thing'll probably happen there too; someone'll say hi to him and he'll be madly in love again. He said I may fail him in being femmy, but I supply other things he needs no one else does, that he couldn't figure me out cuz it seems I fluctuate so between dependency and independency. Nothing settled, of course.

I have to go to NY alone. I can't have anyone or anything in my way when I find what I'm looking for there. I'm not sure myself exactly what it is, but I'll know. And I really do feel whatever comes, whatever I'd run into in NY, I'd be able to handle. I'm only afraid of being shot down, of being told I wasn't wanted on the scene; it's a pain in the ass being a goddamn girl. Being told, or getting the feeling I wasn't wanted on the scene would destroy me.

4/10/1973

Some miscellany, Saturday while waiting for the bus, a kid about 12-13 yrs old comes up and asks if I want a shoe shine. Said no, and he started making idle conversation with me and then, looking at me hesitantly, he asked if I was a girl or boy. I answered a boy. He said he only asked cuz I'm (he continued super hesitantly) "wearing men's clothes." I said that's usually what us boys wear! He really didn't know what to think, and I told him I was going to pick up my girl for a date.

4/12/1973

Called the bus station bout NYC. \$75 round trip. Alice Cooper at Madison Square Garden, June 3.

But then, this afternoon, Lisa comes out of nowhere. She's the guy I went to first semester Russian with summer '70 (I think it was) and who came back to visit me in drag months later (2/10/1971). Been thinking 'bout her lately a lot. Told her I was so glad to see her and told her I had such an identity crisis, that the only thing I'm sure of is I like real femmy guys, but don't know if it's a cop-out for my desire for women. We talked an hour. She's trying to get a sex change operation. Told me the gay bars in Milw and that I maybe should go to the Gay Peoples Union meetings. Said I was scared. She said she'd go with me this Monday. We made it a date.

4/17/1973

Saturday, I became very much less afraid of admitting I'm bisexual, even tho I still have a fear for women. Less afraid of Gay Peoples Union meeting Monday. Began to relax with myself and Monday wore a dress to school for the first time in weeks. Knew it'd freak Tom out, but that's not why I wore it. He complimented me. But wore my leather drag to GPU mtg. Met Lisa there. There were 'bout 30 people there, only four other girls besides me. Mostly men between 25–30 yrs old. It was like any other club mtg 'cept they spoke so freely 'bout being homosexuals. I especially liked one guy, who spoke super-free 'bout helping another guy come out, whom he described as "just gorgeous!" Their topic for the night was problems of coming out. So after mtg, Lisa introduced me to three of the women who told me 'bout a Lesbian Discussion Group mtg every other Friday, one this week. (I hate the word "lesbian," it sounds so dirty and clinical. I prefer gay or homosexual.) Then Lisa and I went to her place, and she changed into pants and we went out to eat and talk a few hours. I feel good 'bout our friendship.

Told Tom today that I spent last evening with Lisa and went to the GPU mtg with her. He asked how it was and if I met anyone there. This is the first time he's known 'bout my gay feelings—that I've admitted to him. I think he felt good 'bout it. At my place he held and kissed me passionately and he initiated "dancing" with me to an album he just got. Soon we were making love and he told me how I made him feel like he's in heaven. The only sleazy thing is, he seems to not want to tell me he loves me. So?... it'll come in time.

4/21/1973

Wed 2 a.m. Sean comes over. Lost no time in getting in bed. He tried butt-fucking me again, but I just couldn't; it hurts so. He just jammed in me and I pulled away and told him I wanted to but couldn't cuz it hurt so. He said just try and relax but I couldn't cuz I knew he wouldn't be gentle but would jam again. So I just said I can't. (Felt bad—I'd like to so I can make love to him like a boy but I couldn't; I'll never be a boy anyhow, and it wouldn't be the same anyhow, I guess.)

Fri nite 8 pm went to a "Lesbian Discussion Group." Held at someone's apartment and 'bout 20 girls showed up. I really was surprised at how at ease I felt. Their

topic was morality in lesbian life. A lady I'd met at GPU raised questions the first 10 min or so, then we split into three small groups to discuss. I really felt close to my group and didn't feel spotty or like I had to be cool. I let them talk most cuz I have no experience but realized the problems of their love affairs were the same as with Tom's and mine, so I contributed some. No one *looked* any different than straight but most dressed kinda sloppy hippy guy style. I was *the* drag king (ha ha). So after small group, had coffee, one in our group asked if I'd had a "monogamous" relationship. Told her I'm just coming out and 'd lived with a guy 4 years who's discovering he's gay, too. Back into large group to discuss what small groups talked 'bout. Many girls were very nice and tried to include me, and I felt very comfortable. Told "leader" lady this is the first time I'd been in a group of women where I didn't feel I had to show 'm I wasn't like them and I couldn't believe it was happening to me. She was pleased.

5/5/1973

Action, Inc.! Thurs Lou Reed (my hero!) in Milw! Started drinking at 3pm. Did an Alice Cooper eye makeup trip. Drunk enough to do a shit job and *B.* took over with some liquid stuff and did an excellent job! We got there by 6:30 and had to wait in line 2 h during which we continued drinking. Good and fuckin' drunk. We all hassled people in line; it was nuts. Then *J.* started getting sick and slouched down on the steps, *P.* holding him and they began letting people in. We told concerned inquirers he overdosed on heroin! Soon we took 'm outside to vomit and then we got him to a bathroom. Ah-ha! Liberate the men's can! So as the second band played, *J.* laid on the floor, slouched over a toilet, *P.* sat next to him and I stood around. First time I saw a real urinal. Guys'd come in, look at me, stand at the urinal, not piss and leave. *P.* and I'd laugh! Then a cop came in. I ducked into a stall but he left. Then a group of gays came in and the draggiest said, "*Oh! Are you a lesbian??!!*" I said yeah. He said, "oh, that's fantastic" or something like that and then left. Also said he liked my Alice Cooper eyes and I was pleased he recognized it as Alice's. I penned up the walls with obscenities and hoped someone passed me for a faggy male. The cop came in a few more times but I kept hiding. It was so fine. It was just a big room, no seats, so we got right up front. Lou comes on! Just like Chicago. So into it, I danced thru his entire set. I felt I danced so fine and sexy, and there was a lovely boy I tried to hustle last weekend. Tried again but he only smiles and looks down embarrassed. Asked what the matter was, and he said I was too fast for him. Ha! What a beauty! Lou got it on. It woulda been *so* easy to rush the stage, but I was too scared to do anything. After the concert I see a group of pretty guys and *the loveliest*, long black curly hair with glitter in it, a red velvet jacket all open, his naked chest smooth. Somehow I went up to him and had him! Don't even ask me how—I don't know! I was under the impression we were going to a party and we left in each other's arms. Stumbled to a car with his friend. I realized they thought of a group sex scene but when we got to his place I took him aside and said I only wanted him. Then he was gone for real long, I sat in a chair thinking of splitting and he and another guy came outa a room—neither of 'm had pants on! I don't know what the story on *that* was.

I think we smoked some dope. Then we went to his room, he was just moving in and we had to line up a sofa and chair cushions to form a mattress. We made love good—I don't remember even what we did. He was beautiful and we made love slowly. I remember once I said something on how we were "fucking" and he said no, we're not fucking, we're "making love" and I started crying cuz he touched me so. He was real romantic like that, talked and made nice noises and got water for us. Our lovemaking wasn't frantic at all but so peaceful. He'd tell me if he liked something I did, etc. He was real into an inner existence type deal and kept saying "astral" projection and "astral" this and that. We woke up several times during the nite and hugged and touched softly. A fine lover! In the morning we got up, I began feeling uncomfortable. Anyway, I just wanted to leave and did abruptly. He followed me to the door and looked hurt, asked if I didn't have anything to say to him. I reached into my purse for a pen and he said, "Good!" Gave him my address and phone, he gave me his. As we hugged goodbye, he said, "My Lou Reed." And I really wanted to be.

5/31/1973

Have been reading my head off: *Tea and Sympathy*, *Dancing the Gay Lib Blues*, *Tearoom Trade*, *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny*, *Is Gay Good?*, *Gay Mystique*, and latest *The Transsexual Phenomenon*. (Anyway, in all my reading, it seems the female-to-male change only involves a hysterectomy and/or a mastectomy, but no penis. What's the point? I have birth control pills, as good as a hysterectomy, and what boobs do I have to remove? And if there's no penis, well, that's what's important, isn't it? That's what makes you a man.) Tuesday, the editor of the GPU News saw me on the street and called me up to his place. We sat around, talked 'bout the draft of my article that I sent him, based on an argument I had with a co-worker on transvestism and feminism—he loves it but it has to be edited cuz it's too long and we thought of ways to get hold of the poster the article was about. Said when he read the part where I said I felt like a male homosexual, he just about flipped and thought that's one of the weirdest things and it's really way-out. Told him I knew that better than anyone! He told me stories of some transvestites he knew and lent me the transsexual book. Said he definitely wants my article in the next issue. So I've just read and read the transsexual book and as I nearly finished it last night, I began crying, needing Tom. Thoughts came pouring out: I want to be him, I don't want me if he doesn't, if he doesn't want me I don't wanna live but I'm too scared to die so I'll just bury myself. I realized I'd dress up in beautiful female clothes and I'd go to him, but if he'd reject me I'd never be able to wear them again. That if he came back to me I'd be able to easily switch back and forth as I'd done before, but I'm escaping into myself, lost, hiding, and afraid now. That I need him and if I can't have him, I'll become him so I can always be with him, crazy thoughts. Crazy interpretations that made me cry and cry and phone and phone but no answer until I fell asleep. It all happened when I realized that I'd never be able to be a pretty girl again until he came back to me, and if he doesn't, I'll always be like I am—a symbol of mangled, violated sex, destroyed in a strange way.

6/23/1973

Friday a woman named *Y.* propositioned me. Told her I'd never been with a woman, she said she'd make me feel fantastic, but there was only one requirement: that *I* didn't touch *her*. Why? That's just her hang-up, shit. Told her I don't even know if I'd want a lesbian experience; finally told her I consider myself a male homosexual; she was pretty grossed out about that but I've seen her since and we're still friends. She's 32 and super mannish; she insisted on paying for everything (coffee, drinks). That bummed me out, too. She said she knew the first time she saw me I wasn't so butch.

7/1/1973

Monday went to Gay Peoples Union meeting as I do every Monday since Lisa took me the first time April 16th (mentioned in entry on 4/17). Lotta seemingly out-of-place people there this time, especially two girl/boy couples in the back row. About three-fourths thru the meeting, one of the guys raised his hand to speak and said they didn't come here to hassle or put down you people but, "I think you all need help real bad." The president just ignored the remark and called on someone else to speak, but one gay turned and asked "what kind of help?" The guy answered, "psychological." Then when they realized no one was willing to argue or even acknowledge their comment any further, the four of them made quite the spectacle of LEAVING THIS PLACE. My heart was just hammering—I felt like turning around and saying "What the hell did you *come* here for—*get the hell OUT!*" But I followed everyone else's example of ignoring them. Still wonder what the shit they were into—people like *that* are the sick perverts.

Made a date with Tom Fri nite and then remembered the Lesbian Discussion Meeting. Decided not to go, but Fri afternoon ran into *D.* who "runs" the meetings and she practically begged me to come as they would be discussing gay men and last week I was one of the few of "their side." So moved the date to Saturday. I was real worried tho and smoked two joints to loosen up, realizing it would probably turn out that I'd be battling the whole group alone. My high made me lose my inhibitions, and I tied my breasts down so they wouldn't jiggle, although it did little to make them appear smaller, plus I rolled up a few socks and made myself a penis, pinned it in my underwear—I was ready for them! The talk began with someone saying she disliked groups like GPU cuz it was dominated by "sexist men." One other woman tried to say they were at least trying to rid themselves of sexism. I said probably if women dominated, or at least were in the majority, women would launch as much sexism against the men. She flatly denied this, saying she was incapable of sexism! Told her that was bullshit, that sexism oppresses men as much as women and no one could deny they are sexist just as they can't deny racism. She denied it anyhow! Also she told of seeing a drag show and was lost as to why a lesbian, after the show, tipped the female impersonator in approval. She referred laughingly to the impersonator as a "shim" (she/him). Pointed out to her that she was displaying sexism right there by ridiculing transvestites. She denied it and said she just didn't understand it. I said I couldn't understand why she couldn't understand it! What's

so hard to understand why a man would enjoy dressing and/or appearing as a woman, or that a woman may enjoy the art with which he does it? She had no answer. Another woman said she objected to the adaptation of roles and images that women abandon as artificial. Also, she added, they were *so bad* at it! I said they certainly don't know if they're bad at it or not, but even if they are that doesn't matter, the mere shape they are in is enough to satisfy their need. Plus, I pointed out there are degrees of transvestism—some are not interested in actually *passing* for someone of the opposite sex while others are. And the reason you think they do such a bad job of impersonating is cuz one only notices those that aren't interested in passing—those that want to pass go unnoticed for that very reason! Also, I don't remember how the topic occurred, but most everyone was shocked when it was pointed out that the majority of transvestites were heterosexual! Someone said they didn't like the idea that one's clothes should be so important to them. I got into a “long” speech that one's clothes identifies one's feeling—clothing is a means of expression and that a person can more fully express themselves in the clothing denied them certainly can't be overlooked and why is it impossible for a person, that is, don't you think it's possible for a transvestite, just becuz he has an identity denied him, to be a full and rich human being? The room was dead silent, and I began feeling conspicuous. Someone said that's a hard question to answer, and the group broke up in 15 min! I hung around reading a mag put out by gay men who are into feminism called “The Faggot Effeminists.” *Y.* called me over where she and *D.* were talking and said I was the only one around there who made any sense and she's sick and tired of bullshit, that these girls claim they aren't sexist and then ridicule transvestites, transsexuals, and everyone else not like them. That she ain't coming to any more of these meetings cuz they aren't good for anything and are just a place for everyone to gripe. She said I'm the only one who knows what they're talking about and she wants to get to know me and talk with me more.

At the bar I talked openly to *D.* about myself and she was freaked when I told her I felt like a gay male. She kinda asked me all kinda questions like she couldn't believe it. Was very honest with her and told her I was feeling less afraid of exposing myself and ready to get my ass kicked if that's what it would mean. When I think back now, she was kinda offish toward me the rest of the night. But by then I was too high to care.

7/7/1973

Tom and I walked along the lakefront, checked out the people—both of us able to pick out the gays easily. No beauties tho. We were looked at a lot, too—we make a pretty strange-looking couple: Tom very feminine and me very masculine. We really have quite a gay relationship—I don't know how else to describe it. I've been gathering source info on articles on transvestism and gender-role identity from bibliographies and footnotes of books, etc.; I have probably 50 articles and books. Spending a lotta time at UWM Library reading and xeroxing important ones. Don't know what my research will lead me to but I'm ready.

Tuesday, went to Grandmother's. All the while, every chance Ma would be alone with me, she'd start asking about my identity, why I go to gay meetings, etc. At first

I was a little hedgy about everything, but after two or three times of our private talks being interrupted, and her resuming them as *soon* as we were alone again, I began opening up. She asked what would the gay women think if they knew I wasn't one of them. Told her my experience of revealing myself to the two gay women and to the GPU News editor. Also of my going to a gay bar and she wanted to know how the gay men reacted to the women there. Told her 'bout how that guy I met from Lou Reed greeted me. She really was interested, and after a while, I told her I felt funny talking about this with her—that for so long I've felt like a pervert and thought if Ma ever knew how I felt, it'd kill her. She said not at all. The only thing I *didn't* tell her was how, when I have sex, I have to fantasize I'm a man making love to this other man before I can have an orgasm. I'm afraid she might really freak over that one.

Thursday I was at the store, and there was a long mixed-up line waiting at the checkout. One grandma said to the grandma standing behind me, "Where does this line go here?" The grandma behind me answered, "I don't know, but I'm behind *him*," meaning *me*! I just skyrocketed to Cloud 9 at that one! Did she really think I was a boy? or was she just ridiculing me? I doubt the latter. I was and am ecstatic about that one! Told Tom about it and he was real pleased!

Fri Tom and I went barhopping. We eventually hit some gay bars, where Tom seriously flirted with various guys. That night we made love and I noticed lately he likes me on top and him on his back. When we awoke in the morn he fucked me again. I feel in a daze and my mind's a blank about this all. I can never be a part of it and I want to and need to so bad. I want to be a beautiful young man. I deeply want to.

7/13/1973

I'm at Chico's, a restaurant across from my place, by myself. I'm in a pretty pissy mood—I *hate* going to eat by myself too. Spent Saturday the seventh at UWM Library reading transvestite and sexual identity articles. Sun the eighth went over to see Lisa. She was plucking out her facial hair (beard)! We sat around talking, she telling me how far she's gotten trying to get her transsexual operation, me telling her how I felt. Told her how I felt like a guy, etc. and could tell she was kind of poo-pooing it so I got up the nerve to tell her as long as I remember I've had to think of myself as a guy making love to another guy to have an orgasm (plus I *really* got off watching those guys try and make Tom the other night). She said that fantasizing myself a male during sex was really an important thing in considering my gender identity. She seemed to take me a lot more seriously then. (At her place, I told her the main thing that bugged me was my bouncing boobs and she suggested I get an elastic panty-girdle and put it over 'm & lift 'm so they look like chest muscles. She said I have a chance to look male—but that I'd always look like a 16-year-old boy cuzza my fair skin, no beard, etc.) Later went to RQ with Lisa, and there saw the guy I said I especially liked at my first GPU meeting (4/17/1973), and he told me Evan (GPU News editor) and him spent 45 min on the phone and Evan told him 'bout my article and it sounds *fabulous* and he *has* to read it *before* it's published! Told him how sexist the women's meetings are (told Lisa earlier—she said she should go next mtg, sit thru it all and pass for a girl and at the end, sock it to 'm! Told her I'd wished

she'd been there!) and the guy I liked from the GPU hugged me around the waist and told me to forget the women's mtgs and join "us men!" I told him that's what I'd *really* like to do! So happy when he did that—I was so scared of being rejected from the scene and I'm being welcomed with open arms! An acquaintance of Lisa's began talking to her—it was noisy with music and I couldn't hear them and then Lisa leans over and tells me he said he didn't know if I was a boy or girl. I skyrocketed to heaven, and I shook the puzzled guy's hand. Later Lisa asked if I liked it when people didn't know. Told her *definitely* and I asked her whether he'd asked if I was a girl, or if he just asked which I was. She said he just said, "Well, which is that...a boy or girl?" I was so pleased. I'm wanting to pass so badly lately. Elated about seeing the drag shows and still can't *believe* three of 'm!

Monday the ninth at GPU, it was proposed GPU sponsor a drag ball this winter. A few guys argued against it cuzza the old jive rap that drag oppresses *women* by promoting the stereotyped look. My heart started beating real fast, Lisa said a few things and then I said drag was *liberating* cuz for me to see a man who's 100% better in what was spozed to come natural to me made me realize that it's *not* in anyone's *nature* to be masculine or feminine.

7/17/1973

Done reading every article on transvestism and transsexualism I could get my hands on. Have been very alone and depressed for quite a while. Alone, unloved, and unlike *everyone* and Tom should be leaving in a month or so, I don't even think he cares. He told me a few days ago he wasn't looking forward to it cuz he's getting tired of his studies. Fri nite, I went to lesbian mtg cuz Aaron and two guys were speaking. Felt uncomfortable and wanted to identify with the guys. The talk kinda fell thru—afterwards, I stood around off by myself and Aaron came up and asked why. Told him I'm beginning to think I don't belong anywhere, that I feel I'm the biggest pervert there is. He sat by me and was sympathetic. Then a girl asked if she could talk alone to me and asked who that "person" was I was with last Fri at RQ. "Your boyfriend?" Said yes. She said "I thought you were gay." Told her I am in a kinda way-out way—that I feel like a gay male. She said that was the most far-out thing she ever heard of. Later Aaron beckoned me to sit by him and he took my hand and we held each other's hand for a long time, squeezing. He talked 'bout the plight of transvestites and transsexuals (all the while squeezing my hand) to a group of girls. Told of a man who had an operation to be a woman, then after a while found she didn't want men and so was wondering how to meet lesbians. I wanted to yell out "That's how I am, too." I felt very close to Aaron, feeling he'd be the only one to understand. We left together and rode our bikes together—he was going the same way. I wanted to tell him all, but somehow it just didn't get a space in the conversation. Felt down.

Today I bought an elastic panty girdle, cut off the garters and put it over my breasts to flatten 'm so I'd have a boy's chest. I also put a stuffed sock in my crotch. Saw a girl there and I can't even remember but I think she said something to me 'bout a sex-change operation, and I told her I wanted one so bad. But I'm not sure that really happened.

8/8/1973

The GPU News Editor made a big production of telling me my *whole* article and picture of the controversial poster will be in the issue due Aug 10th. He titled it, “A Transvestite Answers a Feminist.”² He said he was very excited about it.

8/13/1973

Last week, Tom and I went to my place all drunk and I put eye makeup on him. Didn’t do such a hot job but it looked OK and he liked it. Told me he’s already experimented with some old lipsticks that had been laying around his place. We made love. He asked me to put on something he’d like and I put on this one blue satin skirt he used to like and I guess he still does, but when I had it on (and I don’t know if subconsciously I was doing it on purpose) I could hardly get it on sexually cuz the skirt bummed me out so. When I think of myself as a girl during sex I feel frigid. In the morn when he washed the makeup off, he left a touch on. He liked it. As we were gonna leave to go out and eat breakfast, Evan calls and asks if I can get hold of Lisa and that he has someone we’d probably both like to meet. He picks us both up (I had to tell Tom I couldn’t eat with him), and we pick up this 44-year-old “woman” who’s really a man passing in society as a woman for 23 years without any operation or other medical aid. We four went and ate lunch and then to Evan’s where he taped an interview with her. She was about 5’2” and less than 100 lbs., so very frail. Said she always liked the femmy stuff and at 16 decided either she had to be a femmy little faggot or switch to a woman. Stayed and nursed her sick parents and when she was 22, they both died and she put on her women’s clothes, had her brother drive her to the bus station, and went to New York and lived as a woman since. Married a gay man who knew she was really a man, and they adopted an 8-year-old boy. When he was 14 her husband died and she sent the boy to boarding school and now he’s in his 20s studying to be a priest. He has no idea about his mother. She’s worked as a legal secretary for 12 years, and they have no idea of it either. Fantastic story. Says she knows she’s a man and calls herself a “permanent drag.” Looked like a regular small older lady. Has no desire for any operation. “Why bother? and Too late.” Spent till 8:30 with them. She said she began reading my article but will finish later. Also Evan told us of someone who was doing strip shows in a straight place where no one knew he was a man at all! Twelve drunk guys from a stag party came in and asked this person, who’s a *beautiful girl* if she’ll do a private strip show in their apartment for them. He said they were all beautiful athletic bodies and he agreed for \$75, knowing a show wasn’t all they wanted. After doing a private strip show to the last piece, he ran coyly to the bedroom. They all crashed in and he puts his hand up and hollers, “Stop right there! *What* do you think I am, a *whore*? ONE AT A TIME!” Gave the excuse she wasn’t a whore so he wouldn’t have to fuck them, so he sucked them all off and they never knew he was really a guy! Too Much! Just *fantastic!* Tom just loved this story when I told him it. Sunday the 12th went the

²This article has since been reprinted in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, eds. Routledge: New York, 2006, 159–64.

parents'. Took a copy of my article but I waited till Ma asked for it. She read it, and then dad took it. She said some of it went over her head but she'd have to read it again and that none of it shocked her and if I found myself and have the happy look on my face like I do now, she's glad. Dad only got through half page and said he didn't understand any of it at all! Later *K.* read it, and she understood it all but didn't know what to think about it; I guess it's good that no one knows what to say—means it got them thinking. Monday at GPU mtg, Lisa said if I'd have said my answers in a different way it may have been clearer. I know that already. Aaron wanted me to do a follow-up article for the next issue, but Evan said not the same subject two issues in a row. He commented he felt the case of the woman we interviewed was way-out and so is *mine!* That surprised and pleased me. Said he felt the gays have a lot to learn by far-out cases like ours. After the meeting, Lisa, Evan, and I went to get some coffee. Evan talked our ears off 'bout a drag ball he's planning on Feb 9.

8/18/1973

Well, I can rightly say *everything* has gone wrong in the last 2–3 weeks. My television died and had to be replaced, my apt was broken into, my stereo ripped off, my bedroom rug went moldy and I had to give it away, my back bicycle tire has blown FOUR TIMES and had to be replaced or repaired *four times* in the last 2 weeks, Tom can't even tell me he loves me, and just now Dumbo (my cat) got an abscessed ear and I had to *bus* him to State St. Hospital and leave him there. The only thing that hasn't happened is bodily injury to my person. I have been *so* irritated this week that everyone I see I wanna smash in the face. Went out with Tom last nite, good and drunk. In bed and told him I love him and he can't say he loves me. He didn't even answer. I cried and he just hugged me. I don't feel like I wanna die anymore—I just have no urge to live.

8/22/1973

Things are still shitty but the chaos seems to have subsided. Saturday the 18th, went to bed and began crying. I held myself and stroked my skin like I always do and imagining I was a beautiful boy, I was sleeping with and then it began to get too real and I felt my mind and my body separating. Got so scared and realized I had to get outside and talk to someone if I wanted to stop. Got dressed and rode by bike to Tom's tho I knew he probably wasn't there. But rode around until I saw a light on—it was *M.* We sat on the porch and I complained to him and talked 'bout Tom a little. *M.* said Tom just needed to get away and things'll be better then. He was *surprised* to hear how madly in love Tom is with dormie. Tom sure can hide his feelings. *M.* asked if I was gonna go visit Tom in Berkeley, and I said I didn't even know if he'd want me to. Well, we went to the neighborhood bar and had a few drinks and I felt so much better. It was like 2:30 a.m., and I went home real tired and felt good. 'Bout 15 min later, Tom calls—I'd left just before he came home. I asked if he could talk ("What about?" "Oh, the same old thing.") and he said no. Monday we were spozed to have lunch, but he didn't show up. I went and got Dumbo from the hospital. Bout 7:30 p.m., he phones and says let's go to dinner, so I didn't go to the GPU mtg and

he doesn't show till 9:45. Bitched him out a little—he was real drunk. We ate out and the night was all teasing and ha, ha. Back to my place and I was sure he was going home, but he didn't. He was turned on and when I said I had my period he said oh and stopped being sexy. I had already decided not to have any sex with him that nite and he didn't seem to want to either. So we slept together real peaceful. Tues, he came to have lunch with me and that was really surprising! 2 days in a row I get to see him! Tues nite went out drinking with *K.* and both of us were super drunk and we staggered (and I mean STAGGERED) to her house and I had to walk bout eight blocks to my bike. Thought if I should go to Tom's, sat on a lawn to think and decided no. Took a long fuckin' time to get home and I can't remember so good how it all went but I cried and cried 'bout Tom and phoned him. *M.* had to wake him up ('bout 3 a.m.) and I'm not even sure what I said but I remember crying real hard over the phone. He asked where I'd been, etc. I musta told him I felt so bad about him. He said he'd see me Wed for lunch, and I told him if I made it to work. Knew I wouldn't. I remember the last thing I said: "I love you so much, Tom. I wish you could say that to me." We hung up and I cried and cried and finally fell asleep. Didn't make it to work. My mind is pretty blank today. I just can't hold myself back from calling him when I feel so bad or telling him I love him. I know I should lay off and leave him alone. I feel so desperate sometimes and each day is worse cuz it's closer and closer to when he's leaving. And I just don't know what to do anymore.

8/27/1973

Friday Tom and I went out for supper to the place *I* think he and dormie went when she came into Milw a few weeks ago. Anyway, we had a great time! I couldn't care less about dormie cuz I know more and more as it gets closer to his leaving that he loves me, altho he still won't SAY it. We went to a bar after dinner and both of us got REAL dragged there, so we left and went to his place. Went right to bed. I had made a resolution not to have sex with him till he could *say* it, and, yeah, it felt so good when he began petting and touching me. I told him of my resolution and he said, "Oh, well, OK" real apprehensively, but I said, "But it's too hard to do, so forget it!" We were getting it on great, then *M.* came, and we had to hold it down. Tom asked me to get on top of him, "I like you on top." I said, "Really, I like to be on top, too!" He called me "voluptuous"—I called him "pretty." Beautiful night, during the night, he had a nightmare and awoke, whimpering, and folded himself in my arms for comfort and I pet him and kissed him.

Today at lunch (we've been having lunch every day lately), he asked me the date and I told him next week school at UMW starts. He was surprised it was almost September and said he'd better leave soon. I said I know! Asked if he had a way out there and he said he figured on taking the train or getting a ride out there. Asked if he'd be taking a lot of his stuff and said probably only a suitcase. Told him he could store his stuff at my place if he wants. Said he'd probably box up his books and send for them later. I asked him if he'd write me and he said of course! Asked where he'd be staying and he said probably a hotel for a while till he found a place. I said it all sounds scary, he laughed nervously, "I know it's scary!" And he said, "Well, I should

leave next week.” So this is my last week with my love. I don’t feel sad. I’ve known it for so long. I hope he wants me to come visit him.

9/1/1973

This week has been in the 90 degrees and it’s just too much—too fuckin’ hot to even get dressed decent. Have been seeing Tom every day this week. When I spent the night at Tom’s on Monday, I stole a pair of his underpants in secret, I don’t know. I wore them while sleeping alone and they make me feel not so lonesome, and I figured I’m gonna need a surrogate when he’s gone. I just thought—he’s not taking all his stuff so maybe he can store his clothes *here*, get it? That would be nice! But he’d probably take all his sexy stuff. Before we went out last nite, I said jokingly to Tom how this is our last weekend out together and let’s just stay home and cry about it. He said real serious that it’s not our last weekend out together, only our last one before he goes to Calif. So we came home and made love.

9/5/1973

Hyper day. My place was robbed again—only took my *rings*! All costume jewelry worth nothing. Lady upstairs scared them away.

–Got a copy of “The Transvestite” magazine. No good deep articles, but its air certainly isn’t one of hating women.

9/10/1973

Tom left this afternoon on the 1:15 pm train for Berkeley. No regrets—no tears goodbye. Friday the 7th, we went out to a bar—got bored pretty fast and went to his place. Very quiet nite, no sex. Saturday morn I packed up stuff I had at Tom’s plus stole two more of his underpants. They mean a lot to me now and I’m going to wear them always now that he’s gone. Pretty heavy if I pick a guy up and we have to undress. Sunday Lisa (that male TS) and I went to the Brady Street Festival. Supposed to meet Tom there, everyone else was looking for him too but he showed at the last second and had to split immediately for his Ma’s. Lisa came over to my place and stayed till after midnight. We talked and watched television. She said she felt I looked as much like a boy about 16 as she looks like a girl if I don’t talk or smile. I disagreed but she insisted. Said people judge more on actions and appearances than on real looks. Well, this morn I took off work and went to Tom’s ‘bout 9 a.m. He was packing his suitcase. We went to a nearby restaurant for breakfast and to the store where he bought a little food for the train. He said he’d write me as soon as he got to Berkeley. I didn’t feel much really. Felt mostly like I was glad he is finally going cuz I was so tired of *thinking* about how it would be. We laid down on his bed for a while and I told him I’d miss him. He gave me very few encouraging or loving words. Just kept acting like he was only going away for the weekend or something. He said he was scared to go, and I said I knew. He said he’d be back in about 1 and ½ months! He kept saying he’d write real often. Told him if he needed any of his stuff I’d gladly mail it to him. He was very preoccupied, understandably.

He hardly paid special attention to me at the train station, only glanced at me a few times. I could only give him a peck of a kiss and say “I love you real much” and he only said, “I know” and smiled. This is the first I’ve cried. I wish he could have at least said he loved me. Why can’t he just give me that much?

9/11/1973

Rather bummed out this morning but I feel alright now. Dumbo’s got pneumonia! I realize so much how the adaptation of masculinity is to mask my vulnerable feelings toward Tom. I feel if I dress and act real femmy I’ll only think more of what a big mean thoughtless cold man Tom is and how he fucked over poor little me like he swore he wouldn’t. And I just don’t want to think of that shit. My masculinity is the only escape and shield I have from my feelings of feminine helplessness. I don’t think it’s all so bad.

9/12/1973

Well, Tom got to Berkeley sometime this afternoon—3:30 Milw time, and I still haven’t figured out the time difference between here and there. Saw a couple of friends today—told them I was out looking for a man I can ditch in about 3 months and they thought that was pretty funny. Saw a real cool guy I’ve seen around before—not particularly good looking, but real swishy. We were walking down the hall in opposite directions and we stared at each other till we passed and I turned and looked back but he didn’t. What am I supposed to do to get these boys? Grab their dee’s right then and there? It’s so frustrating. I just want a guy for companionship and warmth—doesn’t have to be for sex (but it’d be nice).

9/16/1973

Tom’s birthday. I didn’t think of it till Tom’s mother phoned and said Tom called her Friday and today, saying he was going out for a nice dinner to celebrate his birthday. He’s 24. He told her he has an apartment a couple blocks from the Univ for \$60 a month—I guess it’s an efficiency. Also that he wrote me and *M.*—probably mailed it Saturday. I was just thinking the other day that Tom’s leaving has kind of released me from having to think about him. I just don’t have any reason or anything to think about him. When he was here I had to think how often I’d seen him, how he acted, etc. Now all I have is to read letters from him that will probably be unemotional and read just like his ones to *M.* do. He often said he felt he’d be able to sort out his feelings once he gets out there, but I wonder. Why should he sort them out when he’s 1,000,000 miles away from them? I just don’t think he will. I just don’t think there will be an end—a happy end, anyway. If only he could say he loves me—but why should he love me when I’m not there to love?

Saturday, I couldn’t get anyone to go with me so went to Teddy’s bar myself. Soon I spotted a beautiful guy I’ve seen around a lot. So all nite I stared at him, and he kept looking around, caught my eye, and stared back. I was getting soggy pants. He’s so gorgeous, a blond Adonis, a graceful boy, soft skin, sparkling teeth, and a pretty face. But we just kept exchanging these momentary stares and he’d go about his business. So after several hours I mustered enough courage and approached him

and asked, “Should I keep trying or not?” “Trying to do what?” he looked at me with flirty eyes, smiling. I wanted to touch him. “To pick you up.” He laughed, taken by surprise. “Well, not tonite. I’m just watching the band.” Now I laughed, “Oh, yeah, so am I.” He kept looking at me smiling—his beautiful face; I just was so frustrated and shook my head, “Oh...you...you’re such a tease...you really are...” And he smiled and said, “Why do you think I’m teasing you?” I looked at his pretty face, his lovely eyes and lips, and I just said, “I don’t know, I just think you are.” (And now I think that just by being so pretty, he was teasing me, by looking at me.) I stood there looking at him. Well he was so pretty and I knew I couldn’t get him so I said, “Well, at least I tried” and walked away. Sat around ‘bout 15 min and left. On my way out there he is standing like a beauty outside the door and I had to pass him, he saw me so I said “bye bye” real coldly. Went home. And so I had to sleep with the boy I am and make love to myself, like I have every nite. I pretend I’m a boy in bed and think how it feels. I’ve done this for years—as long as I’ve had sexual feelings. I have to go to bars often if I’m to find myself a boy to sleep with. In times I can’t, I can become a boy to sleep with. But it’s so much nicer with a real one.

9/18/1973

The impossible happened. Even now I feel stunned and numb, like it didn’t happen, even *while* it was happening.

Monday I went to the GPU meeting and about one-fourth of the way thru it, a really fine young man came in I’ve never seen before and sat on the pew next to me. I immediately thought he was gorgeous and when a guy popped up next to him to welcome him I thought, “Shit, I’ll never have a chance next to all these guys...,” not that I thought I even *had* a chance. Whenever he wasn’t looking I looked at him admiringly. So when the meeting was over, as usual some stayed around to chat, and I did too. He told some people he was from New York and came to Milw to dance with the Milw Ballet Company. Yes—he looked a *lot* like a dancer, had that classic, statue face and body. He offered to help draw for GPU News. As they talked, I caught his eye and we stood looking in each other’s eyes about 15 s and I thought “Hmmm...” Kept a close eye on him—he was staying at the YMCA, he said to someone. When I saw him leave I “rushed” out after him. He was walking down the avenue toward the lakefront and I rehearsed my speech. I don’t know why but he just struck me as not being untouchable like most gay guys, I guess from the stare we had. Suddenly he stopped in the middle of the sidewalk and I walked up to him and he asked if I had change for the bus. Gave it to him and we kept walking together and I said, “You wouldn’t happen to be bi, would you?” He looked startled and said “*What?*” “Bisexual.” I didn’t look at him at all, so nervous. “Well, I’ve been known to go out with girls...why?” “Cuz I’m interested.” “In me?” “Yeah.” He was pretty surprised and we just kept walking, and he asked me what I was into. Told him my lover, a male transvestite, left last week for Calif and it’s pretty hard to replace someone like that. He asked me when did he dress, I said only when we were together. He kept going, “oh, this is really strange,” etc. He said he hasn’t gone to bed with a girl in 5 or 6 years. I felt like saying as far as I’m concerned if he went with me he wouldn’t be breaking his record, but didn’t. He said, “Well, OK, let’s give it a try.” Asked if I was getting myself into something cuz he sounded so hesi-

tant and he said no. So we turned and went to my place. His name was Lawrence. I was just in a daze. At my place he asked if I had beer or something so he could relax, but I only had grapefruit juice. We sat on the couch and drank that. We chit-chatted about shit and he said “I feel like I’m in high school—I don’t know what to *do!*” Told him he’s making me more nervous than him and began kissing and he leaned back and was the first to undo my clothes. Was freaked at my elastic band to flatten my breasts. So we kissed and petted for about 15 min and he still wasn’t hard, although he acted like he was enjoying himself. He asked if I wanted to go in the bedroom. I asked if he did, he said yes, so we did. He opened my pants and was freaked by my jockey shorts. I opened his and he was naked. We got in bed and made out, still not hard, so I went down on him and sucked him. He was hard in no time. He pulled me back up and we fucked superbly. He asked me if I ever got screwed in the ass and I told him some guy tried but was a clod and it hurt too much. He said yeah, it does hurt pretty much the first times. So I tickled him, licked and kissed and stroked him and laughed. He said, “Oh, you’re really fun! I’m really glad you’re so fun cuz being a homosexual I’m really scared of girls.” So we talked how dumb girls were, and he defended them more than I did. He made a sandwich and I brought the TV in the bedroom and we chatted. He told me he just broke up with his lover of 5 years. I showed him a picture of Tom and he asked if Tom “always purses his lips like that,” that he was a good-looking boy. He had wanted to return to the Y but I said oh stay so he did. Told me he’d been on his way to the park to have some sex when I approached him. Anyway he was gorgeous and we slept together like babies. In the morn, we ate breakfast and I gave him my phone no. He always whispers “beast” to Little Topsy (my other cat besides Dumbo) lingering on the “sss”—I’ll always remember that about him. Told me where he was rehearsing so I could “leave messages” for him.

Tues, the 18th ‘bout 10 p.m., he phones and says the two other “boys” he’s moving in with won’t be in tonite and one of them is urging him to have me over there or he should come to my place. I met him at Big Boy’s, he and the other guy who was really off the wall. Went to his new place and he showed me around. The heat wasn’t on at his place, so we went to mine. He wore his brown leather jacket! We had to stop and rest twice in the eight blocks cuz his “Achilles tendon” hurt him from practicing so much. He was so beautiful. What a prince! He rinsed out his tights, etc. I washed my hair. (He said Monday that he so much preferred a “meaningful relationship” on a one-to-one basis than park sex, etc.) He read me his resume he had to write—he’s really done a lot of dancing, even been in films and a dance teacher. He laid on the couch naked and I sat at his feet and he wrapped his legs around me and I pet them. He made little “ooohhh” pleasure sighs and I told him how lovely he is. After a long time, I bent over and sucked him real good (he’d been hard before I started to tho). He stopped me cuz he was gonna come and said he didn’t want to yet. In bed, we made love and he used his hand to make me come and then fucked me from the rear. I love this: he whimpers and cries out quietly when he comes. I always loved that. We curled up after sex and slept. I got to look at him while he slept Wed morn, what a beauty. I still can’t believe that I could do it—get a gay man and make love to him. (Told him I wasn’t into women and I want to go to a gay bar and get men. He said I could. Asked how? They’re there to get other guys. He just said I could, without

explaining how that could be!) Wed morn, took off work and we had a leisurely breakfast. He read the first half of my published article and said it was really good. (After sex Monday I asked why he came with me. Said he thinks cuzza my leather jacket and my approach. Told him those are the things that usually turn guys off to me cuz they think I'm gonna chop their dicks off or something.) I love the way he moves, esp. the way he sits. He'll be dancing around Thanksgiving at the PAC. Told him maybe I'd go see him dance. 'Bout 1:15 p.m., he had to leave for rehearsal, and I went outside with him cuz I had to tighten some screws on my bike. He asked for a kiss before he left. Said he'd call Saturday and we'll go dancing, OK?

9/20/1973

Yesterday *still* no letter from Tom and I started to get bummed—knew sometimes the jerk delivered my mail to the front of the house, so checked. There it was! He sounded OK and called the place he got a “jive-ass firetrap” and said everyone acted like they had bodies in their closets. I took that as having a sexual meaning, but then realized it didn't. He already got picked up by two gays who drove him somewhere and got him stoned. In his letter he called the one from NY “very lovely.” He said they both stared at him all the while, but he coquettishly left in “good style.” Oh, Tom you fleeting beauty—your saintlike face and your ghostlike soul. I wrote him right away. It shocked me to see his return address—somewhere I didn't even know and I felt so far away. Only told him Lawrence and I met and we were gonna do a lot of things socially. Went to Evan's to help him with the next issue of GPU News and told him about Lawrence. He was delighted at the story. By the way, I'm gonna be working full-time again starting October. I know I won't like it, but there's really no reason I shouldn't do it and I can use the \$. I sent Tom \$10 “for his birthday.” Hope he gets the letter and writes back soon. And you know, he wrote that “absence does make the heart grow fonder” and at the end of his letter he wrote “I love you too!” Tom, why couldn't you have at least said that while you were here—1½ weeks can't make that big a difference. I hope things work out all right.

10/2/1973

Got my second letter from Tom yesterday. Told me 'bout his social life there and how all these guys try to pick him up and how he teases them (altho he doesn't do it purposely I think). He's got a job, washing dishes again! He spoke of phoning me. He was worried I wouldn't write him just as I was he wouldn't. It would be nice to hear his voice. I really desire him—don't miss him as much as I desire him.

10/14/1973

Last week and a half has been too much. I've been really sick. Thurs the 4th, I left work at 4 p.m. and have had a super sinus infection since. Lawrence came over Sat nite; we went out to the River Queen for a few hours. But he was really a doll nursing me, putting Vicks in the vaporizer, refilling it, getting me vitamin C, cooking supper, and making me tea. He was wonderful—my fever was 100–102. Mon afternoon, mom picked me up and I went to the parents'. Sick there all week. On Sat

nite, Dumbo got outside and went over to that lady's who calls him "Butterscotch." She phoned me and I told her I was at a loss to help him, that I've been force-feeding him for 2 weeks and he's getting worse. She wanted to keep him and try nursing him. Anyway, all week I kept in touch with her and he was worse and worse. Fri the 12th, she phoned and said she felt it was hopeless but still had hope. Sun morn he died. I knew he would and I wrote him off a long time ago. She just wanted to try. So all I have now is Little Topsy. Wed, I got a letter from Tom. He complained of being tired of beating off and I wrote and encouraged him to get a lover. So today's the first day I'm home. Miss Lawrence a lot, I'm still weak and depressed. Getting back to normal—going outside especially—scares me. It's so safe being with mommy and not having to be on your own. I miss Tom so much and feel like I'm freaking out in some internal, hidden-from-view way. I'm losing touch with the world—oh, I don't know. Maybe I just feel this way cuz my invalid state. I just need to see Lawrence and go out drinking and sleep with him and get back to my office and onto my bicycle.

10/18/1973

Back to routine. Monday went to GPU mtg and Evan said Lawrence had phoned him looking for me. So Tues, I left a note at his dance studio that I'm sorry I was gone so long, missed him, and could he come over tonite? He did and while he was gone (went home for some stuff), Tom phoned me. It was really strange cuz I kept waiting for him to say why he called me, but he never did. He needed me to send some books to him, but it wasn't urgent. He sounded depressed thru the whole conversation and only explained that he was "tired." I got the impression he was just lonesome and wanted to talk. He told me something very important to me tho: said he's trying to get financial aid to study next quarter and if he can't, he'll probably just stay there and work and establish residency so tuition isn't so high. So all this rap on how he'll be back in a few months was just talk—like a lot of other things he's said. I didn't say anything to him tho, just, oh how long does it take to establish residency, etc. He told me he bought a choker necklace and that he went out with one of the other guys living in his bldg, but all he wanted to do was hustle girls, so Tom doesn't think he'll go with him anymore. Shit like that. We talked about 20 mins. He depressed me too. So Lawrence came back and we ate supper. He told me of his adventures last week—of the boys he'd slept with, etc. Also his lover of 5 yrs, Bill, is coming to Milw to stay with him the end of this week. I don't know if that means anything concerning me, i.e., I don't know if I'll still be able to sleep with Lawrence once Bill's here, but he didn't say and I didn't ask, so I'll just have to see. Lawrence asked if I wanted something to help me sleep. When I asked what and laughed, he laughed "Oh, it's about 7 inches...." So we fucked—he turned me over and came in my ass. I relaxed and was so surprised cuz it *didn't hurt*, but I was scared I'd tense up and it'd hurt, but he soon stopped. Afterward he asked if I like it from the back. Told him it felt fine, etc. and finally he realized he'd been in my ass and not my cunt—he didn't know! Just said he found a hole and stuck it in! So funny and he said he was glad cuz he likes to fuck in the ass. He was so cute, I just

kissed him. He's so pretty, the more I look at him and he colors my fantasies so! I hope Bill's coming doesn't break us off.

10/30/1973

Lisa on Sunday was telling me most of the gay drag queens hate women and think of them as people with "foul-smelling crotches" called cunts. The way she said it really threw me and I finally realized that that's what I think of women too.

11/11/1973

Tues at supper, we talked how Lawrence's brother found Lawrence a free place to live. His brother said either there or Lawrence'd have to live with me. Lawrence laughed that his brother was trying to save him from heterosexuality and I said you don't have to worry about that with me around and Lawrence piped up and says oh no! And he tells them how I accosted him on the street for sex. With Bill there! And I was so embarrassed and that's another thing that made me depressed cuz I'm such a gross pig and I have to make boys be heterosexual to have sex with them. Later, I mentioned to Lawrence when we were alone that he could stay at my place if he wanted and he thanked me and said he'd be visiting me a lot. The bass player in the opera was a real doll, a classic face, and soft blond hair, and Lawrence and I kept an eye on him and I got bored with the opera and just stared at blondie and had sex fantasies about him. Then we went to the new place Lawrence lives. Lawrence had said as we left the opera, "You want to screw?" Asked if he wanted the truth and told him I had my period, but if he didn't mind, I didn't. I felt like a gross pig girl again and was surprised when he said he didn't care. We had sex and it was so nice to sleep with someone again. Saturday went to Evan's to work on GPU shit and he and Aaron asked me to run for vice-president or secretary of GPU in December. Don't know if I want the responsibility but sure would like the status.

So today I found a letter from Tom in my mailbox. Says he is loving me.

11/13/1973

Well, got a few uppers after being so depressed lately: went to yesterday's GPU mtg and before I even got inside, a guy who seems to respect me or something (he said a couple months ago that I usually have something very provocative to say), told me he was on the GPU phone line and a straight (heterosexual) male transvestite phoned and did I have any places, etc., this guy could contact about TVs. I said yeah and told him to phone me at my place later. Aaron had me read an article to the mtg. I was a little embarrassed, but I've never felt such acceptance before. I've never been in a group like that—I mean like in high school, even grade school, I was always left out of things and at GPU I feel so wanted. People accept me as a female TV, even tho there's really not spozed to be such a thing. Anyway, the guy didn't get hold of me Mon nite but called me tonite, and I gave him a batch of names, addresses, and phones. We chatted and he asked me hesitantly if I was a lesbian. Told him certainly not and he asked if I considered myself a TV. Said yes, that's the closest

definition I can find for what I feel. He said he had a feeling I wasn't a lesbian but wasn't sure. I tried to coax him into telling me why or how he guessed I wasn't, but he didn't say. I really wonder how he could tell. Anyway, he said he'd try and get this hetero TV to a mtg to meet me cuz he and I'd probably have a lot in common. Would really like to meet him, tho he's 30 and married. Would be good for me. How do I describe that I deceive myself all day and night that I'm a boy and I feel I am—even tho I'm not even passing in society?

11/23/1973

Feeling pretty down and shitty lately. Haven't seen Lawrence since the 15th and haven't fucked since the 14th. On the 15th he seemed pretty bummed and I'm not sure why. But I'm guessing it's cuz his performances are now. Opening nite was the 21st. I went alone, took binoculars, and watched him the entire time he was on. Was he lovely! It was so hard to imagine while looking at him that I knew him and had fucked him. So proud and graceful and sexual. He just made me feel worse that I hadn't slept with him, or even talked to him, in so long. So I hope he's just been too busy with his performances. He has another tonite and another tomorrow and that's it. Hope he contacts me then. Thanksgiving, I dressed up in a dress and nylons, etc. for fun and had *K.* put my hair up and makeup on me. I really looked pretty and Ma took all these pictures. Fun. Even had "diamond" earrings on! 'Bout 7 p.m. I went to Lawrence's like that to freak him out, but he wasn't home. Today I also went there 'bout 4 p.m. Not home again, so I left a little note saying I hoped to hear from him soon. Rat. Also Tom hasn't written or phoned in a long time (2 weeks?). Had a dream the other nite he wrote me and said he'd met *Mr. Right* and they were so happy together. I feel awfully alone these days. I got a letter from Bill, Lawrence's lover, already. Said he's thinking of going AC-DC (bisexual) cuz he feels gay relationships are too "fraught with problems." Wrote him back that it's not gay relationships that're a hassle, it's *all* human relations and that he'll just get girl troubles instead of boy troubles. Also he again extended an invitation for me to visit NYC and stay with him. Hmmm. Can't even think of Christmas gift giving and receiving. All I want are things that'll be too terrible to receive as gifts from the family such as a subscription to Transvestite Magazine. If I do go visit Tom during Christmas, I don't know. It's gonna be pretty strange. I think I've changed a lot—come out a lot more since he left. I've felt freer to come out, like wearing jockey shorts I stole from Tom and being more vocal about myself. I can hardly bear straight bars. I knew if I came out this far it'd be impossible to go back to where I was and wonder if that'll affect Tom and I at all. I wonder if he'll still want me the way I've become. Or what has happened to him? How's he changed? He must have in *some* ways. I'll be a little embarrassed around him at first, esp. with these shorts, if I ever get to see him, that is.

My mind is just a blank lately. Maybe the only way I keep from freaking in these harder times.

11/30/1973

Well it's 5 a.m. Dec 1 and I'm just so keyed up about the exciting events of Nov 30 I just can't fall asleep and I've been laying here just having all this stuff going

thru my mind. Got to pick up my mail today and (1) got a letter from Tom with a wonderful beautiful invitation for me to spend Christmas with him in Berkeley. Am so happy. With the fuel shortage, the airlines claim to be almost booked solid during Christmas, so I have to make reservations first thing tomorrow before even talking to Tom or going thru the motions of an OK from work. He seems to be a little apprehensive as I am—wrote about hoping I don't upset the “cosmos” he's fit himself into there. Also a romantic part how he enjoys my “scintillating presence.” Also in the mail (2) a letter from Transvestite Information Service (a group I just joined) with a pile of garbage on TVs and (3) a separate letter from TVIS's female TV/TS counselor I wrote to in Chicago and she gave me an open arms welcome and says she's dying to meet me and will drive up to Milw any weekend and phone her soon and she'll come help me pass as a boy—she has for 3 years, etc. She dates gay women, gay men, drag queens, etc. It was a fabulous letter and I'm all excited about her too. Plus there's so much work piling up for me at home and on the job, plus before I go, I better get Christmas presents all wrapped and set up someone to care for Little Topsy while gone and what should I take and I didn't tell you: Lawrence said if I wasn't going to Berkeley (before I found out), I should come to NYC with him over the holidays. God! GPU elections nominations Monday, write all these people, Tom, oh I love you. It'll be so scary to touch you again and to sleep beside you—I'm afraid it'll just freak me. He told me all these transy clothes he has bought so I'm feeling less scared about revealing my jockey shorts. I love him so damn much.

12/6/1973

Nice wonderful things happening. For starters, yesterday, I phoned that female TV counselor (see last entry, Oct 30). The call depressed me as for one we had a horrible connection and I could barely hear her plus she'd just woke and was half asleep and had a cold. She came on real forward like all of a sudden she'd say “Well, what do you wear?” and then said I should wear a *tie* cuz everyone thinks you're a guy then. I thought what the screw, *boys*, *real* boys don't even wear ties! Then she'd say she's surprised how high my voice is—she thought it'd be lower and how old am I. Shit like that. I thought what the fuck I never let on I passed and she's got the wrong idea. So she's spozed to call me back whenever she's coming up to Milw this week or next. Also told her my hair was long and she said almost in disgust “Oh *that's* got to go!” Shit. So during my lunch hour went to a hair stylist shop nearby and told the guy I just wanted him to cut it and make me look as much as possible like a boy. So after work, he cut it and I had no regrets and I'm thrilled with the way it looks. Thought it strange that I'd been so concerned how flat my chest should be and didn't bother me my hair was so long but realized that's cuz I can't *see* my hair but can look down and see the rest of me. My distorted body image again.

12/9/1973

More fabulous things happening to me. Thurs nite, Tom phoned and said my plane arrangements were fine by him. I was half asleep as he woke me. He told me something how he was having dinner with a married woman and her husband came home and found them in a compromising position. Asked how he meant, but he

wouldn't say and just said that kinda stuff is happening to him all the time. Knowing him it probably wasn't anything sexual, but he alludes to it. He probably just felt his presence compromising. Told him I got my hair cut—he was surprised. We both agreed it's sure gonna be strange seeing each other again.

12/11/1973

Well I was right about something crappy happening to put the damper on the nice shit lately. Yesterday, I got a real smart-assed letter from Tom becuz in my last letter to him I tried to talk a little bit about all his whining about being afraid of gays, etc. He got real cutesy ha-ha arrogant, actually *cutting out* the sentences I'd written and *pasting* them on his letter and then underneath each pastey he'd write his comments. I just can't believe he'd be so infantile. His comments were real jive coy "I know you're dying to get the scoop ha ha" crap. I'd written that from what he's said I can only deduct that he's kind of prudish with all sex feelings except with me under which he ha-ha's: "Very bad deduction, certainly not the only one (even given your misconceptions, on which see below) though maybe the only one *you* have in mind." And little guess-what-I-mean shit like I'd said I got the impression he's unable to respond even if he wanted to heterosexually, outside of with me and he says "A fairly shrewd impression, insight. I once had it myself" gee and I'm supposed to go oh, oh! now he doesn't have that impression, oh! dear! he's! fucking! But then the real topper was his last paragraph "Don't worry/pry about my sex life, I've kept clear of yours. If I want your help believe me I'll ask for it." Well after getting down with all that shit I thought who the fuck does he think he is? I was pretty shaken and immediately sent off a letter saying excuse me but I didn't know we were playing these little games; I myself was trying to be honest. And that as far as his sex life is concerned, "I wasn't aware it was any more sacred than anyone else's...it has ceased to mean more to me." And that I hope to hear from him soon because at this particular moment I'm not too eager to come out there. I just don't know how he got so uppity. (Maybe a defensive measure cuz I freaked him out by telling him about myself.) I know he and I used to play a lot of games being mysterious about our feelings, etc., but he'd been commenting here and there how he was confused and felt bad and I myself laid it all on the line to him and figured maybe he wanted to talk about himself too. I guess the thing he doesn't know is that I don't care anymore. I'm *honestly* not jealous or even curious about his sex life, as I think even Lawrence is a lot more important to me right now—and a lot more interesting! Fuck that. And that MY sex life is in such transition that I don't even have the time much less the will to worry about his.

And that's going to be the problem when (if!) I go there: I'm so used to talking about everything! all the thoughts and wishes—dreams Lawrence guesses and accepts and fulfills! That I'm not going to be able to be satisfied anymore with Tom's half-flirting pretending games. I know I can get exactly what I want now—to fantasize is no longer good enough. Before it was beyond my dreams—it was the worst perversion I wished to have a penis, to fuck a boy, and to be on top and inside! But now it's only a matter of time. Because Lawrence wants it. He wants me. And

Tom, he wouldn't even let me with my goddam finger! (Lawrence says Tom is "anal neurotic.") Tom doesn't even know I *am* a boy now. That I just don't read about pretty queens anymore.

God, I hope this whole thing will blow over or something. What a fucking drag. And another thing: I'm surprised how really little this whole hassle even means to me. I'm not, Christ, *nearly* as upset as I'd have been even a few months ago. And you know, I think if I lost him now, I really will not have lost that much, only the past. (And if I did lose him, it would all be over a "misconception" he thinks it's so funny to have, becuz *he* doesn't want to *talk* about it! Because he's so *demure*.) SHIT!

12/13/1973

Talked with Lawrence tonite about the exchange between Tom and I, and he made me feel like a real asshole for sending the snotty letter to Tom I did. I have such mixed feelings: on one hand, I feel I should have disregarded Tom's snottiness because I understand how mixed up he is and freaked out, but on the other hand, I think why should I let him put me down and not react in my own defense. Anyhow, now I wish so bad Tom'd call so I can apologize and tell him I love him so much. Christ, I should talk about arrogance—I can get my nose up there with the best of 'em. I'm rereading earlier entries in this diary and Tom said once and is right: I fluctuate so between dependence and independence. Wish he'd call. I know if I'd lose him, I'd lose all—what I wrote the 11th was bullshit.

12/17/1973

Feel so *good*! Yesterday exchanged Christmas presents with the family and I got some good stuff, esp. a blue-grey glittery scarf I've had my eye on for some time. I felt real high and by evening I was so hyper thinking of how excellent it'd be to see Tom. But he still wasn't calling, and I figured it was just like him to wait till the last minute on shit like that. Today just thought and planned all day—felt like I was already there. And about 6 p.m. he phoned! I said, "Hi, T. You're not mad at me?" He said not really cheerfully, and I told him I wasn't mad at him either and I love him so much and *he said he loves me too!* and that he thinks it romantic that we "exchanged poison pen letters." I love him so fucking much. So told him 'bout the guitar hassle (I can't carry it onto the plane and baggage smashes guitars) and he said don't bring it. Glad. But he won't be able to meet me at the airport and wants me to bus from airport to bus terminal and he'll meet me there around 5–5:30 (my plane arrives at 1:00!). I *know* I'm gonna get lost. Told him to look real pretty for me, and he said he'd probably look like a slob. (I KNOW he'll show up dressed to kill—I love him!) He sang little parts of the new Lou Reed album I just got, and I said I couldn't wait to see him, and we'd have real much fun, and he said yes, yes! We're both so excited and he says he loves me and I just can't wait to kiss and touch him. I know he'll love me the way I am now—all come out and happy. Like he said (see Jan 6). I'll be the man and he can be the woman. God I love him.

12/21/1973

Here I am in Berkeley. My plane left Milw at 10:30 Dec 20. Four-hour flight and I saw the Rocky Mountains and all kinda shit from the plane; the view was so clear. Landed at 1:00 and hung around the airport till 2:30, then bussed into San Francisco. Was so tired by then, tried to sleep sitting up and at 5:30 Tom comes bee-lining in and we walk out together. He was super speedy and began talking and barely stopped for about ½ hr. Seems he'd had his first homosexual experience last night. Met this guy at a bar and Tom said he took him to his (Tom's) place and he (Tom) was so drunk he said he's just gonna go to sleep, so he took off his clothes and got in bed. So did the guy. And Tom says, this guy got off on it but he didn't and he's scared the guy's gonna come back around again and he's so confused, he doesn't know, etc. He acted like he wasn't really all there and I kissed him and he said he really liked my haircut and I'm so beautiful and he loves me so much, he really does. He kept telling me he loves me. We went right to his place. I could tell that his mind was totally on the night before, but I thought it was great. And he said how wonderful it was to have me here and he really loves me so much and I'm so beautiful. He put on his clogs and a pair of silky textured black knee-length stockings (which gave him a hard-on the first time he put them on, he said!). He looked so beautiful as we went out to eat, his long hair flowing and he walks like a girl in heels with his clogs. I told him he looked like a beautiful girl and he laughed embarrassed, cuz that's what the guy last nite said. And he doesn't know why I think he's beautiful cuz he thinks I'm much more beautiful. So at the restaurant he volunteered the whole story: they'd left the bar, bought liquor, and sat in a park. Tom told him (I'll call him Gay Guy) that he hoped he wasn't expecting anything and that he just couldn't and G.G. was very understanding and so kind and Tom began kissing and kissing him. So at the same time Tom's saying no, he's saying yes. So Tom brings him to his place and they talk and drink more. Well, then the story gets kinda hazy and suddenly Tom tells me he sucked the guy off! [☺] Says he just doesn't know, he didn't like it, but then 2 s later says he did! He spoke so quietly and sad and said he just doesn't want a homosexual relationship cuz he likes girls and would rather sleep with me any day. And he was super paranoid that G.G. would return now that he knows where Tom lives. I think Tom made him leave, not sleep over. That part of the story was hazy too. But he kept saying what a beautiful smile the guy had. So Tom was left over from the night before but was so loving and glad to see me, and he said over and over he knows now he loves me. I tried to tell him he could have two different worlds, girls and boys, or he could fuse them together. He didn't get mad this time when I offered suggestions! And so we slept fully clothed in each other's arms. It is so good, and we're peacefully happy.

12/23/1973

Everything is still beautiful. Yesterday we bussed to San Francisco and walked all over, thru Chinatown and up and down insane hills, then back to Berkeley and ate out for supper. Seems we spent most of the time eating out, but it's something we both love doing, and neither of us have been lately. So we bought liquor and

back to his place and drank and as we got drunk, talked. Began talking about the snotty letter exchange (he said he'd sent the that snotty letter as a first impulse and even as he mailed it, realized he shouldn't have and that he really felt he blew it when he got my snotty letter and thought of sending a telegram, as I had). Then we began talking about our gender identities, and he said he also felt he had a neuter identity, as I did. Somehow, it just fit into the conversation and I told him the truth about Lawrence and I and that we had sex. He laughingly said now he'd have to try and not be jealous of all my lovers and I told him it was only Lawrence. Well, it was true confession time, and he told me about the married woman here he fucked. And then it seemed like I finally was let into his private world, and he told me that until the married woman experience, he had been impotent with anyone but me. That he even seriously thought about going to a certain sex clinic for help, but he felt he had to cure it himself. And he told me he'd tried to have sex with a mutual friend of ours twice!!! But he couldn't get it on. Also that he couldn't Wed night with the guy he sucked off. Told me he felt so low, like the lowest person on earth when he sucked him off, that the guy didn't even move and that he (Tom) felt more like a girl than ever. Also that complete nakedness turned him off, he found it clinical and "like a doctor's office." Anyway I was so surprised by these reveals. Really about our mutual friend—she's so fat and ugly. Tom said she "seduced" him as had the married woman. When I asked about dormie he alluded to not being able to get it on with her either and also he clearly said that he'd rather get a letter from me any day than one from her! But he's still not over her, but when he's not with her he couldn't care less about her; it's only when he's with her he thinks he loves her. (Fri nite I sucked him off; afterward he turned away from me, freaked, and I figured he was freaked as I'd done to him what he'd done the nite before to another boy and it was too confusing. He admitted that was the reason and that he'd guessed I had sex with Lawrence cuz I sucked so well!) Said he'd definitely like to go to NY and visit Lawrence with me someday and that he wants to kiss him! Also told Tom my biggest secret from him—that when I have sex, I must fantasize I'm a boy or I'm turned off. Said he had very few sex fantasies and got off most in masturbation on *visual* porno, etc. As for his "impotence" (it's *not* impotence if he *can* get it on with *me*, is it?), he said he's learned to live with it and to expect it and he laughs to himself when he's so teasingly sensual (and he knows he is) when he knows he can't do anything. Says *everyone* in Berkeley just takes for granted he's gay—people stop on the streets, one man asking Tom if he knew where he could "get a man for the nite." We walked to The White Horse, a gay bar. And he wanted to act like he wasn't with me again. Asked why and he said I'm a girl, to which I said no I'm not. He began at least paying a little more attention to me. Some guy approached us and we talked for a while and suddenly Tom shut up and began sulking and being a goddam baby. He wouldn't even *talk* to me or *look* at me and I got more and more pissed. Asked why he brought me there if he's just going to act like he hates me. Didn't answer. So I just sat at the bar alone. After a while, I demanded we leave, but he said he wanted to stay and moved away from me. So I sat the rest of the nite just waiting. At the end of the nite, a guy began talking to me and I told him my man was giving me a hard time and then I saw Tom walk out the door and pointed him out to the guy, who

exclaimed, “What is he, a transvestite on the side?” cuz he looks so much like a girl with his clogs on. I walked out after him and we walked home in total silence. In bed, I hugged and kissed him—he babbled how he hates me so much and loves me so much. That I’m so much better than him and he just “wants all those boys so much” but doesn’t even know how to talk to them. That he just wants to die in 7 years so he doesn’t get old becuz his beauty is all he has. Told him he has me and don’t tell me to go away like this, that I’m not better than him—I hate myself and I’m already living dead—I’m living someone else’s life. We both cried uncontrollably in each other’s arms and he said I knew everything and yet I know nothing and I told him I knew I didn’t know anything. So he hates me cuz I can do all the things he wants to but won’t let himself do.

12/30/1973

I’m on the return flight to Milw right now. Feel sad. Tom was so depressed (he said “tired”) all yesterday and this morn. He really was sad I was going and told me so. Yesterday he kept saying well, he guesses he’ll do this and that now and back to budgie meals and being alone again. Friday the 28th, he had to work 11 a.m. to 4:30 and then we went up into the hills behind the Univ. Really nice—could see the city lights and all, but the walk was muddy from the rain and it wasn’t all *that* clear visibly, plus he was so tired from work. Went to eat at a bar/restaurant. The married woman, who he’s been hanging around with from one of his classes, left a note for Tom to phone her if he wanted to do something that nite and so he debated for hours whether he thought we should go to her place or just ignore it. So as he fretted, I said let’s not if it makes him uncomfortable, so he agreed not to—but ½ hour later called her to see what was going on. So we went to her place. (He said he didn’t want me to see her cuz she wasn’t beautiful, and he doesn’t want me to think he’s hanging around with spamdogs.) So we sat around her place and it wasn’t strained at all. She was kinda blah. Went to some bars, ran into her husband at one, and it was strange. He was real nice and in fact knows about Tom. But as we were leaving the bar, all of a sudden I feel this violent pulling my of hair and I almost fell, and when I straightened up, there’s her hubbie standing in front of me real crazy staring at me looking like he was ready for a punch-out. So I just stood there staring back waiting for him to make the first move. She says his name real whiney pleading and we still are staring for a while and then he leaves. I thought what the fuck. Asked her what the deal was—did he think I was a lesbian or something and she said probably. Fucking weirdo. So we go around to more bars and it began raining (of course) and back to Tom’s. I was wondering what we were gonna do, but I guess it didn’t occur to Tom he had to get her outa there. We were all *very* drunk and tired. Finally he said well, he guesses he’ll “lend his umbrella to someone” hinting for her to leave, but she refuses. He begged her to leave, but she said no and that she’ll sleep on the floor. I was really surprised and we both had to beg for about 15 min before she consented to leave. Tom had to walk her home tho. Shit. Another weirdo. Anyway, all in all compared to the nerds there, she wasn’t all that bad. Tom came home and in bed told me over and over how much he loves me and how happy he is I’m there. We had

made plans to go stay overnite at a friend's of his who lives in SF so we wouldn't have to get up so early this morn to get to the airport as my plane left at 8:50 a.m. But later he asked if I minded that we stay at his place cuz it was our last nite together, etc. He's so beautiful. So we stayed at the "bar" looking at all the people (he pointed out two pretty boys to me and we admired them voyeuristically). 'Bout 11 p.m. went to bed. Now that I think of it, maybe he wanted me to make the first move to have sex, but I didn't although we cuddled and kissed and slept in each other's arms. This morn he was sad. Had no time to have any breakfast or anything as we had to wait ½ h for the bus that took us into SF. But he just had a long face and said he loves me and I should write real many letters. I felt almost like the sides were reversed from when I said goodbye to him at the train when he left and there was no way to cheer me up. Cried a little when I got on the plane. He'd said earlier he would watch my plane take off but as we parted he said he was going to leave right away.

So that's it for 1973. I'm just thinking about Tom all the time now, naturally. He doesn't seem so far away and out of reach, out of mind. I *know* he loves me and is waiting to come back to Milw to be with me. After all these months of wondering and waiting, it's all paid off. I'd always thought it would—altho I was a bit hopeless at times.

I don't want an exclusive relationship with him anymore. Just so we can be together in mind always and so I can always pretend I'm him and he can be me. He's such a pretty girl and he loves me. And goddam I love him so.

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Chapter 2

Theoretical Introduction to Discourse and the Body: Foucault, Butler, Queer Theory, and Transgender Studies

Our everyday understanding of the relation of our bodies to language is pretty simple, it seems. We experience our body as it moves through and senses the world around us. We encounter things. And then we name them and talk about them. Sometimes the language we use seems to be right on the mark, and sometimes we struggle to express an experience and never feel that we have ever really hit the target. In any case, language is what we use to try to express to others our encounters with the world, ourselves, and other people—and for the most part it works.

On reflection, then, it looks like we have a world of things and then a world of words about those things.

Often, we lump our bodies in with the world of things.

And philosophers usually put our minds (our activity of thinking, which is not quite the same as the physical “grey matter” of the brain) in with the world of words, because our minds are what create and understand words and language.

We even have sayings such as “mind over matter,” and “you have to see it to make it happen.” This shows not only that we see these two worlds as distinct but also that one seems to have more strength or power than the other. In other words, our minds—linked to the world of words—appear to be able to control, interpret, and understand that the world of things, which seems to sort of just sit there, is waiting for us to do stuff with it. Sometimes a thing imposes itself on me, like when I stub my toe, but then I try to recover my power over things, by, for example, talking myself through the pain or distracting myself. Again, the body is usually lumped into the thing-world, and this is further evidenced today by our attitudes about body sculpting, plastic surgery, certain types of physical training, and so on.

So far, so good. Pretty obvious, right? Bodies and things on one side, words and thinking minds (supposedly in control) on the other.

2.1 Allow Me to Introduce Michel Foucault

Foucault started doing some research—about the history of prisons, our definitions of mental health, and our attitudes about sex. And he made some pretty interesting—and disturbing—discoveries: in other periods in history, we did not even name certain things the way we do now. No big deal, we already knew that. But here is the key: if we did not name them at all, then, in some way, we did not *see* these things. They *did not appear*. In some weird way, the objects so obvious to us now were *invisible* to people in other periods of time.

Now, our first reaction is simply to say that, well, we just see things *better* than they did back then. We have been progressing in science, technology, theoretical understanding, etc. We just did not get it back in those days. But that is just what Foucault's research shows to be false. Instead of progressing through improvements of understanding gradually through history, where each new discovery builds on the last ones, he found that we actually do things quite differently. We make sudden, huge leaps from one way of looking at things to another (in other contexts, this might also be called a “paradigm shift”). And when we do this, we create new terms and new languages about this new way of seeing things—and it does not necessarily connect at all with the paradigm that preceded it. Nor are the “leaps” that we make “forward” or “backward”. In fact, the different paradigms can contradict each other or have very little to do with each other. And, in fact, no single paradigm is even internally consistent within itself. In other words, no paradigm is the result of some coherent theory agreed upon by some central source of power. Thus, when we do create new terms and languages for our new understanding, certain objects that were “obvious” before simply *disappear* and other objects—the new ones we are suddenly giving names to—*appear*.

Here is an example: We think of our daily lives as filled with more or less “stress.” We describe ourselves as “stressed” or not; we often attribute our tendency to become ill, our lack of ability to concentrate, and our various moods to stress. But stress is actually a relatively new phenomenon when it comes to our psychological welfare. It actually “appeared” around WWII, and there are arguments that, without that war, we might not have considered stress as applicable to our everyday lives. Prior to WWII, “stress” was only on the periphery of psychological studies, although it was integrated into medicine via engineering metaphors in the first half of the twentieth century. Basically, just as we can study how much stress a piece of metal can stand before it bends or breaks, we can also examine how much stress a body, or certain organs of the body, can withstand. So engineers would put pressure on a piece of metal in order to determine its breaking point, and some doctors began to apply this concept and method to parts of the body. With the onset of WWII, psychologists began to acknowledge that a person's psychology is not only affected by internal factors (memories, aspects of one's personality, etc.) but that external factors are also significant. Before this, they believed the success of a soldier all came down to his “character” or his own abilities. External factors became apparent when studying the psychological effects of battle on soldiers and especially on air force

pilots. With these studies, the environment was recognized as hostile, as something to be *endured*, as something that one could or could not overcome, depending on the extremity of the situation. Psychologists (and the military) began writing about the stress of war on individuals, they began testing how much stress a person could take, and they began introducing ways to offset the effects of stress. It is not surprising that the military term of “morale building” also arose around the same time.

Note that, at this moment, “stress” was for the first time applied to something *that was not a physical object*; instead, “stress” was now measured with regard to a person’s psychology. The notion of “stress” slowly crept into everyday terminology after that, until today, we can hardly conceive of our lives without an assessment of the “stress levels” we face within them. We even have assessments of the “stress levels” inherent in different jobs, types of relationships, etc. It is interesting to reflect, however, on the fact that this conception of stress comes from an environment of war and of surroundings that attack us and that need to be “endured” (and, today, “managed”). Our talk of stress nowadays holds within it an implication of war with our own surroundings. Nevertheless, we only think of ourselves—and I would say that we almost necessarily think of ourselves—as dealing with “stress” because this concept was introduced as part of human life in the early to mid-twentieth century. Prior to that, people never thought of themselves as stressed. It was a foreign concept when applied to human psychology. This is not to say that there were no negative terms for human psychology; rather terms such as “strain”—which indicated “exhaustion” rather than “breaking point”—and “anxiety” were prevalent in prior periods and even prior to that, well, that is a different study. What is important to note is how a certain *thing*, in this case, psychological stress, *appeared* through a certain discourse and, in doing so, infiltrated into our own self-perception such that now we cannot imagine ourselves otherwise.¹

Foucault (1980) himself gives an extended example in his *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*—sex. Now, he is not arguing that no one had sex before a prior period in history. Rather, he is arguing that, starting with the modern period,² sex was suddenly *named* in completely new ways. *It became an object to be studied*. Suddenly, medicine started taking interest in reproduction, psychology started looking at sexual pathologies and how children experience sexuality, criminologists started distinguishing crimes “of a sexual nature,” and so on. Literally, certain diseases appeared because they were identified and named. Certain organs were now taken to be “reproductive” while others were not. Simply, the body appeared such that it never had before.

Thus, we see the power of language, or in this case, “discourse.” I have been using the term already in my explanation, but I should define it a bit more explicitly at this point: For our purposes, discourse can be understood as the intermingled flow of language, power, and knowledge that is infused in our lived experience. It is the

¹Much of this description comes out of Robert Kugelmann’s very interesting book, *Stress: The Nature and History of Engineered Grief* (1992).

²Foucault identifies the “modern period” as beginning around the middle of the seventeenth century going through the nineteenth century—with its effects continuing into today.

way of using language that both represents and, more importantly, *influences* how we think about something. It is not unidirectional; in other words, it does not “come down” to the “average” person from some monolithic source, but rather, it flows from various institutions that identify themselves as important, through individuals, through other institutions, and back again. As Foucault (1980) says with regard to his study of sex:

The central issue [...] is [...] to account for the fact that [sex] is spoken about, to discover who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said. What is at issue, briefly, is the over-all “discursive fact,” the way in which sex is “put into discourse.” (Foucault 1980, 11)

According to Foucault, then, we *produce* sexuality through our ways of defining it. And not only that, the way we produce sexuality in our discourse is such that that very *productive activity disappears*. In other words, our discourse about reproductive organs, crimes of a sexual nature, etc. addresses the body in such a way that it *hides the fact that it is producing a certain type of body*, making it seem as if the very discourse that is making the body appear in a certain way is actually talking about something purely factual, over which we have no control. Discourse makes us think that we are talking about “real things” that are “out there” when really the discourse itself is constructing those very objects, making them visible. So, to return to our example, we think of psychological “stress” as a fact, something to be measured, something obvious to everyone, when really it was created when that term was applied to soldiers in WWII. The creation of “stress” has disappeared, except to a few historians and genealogists. Thus Foucault (1980) says:

If sexuality was constituted as an area of investigation, this was only because relations of power had established it as a possible object; and conversely, if power was able to take it as a target, this was because techniques of knowledge and procedures of discourse were capable of investing it. Between techniques of knowledge and strategies of power, *there is no exteriority*, even if they have specific roles and are linked together on the basis of their difference. (Foucault 1980, 98; my emphasis)

Power and knowledge express themselves through discourse. In other words, when we talk about things, we are always talking about them in a way that involves knowledge and/or power. We say what we can or cannot *know* about them or what we can or cannot *do* with them. And as we set them up as objects to *study* and/or to *manipulate*, we *construct* these very objects:

In actual fact, what was involved, rather, was the very production of sexuality. *Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check*, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover. *It is the name that can be given to a historical construct*: not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power. (Foucault 1980, 105–6; my emphasis)

So sexuality has been produced by the way we talk about it. Given this, it seems that words do not (always) reflect some immutable world “out there,” but rather, our

words contribute to what appears in that *seemingly* immutable world. And those words make that world *appear immutable* itself. Further, and possibly more disturbing given the way we “usually” see our relationship with the world and our bodies, Foucault points out that if our bodies are among the things that are created by discourse, then the very desires that we experience in those bodies must be created as well. In other words—and this issue will be taken up extensively by Judith Butler, whom I will introduce in a moment—the desires that we feel, or perhaps more accurately, the *desires that we notice*, are produced by the discourse that makes it possible for us to identify them:

By creating the imaginary element that is “sex,” the deployment of sexuality established one of its most essential internal operating principles: the desire for sex – the desire to have it, to have access to it, to discover it, to liberate it, to articulate it in discourse, to formulate it in truth. [...] It is this desirability that makes us think we are affirming the rights of our sex against all power, when in fact we are fastened to the deployment of sexuality that has lifted up from deep within us a sort of mirage in which we think we see ourselves reflected – the dark shimmer of sex. (Foucault 1980, 156–7)

Thus, all of our experiences, and especially those that are through or from or about our bodies, only appear when they are deemed important enough to be named, i.e., when they are tied in with some kind of investment of knowledge-power.

Now this still seems rather counterintuitive, but think about it: Could I *feel* “fat” if that term did not exist? Why do I *feel* “sexy” at some times and not at others? The discourses of all sorts of institutions, i.e., medicine, psychology, and sociology, for sure—but also fashion, the food industry (and the fast-food industry), and even the automotive and travel industries, to name a few—have a say in how I feel about myself, how I interpret my body, and even how I *feel in my body*. While my body is in one sense certainly my own, in another sense, many people had plenty to say about it before I supposedly recognized it as mine—and even before I was born. Notions of beauty, proper behavior, and interpretations of my gender, race, and abilities (among other things) were all existing before I came into being, and they were applied to me before I could understand them or could join the discussions about them. Thus my body is not entirely my own. How I feel “in” it is not entirely up to me.

Foucault takes this argument even further: The very understanding of a “soul” as “inside” the body is created by discourse as well. In fact, the very notion that we can “train” our bodies (and not just athletically but in every way: to sit still for so many hours a day while we work or study, to eat at certain times of the day, to maintain a specific posture, etc.) is a notion that is involved in understanding the soul as separable from and “internal” to the body.

This latter argument is developed specifically in Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* (1995), although similar strains of this argument are found in other works of his as well. Briefly, Foucault recognizes that between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, attitudes about the treatment of criminals changed. Within a few decades, across Europe and even in the USA, societies moved from having public spectacles of gruesome torture to the regimented, work-related confinement of criminals. Both approaches were evidence, according to Foucault, of specific attitudes about the

individual and the body. When societies converted to using prison as a place to “reform” the criminal and to “train” him or her, this showed that there was a new emphasis on what we would now call “self-control”—and this emphasis required a specific understanding of a “soul,” *a soul that could do the controlling*. It also presumed a body that *could be controlled*. In other words, when we are “trained,” usually through punishment, to modify our behaviors, this training actually creates a soul that takes over the job as “overseer.” In time, we correct ourselves (and each other) instead of having someone else who is “in charge” correct us, making ourselves docile, compliant persons—members of a civilized community. And anyone who is not docile and compliant is put through the training again, to reestablish that inner control, or the soul:

It would be wrong to say that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary, it exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of a power that is exercised on those punished [...]. (Foucault 1995, 29)

Foucault is frighteningly insightful here: even in schools, we use various types of punishment or coercion to train young children to sit still for several hours at a time, to sit a certain way in order to have proper handwriting (this is a specific example used by Foucault), to eat only at certain times, to play in certain ways, etc. This then translates into adults who sit all day in front of computers, eat lunch when they are told, take breaks when they are allowed (or when they allow themselves), follow the rules of roads, personal space, and so on. According to Foucault, this bodily control shows how we are a product of our laws and our sciences. In fact, the transition to “punishing” children with a “time-out” rather than a “spanking” is a perfect example of Foucault’s theory: when children “go into a time-out,” they are required to sit quietly in a removed spot for a certain amount of time; it is not a “physical” punishment in the sense of striking or causing physical pain. At the same time, its goal (among others) is *specifically to teach the child to control his or her own body*. Foucault (1995) explains:

This is the historical reality of this soul, which... is not born in sin and subject to punishment, but is *born rather out of methods of punishment, supervision and constraint*. [...] A “soul” inhabits [the person] and brings him to existence, which is itself a factor in the mastery that power exercises over the body. The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body. (Foucault 1995, 29–30; my emphasis)

The soul, then, “imprisons” the body by keeping it under tight control—and we are rewarded for and proud of this control. We think of this control as a form of personal success, rather than as a system of discourse that we have absorbed into ourselves and that now makes us what we are. Foucault sees evidence for this beyond our prisons; it is evident, specifically, in schooling and the military. But today we can see it also in our exercise regimes, our dieting, and even our moods: if we lose control, we have failed.³ Thus, this attitude is pervasive throughout our society and our lives. In other words, it is part of our discourse at every level.

³For a much more in-depth analysis of the constitution of fat and thin bodies, as well as our attitudes about how we control our bodies, see Susan Bordo’s *Unbearable Weight* (1993).

If the discourse of sexuality makes the body appear in a certain way and if the punishment of the body forms who we are as persons, then punishment and discourse work together to construct us as specific types of sexual persons, people whose behavior appears only through a type of sexual body. Our very identity is integrally tied not only to how we behave but also to our sex. Simply put, my identity is linked with my sex, because who I am appears through my disciplined, sexual body. My identity and acceptance in society are bound up with how I behave *as a man or a woman*, and thus *who I am and my sex are intertwined*:

On the contrary, sex is the most speculative, most ideal, and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations, and pleasures. [...] It is through sex – in fact, an imaginary point determined by the deployment of sexuality – that each individual has to pass in order to have access to his own intelligibility (seeing that it is both the hidden aspect and the generative principle of meaning), to the whole of his body (since it is a real and threatened part of it, while symbolically constituting the whole), to his identity (since it joins the force of a drive to the singularity of a history). (Foucault 1980, 155–6)

In other words, we only recognize ourselves as individuals through our sex. It begins with the proclamation “It’s a girl!” or “It’s a boy!” and it goes from there. It invests our entire adolescence and how we relate with our peers. For example, imagine a person who was born in a female body but who as a young adult, or even later in adulthood, makes the transition to living as a man (in whatever manner best expresses his masculinity). Some cisgender family members or friends, in response to his transition, might claim that they “lost” a mother, daughter, or female friend and then gained someone else. They might grieve the “lost” person as if “she” had died. Even though the person before them holds all the same memories, love, and connection with the world as before, he might be taken as a *different person*. Although this is only one of many ways to respond when a person transitions, the fact that such grieving and sense of loss occurs at all is an indicator of how closely many of us tie sex and identity together.⁴

Foucault therefore provides the following fascinating conclusion: our bodies and desires (as well as who we are) do not appear because they are “material” or “natural”; rather, they appear because they are discursive. More simply, *discourse gives rise to bodies and desires and not the other way around*. Bodies appear as sexual, pathological, and manipulable and desire as “driven” or “instinctual,” only because *we name them as such*. When they are not named that way, they do not appear that way. So, for example, when I see a “hottie” and suddenly realize that that person makes me “hot,” I only feel that *heat* because this term has been applied to this kind of situation.

Given how we started out, this might still seem starkly counterintuitive. However, consider also the following, more personal (and, unfortunately, not very sexual)

⁴Whether we think these emotions are misguided or not, we must also realize that the feelings are real to those who experience them. The point being made here is simply to show the strong connection we often make between a person’s identity and her sex.

example (which is actually true)⁵: When I was working as a food server, the employees of the restaurant, after a long night's work, would sit at the bar for a drink and to relax. Often, the more experienced servers would sample a new wine being offered at the restaurant, and I would join them. They would sniff the wine, then sip, and swirl the wine in their mouths and would give their assessments: "Strong scent of cinnamon." "Definitely hay in there." "Love the cherry background." "Very earthy." Then I would sniff, sip, and swirl as well. And what did I sense? Plain old red wine. No cinnamon, hay, cherry, earth, or any other of the delightful (or strange) flavors my colleagues were gaining from their experiences of, what I supposed was, the same wine. Just ordinary red wine. *But*, each night I would listen, sniff, sip, and swirl. With time, I too could sense the various flavors identified by my friends. Now I *can* smell and taste such things as cinnamon, clove, grass, flowers, and other similar items integrated into the wine, although I am far from an expert.

At the beginning, I expected red wine, and I sensed it—it appeared to me—as such, simply. The other flavors may have been on the horizon, but as yet, they were horizons to which I was not open. While listening to the discussions of my friends about the wine, however, I refined my focus. Soon I was able to recognize the details of the wines I drank, and I could tune into those details as things for themselves (cinnamon, hay, etc.). Simply put, *the discourse about the wine made it possible for me to perceive objects in relation to the wine that I had been unable to perceive before*. The discourse gave me "new" objects. Those new objects *appeared* to me only because of the discourse I heard about them.

Given this example, we can see the strength of the arguments by Foucault described above and evidence for it. Discourse can make objects appear in a very real, embodied way. We can identify similar examples in many experiences, such as walking through a forest with a knowledgeable forest ranger, looking at a painting with an art critic, etc.. The turning point of this argument, however, is whether discourse grounds the existence or appearance of *all* objects (and without discourse we would never be able to experience them at all), or whether it opens us up to possibilities that were merely hidden in the horizons of an experience. We saw in the example of the appearance of stress—and in Foucault's arguments—reasons for concluding that discourse grounds all experience, and we will see a more developed argument for this position offered by Judith Butler and a few others. However, the example of my experience of drinking wine indicates the possibility of some embodied experience that is already there before discourse takes it up, and this position is often presented in transgender studies as well. We will be working through both positions through the remainder of this chapter.

⁵This example was presented in papers at two conferences: "Self and Other: Phenomenology vs. Discourse," given at the Nordic Society for Phenomenology conference, *Self and Other*, Copenhagen, Denmark, April 20, 2007; and "An Application of Husserlian Phenomenology to Questions of Discourse and Gender," given at the Husserl Circle annual meeting, Prague, Czech Republic, April 24, 2007. I thank the organizers of the conferences for supporting the early stages of this analysis, as well as the conference attendees for their critical and supportive questions and comments. I also thank my former restaurant co-workers for their insights on the flavors and aromas of wine!

2.2 Directing Our Attention to Judith Butler

Butler takes Foucault's arguments very seriously. Seeing Foucault's philosophy on a broader scale, she realizes that if discourse actually produces what it addresses, then this can be applied to important ways in which we understand ourselves. More specifically, if discourse produces the objects it claims to be talking about, then, given our current legal and governing systems, the very laws that exist to protect individuals (or laws that we may fight for, in order to have such protection) have themselves *constructed certain "types" of individuals*. Thus, taking myself as a person who has rights and responsibilities is produced rather than "natural." A law that protects women constructs what a woman is at the same time that it protects them. Most obviously, it constructs women as a group that needs protection. Butler takes this to the area of feminist politics in her book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999). She argues that because of the productive nature of discourse (legal and otherwise), feminist politics must think carefully about what the term "woman" includes and excludes:

Juridical power inevitably "produces" what it claims merely to represent; hence, politics must be concerned with this dual function of power: the juridical and the productive. In effect, the law produces and then conceals the notion of "a subject before the law" in order to invoke that discursive formation as a naturalized foundational premise that subsequently legitimates that law's own regulatory hegemony. [...] Feminist critique ought also to understand how the category of "women," the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought. (Butler 1999, 5)

The project of feminist politics, then, in addition to "fighting for women's rights," should be to examine exactly how the category of "woman" has been constructed, how it is being used, and how that use continues to construct it in ways that might be dangerous. In other words, when we talk about "women," who are we talking about? White women? Fertile women? Middle-aged women? Middle-class women? Cisgendered women? What might we blindly presume about this group when we refer to it? Invoking the category of "woman," Butler argues, actually presumes certain categories such as—and especially—heterosexuality. Feminist politics ends up being exclusive by ignoring "women" who are not heterosexual, and/or who do not fit into the experiences of a certain race, class, ability, and so on. The discourse of feminist politics, if it focuses solely on securing certain rights for "women," then, is, in a certain way, the undoing of its own project: First, feminist politics undermines itself because it cannot identify what it means to represent. In other words, upon examination, the category of "woman" ends up being terribly slippery, fluctuating between being exclusively narrow and too broadly general. In either case, we have trouble defining what "woman" really is. (What body parts must one have, if any? What types of relations to "men" should be implied, if any?) Second, feminist politics works against its own project because that which it does not represent, i.e., that which it excludes, ignores, or (more often than not) simply does not see, comes back to haunt it and reveals its inadequacy. Thus, for example, women of color and lesbians have brought serious challenges to feminist politics in the history of its

development. And the answer is not simply to say, “Well, ok, we’ll just include you, too,” because this leads the category to gross generalization or to uncritical and unending lists of members. Ultimately, the category, and all it stands for, has lost all definition. For this reason, Butler says, a category must attempt to survive this tension by maintaining that very tension, allowing for internal contradiction instead of seeking homogeneity. It would allow for disagreements between different members’ interpretations of what is “most important” for “women”—reproductive rights, protection from domestic violence, job security, legal protection for lesbians, etc. In fact, we could say this of any identity politics, as they all face similar challenges.

Butler’s (1999) main argument goes beyond this one addressing feminist politics, though, and it is a refinement and development of Foucault’s (in combination with other theorists)⁶: When we speak “about” gender, or when gender is in our discourse, we are repeating certain discursive lines that “make” gender what it is. That repetition itself is productive. We make gender real through referring to it repeatedly in specific ways. In other words, according to Butler (1999), gender is “performative”; we “constitute” it through our very words and actions:

In this sense, *gender* is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence. Hence, within the inherited discourse [...] gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed. [...] There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results. (Butler 1999, 33)

Remember Foucault’s (1980, 98) assertion, when he concluded that sex is produced by the discursive relations arising from knowledge and power: “Between techniques of knowledge and strategies of power, there is no exteriority.” Both Foucault and Butler argue that there is nothing *beyond* the expressions we have about sex and gender. So, according to Butler, there are no essential genders, such as masculine and feminine, that direct our words and actions; rather, our words and actions bring gender into being. And, as we continue to perform them, these genders become reified, thus seeming to verify any claims that they are essential or “natural.” They seem “real” because that is all we are able to see and because they have been repeated for a long, long time. By the same token, other possible ways of living out our genders, such as through our sexual orientation, do not appear. Certain sexual orientations (such as homosexuality, given specific discourses) do not appear or are made to disappear. The performativity of gender, then, is not only a productive activity, but it is also an exclusive one. When gender is made to appear, it is made to appear with certain limits, and anything beyond those limits is (made) invisible. For by performing certain genders repeatedly (and here Butler points usually to the

⁶Butler’s argument is actually a complex interpretation of several theorists, both explicitly and implicitly. While Foucault’s position is clearly an important influence, Butler also weaves her position through interpretations of Austin, Derrida, Lacan, Freud, Kristeva, Wittig, and others.

performativity of heterosexual orientation), the possibility of other genders is made “unthinkable.”

Since we are so used to thinking of gender as “natural,” an example might be helpful. I heard a story once, from a gay teenager, and it is quite possibly the story of many young persons in similar situations: He had been raised in an extremely conservative, religious community, where “homosexuality” had always been described as “evil,” “ugly,” “perverted,” and the like. By contrast, “heterosexuality” was “beautiful,” “inspiring,” and “good.” Interestingly, in teaching its children about (its views on) homosexuality and heterosexuality, this community never defined the terms themselves. So, when this young person reached adolescence, he explored his homosexual desires and found that the intimacy he shared with other men was beautiful, inspiring, and good. He therefore concluded that he must be heterosexual. He insisted upon his heterosexuality quite forcefully (to the confusion and probable dismay of his male sexual partners), because it was *unthinkable* to him that the sex he was having could be evil, ugly, or perverted (and thus homosexual). The discourse of his community had made one type of sexual activity and orientation unthinkable, and so it disappeared in two ways—homosexuality itself was never even defined and no pleasurable activity could be seen (by this adolescent) as homosexual. The young man, then, in the absence of other discourses, saw no other option but to conclude that he belonged to the “visible” group of heterosexuality. Later, of course, the young man would learn more fully what homosexuality was, and he would have to deal with both the dominant discourse of his childhood as well as the counter-discourses available outside of his childhood community. It is interesting to note, though, that the extreme discourse of his childhood did not make the young man’s desires, nor his sexual activities and pleasures, disappear in themselves; rather he was simply compelled to assign the description he thought most appropriate to his intimate experiences, given the discourses available to him on heterosexuality and homosexuality. In a sense, his desires and pleasurable sexual experiences were the foundation for his own “counter” discourse—at least until he encountered more complex counter-discourses a few years later.⁷

But this young man’s experiences—especially those of enjoying homosexual desire within a context where that desire was considered evil—indicate some type of material or physical body, or more accurately, a living, sensing body, that lives through, or against, the discourses surrounding it. Butler touches more specifically on the notion of a material body in her subsequent major work, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (1993). Here she argues that “performativity” is *necessarily exclusive*. In other words, our performativity of gender requires that we draw lines identifying what belongs—what appears as existent—and what does not:

⁷I met this young person while volunteering at the Gay and Lesbian Community Center in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I have since lost contact with him. This was a story he shared casually with a roomful of fellow teens and a few adult volunteers. I wish to thank him for his insightful story.

The normative force of performativity – its power to establish what qualifies as “being” – works not only through reiteration, but through exclusion as well. And in the case of bodies, those exclusions haunt signification as its abject borders or as that which is strictly fore-closed: the unlivable, the nonnarrativizable, the traumatic. (Butler 1993, 188)

Thus as performativity is producing gender, constructing identities known as masculine and feminine, it simultaneously creates a realm of what is *not* considered gender. It thus constructs the “abnormal,” the “impossible,” and the “unlivable.” Appropriately, though, that which is excluded provides the possibility for undermining those gender “regimes” that have been reified.⁸ To explain, every word, term, or delineation identifies not only an object but also everything that object is *not*. So the word “table” implies *not* chair, *not* love, *not* running, etc. If words did not do this, if they did not exclude, then they would not be able to communicate *anything* (because they would always communicate *everything*). So, words, by their very nature, exclude. In the same way, gender (as discursive) is performed in such a way that it justifies certain ways of “being” as it outlines what it is, and in doing so, it excludes everything else. In a society where heterosexuality is presumed or compulsory, then, homosexuality, bisexuality, intersexuality, transsexuality, transgender, and a whole host of different types of pleasures, intimate relations, desires, and embodiments become deemed “abnormal,” “sick,” or “unthinkable.” Because we have the terms “masculine” and “feminine,” for example, we make presumptions about how sexual relations are most appropriately carried out by a pair of persons, how such pairs are most appropriate when they are made up of two “opposite” types of bodies or beings, how certain types of roles are “natural” to these “pairings,” and so on. But other types of “gendering” challenge the very essential nature of what is considered “natural,” “healthy,” or “normal” gender. When homosexuality is made to “disappear” by a heterosexist discourse, for example, it still haunts that discourse. It is like a ghost that is both material and immaterial at once. But just like we need the concept of the ghost to show what we, fully living, material beings, are *not*, heterosexuality *needs* homosexuality to be able to define itself as heterosexual. In other words, an established gender *needs that which it excludes in order to name itself*. The performativity of gender *needs* to exclude in order to produce itself, and so, quite simply, it does not stand on its own. That which has been excluded ends up challenging the very “naturalness” of what is “included”; we realize that what is considered “normal” is only considered “normal” because it has a history of repetition and discursive performance behind it. In fact, it is based upon a host of other possibilities that might have been deemed “natural” instead. There is nothing inherently normal or essential about the circumscribed gender at all. It is just what happened to solidify through repetition:

As a sedimented effect of a reiterative or ritual practice, sex acquires its naturalized effect, and, yet, it is also by virtue of this reiteration that gaps and fissures are opened up as the constitutive instabilities in such constructions, as that which escapes or exceeds the norm, as that which cannot be wholly defined or fixed by the repetitive labor of that norm. (Butler 1993, 10)

⁸This is a move which follows the pattern we saw in Butler’s discussion of feminism and identity politics in *Gender Trouble* (1999), where what is excluded comes back to haunt that which did the excluding.

In fact, this argument remains consistent with Butler's line in *Gender Trouble*:

Indeed, precisely because certain kinds of "gender identities" fail to conform to those norms of cultural intelligibility, they appear only as developmental failures or logical impossibilities from within that domain. Their persistence and proliferation, however, provide critical opportunities to expose the limits and regulatory aims of that domain of intelligibility, and, hence, to open up within the very terms of that matrix of intelligibility rival and subversive matrices of gender disorder. (Butler 1999, 24)

However, if that which is supposed to challenge what is currently "normal" is itself "unthinkable," then how can we recognize it at all? How is subversion even possible, if our identities and our gender (which are not separate, according to both Foucault and Butler) are completely invested in discursive regimes of power and knowledge? *How does the "unknowable" rise up to challenge what is known?*

Both Foucault and Butler are aware of this problem and make moves to address it: Foucault argues that resistance to a certain knowledge-power can only come from within the discourse that already exists. Thus, for example, the gay rights movement, which fights against discourses that vilify homosexuality and other "deviant" sexualities, uses the same discourses, terms, scientific method, etc., in order to make its case:

There is no question that the appearance in nineteenth-century psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, pederasty, and "psychic hermaphroditism" made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of "perversity": but it also made possible the formation of a "reverse" discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or "naturalness" be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified. (Foucault 1980, 101)

The same discourse, in a sense, can offer a proposition and the contradiction to that proposition. Thus, all positions are already discursive. It cannot be escaped. However, Foucault also recommends that in order to defy the discourses that produce "sex" through the medical, psychological, criminal, and other areas, we should turn to pleasure. The implication is that pleasure, in itself, can provide a counter to discourse: "The rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures" (Foucault 1980, 157). Desire, Foucault has already explained, has been appropriated by discourse. Pleasure, however, may have evaded discourse in some way.⁹

⁹In fact, he indicates the erotic arts (*ars erotica*) as an art where "truth is drawn from pleasure itself" (Foucault 1980, 57). While he wonders whether the contemporary European attitude about sex (*Scientia sexualis*) might be its own form of erotic art (Foucault 1980, 70–1), especially given the pleasure gained from various activities, such as the research of sex itself, the pleasure in the hunt for truth, the pleasure in being the hidden truth, etc., Foucault seems to hold onto pleasure as something that might have escaped the discursivity of sex, or at least our European-influenced discourses that produce sex in a specific way (especially through a scientific attitude). Later, Foucault (1984, 347–8) admits that his positioning of *ars erotica* against *scientia sexualis* was misguided, since these two approaches to sex were from different cultures and periods of history and thus were not comparable to one another. Nevertheless, he continues to find the historical connection and disconnection of desire and pleasure interesting (Foucault 1984, 347).

What does this mean for us? First, Foucault appears, in this early work at least, to be contradicting himself. He argues convincingly that sex and sexuality are constituted only through discourse (especially in the modern period, as he has identified it), and yet he claims that pleasure (bodily pleasure, as implied in the citation above) is the medium by which we can “counterattack against the [discursive] deployment of sexuality.” It is important to note that, after his extensive research and the development of his argument, Foucault tries to maintain some kind of position—or at least, some kind of hope—that can counteract the dominance of discourse in our embodied experiences. He seems to need to point to *something* that gives us some kind of raw experience for itself, where we are not immediately and always subjected to, or dominated by, the knowledge-power surrounding us. I would like to suggest that this last-ditch effort to reclaim the body is not just a remaining glimmer of romantic (modernist) hope but possibly also an indicator to the fact that we *do* sometimes find ways to counter dominant discourses. And while some of those counter positions may come from within discourse itself (as Foucault describes), *some also seem to arise from elsewhere*. Foucault’s indication toward “pleasure,” as problematic as it is—especially given Butler’s criticism, as we will see in a moment—indicates a deeper, less obvious experience: somehow, *some of our experiences exceed the discourses at hand, and it is that excess that can sometimes provide the motivation for challenge*. But let us turn first to Butler’s criticism of Foucault’s reference to pleasure.

Butler (1999) recognizes that the notion of pleasure actually has been appropriated by discourse just as much as the notion of desire. In fact, she takes Foucault to task for this. Through the citation in the following quotation, Butler (1999) is referring specifically to the “Introduction” to *Herculine Barbin* (Barbin and Foucault 1980, xiii–xiv), where Foucault claims that Herculine’s pleasures offered her a happy experience beyond the discourses that restricted her body. Within this specific criticism, however, Butler (1999) is also expressing her overall criticism of Foucault’s references to a possible “outside” to discourse:

On the one hand, Foucault wants to argue that there is no “sex” in itself which is not produced by complex interactions of discourse and power, and yet there does seem to be a “multiplicity of pleasures” *in itself* which is not the effect of any specific discourse/power exchange. [...] On the other hand, Foucault officially insists that sexuality and power are coextensive [...]. (Butler 1999, 123)

Simply, according to Butler, Foucault wants to have it both ways—both a body that is completely discursive and a realm of bodily pleasures that is extra-discursive—and Butler harshly, and rightly, challenges him to this effect. At the same time, Butler (1993) herself also has to admit, implicitly, that bodies are certainly not *entirely* discursive. In fact, something about the body always escapes discourse:

In other words, “sex” is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time. It is not a simple fact or static condition of a body, but a process whereby regulatory norms materialize “sex” and achieve this materialization through a forcible reiteration of those norms. That this reiteration is necessary is a sign that materialization is never quite complete,

that *bodies never quite comply* with the norms by which their materialization is impelled. (Butler 1993, 1–2; my emphasis)

If sex is that which is materialized through repetition, through performativity, and through discourse, then what is it that “does not comply”? Butler admits that, certainly, there are bodies that experience pain and that are raped, tortured, etc. and that such bodies are not simply discursive.¹⁰ Nevertheless, she argues strongly that there cannot be a “place” or a “stuff” that is prior to discursivity and that gendered being *materializes* always and only through repeated performativity.

So, Butler also seems to admit *something* that exceeds discourse, although she admits this more carefully than Foucault does. Is Butler contradicting herself as well? She clearly recognizes a problem that needs to be worked out: bodies cannot be completely discursive, since certain embodied experiences that are inexplicable or unthinkable nevertheless “haunt” that which is discursively “normal.” At the same time, bodies are not simply “natural”; they are not brute entities subject only to physical causes. Instead of contradicting herself, though, Butler seems to try to maintain a tension between this inexplicable existence and that which “materializes” through discourse.¹¹ However, her descriptions almost always slip into a description of the discursive side of things—perhaps because we always have to *use* discourse to describe our experiences.

It seems that at this point where both Foucault and Butler seem to struggle most, we are at the crux of the problem. What exactly does express itself when there is resistance to discourse that seems to have no source in discourse itself? What is it that “does not comply”? How do our bodies “speak” to us? How do they “resonate,” or refuse to resonate, with the discourses at hand? While there are many ways to answer these questions, we will turn now to the areas of queer theory and transgender studies in which we can find discussions of sexual and gendered embodiment arising in response to Foucault’s and Butler’s theories. And although he died before the establishment of these areas of study, I have excerpted insights from Lou Sullivan’s diaries into our analyses from here on, allowing him to interject with his own insights.

¹⁰ Butler makes this admission especially in the introduction to *Bodies that Matter* (1993), while throughout the text she works to figure out how that which exceeds the margins of discursivity might be related to the discursive. She says, for example, “For surely bodies live and die; eat and sleep; feel pain, pleasure; endure illness and violence; and these ‘facts,’ one might skeptically proclaim, cannot be dismissed as mere construction. Surely there must be some kind of necessity that accompanies these primary and irrefutable experiences. And surely there is. But their irrefutability in no way implies what it might mean to affirm them and through what discursive means.” (Butler 1993, xi)

¹¹ This would be consistent with Butler’s argument in *Gender Trouble* (1999) with regard to feminist politics (that identity politics should be discarded in exchange for allowing for internal contradictions within a group).

2.3 A Shift to Queer Theory and Transgender Studies

We will focus on a thread of discussions about embodiment within queer theory and transgender studies, although each of these areas spans much further than the questions addressed here. This thread has certain roots in the arguments of Foucault and Butler, either presuming their conclusions or reacting against them, and they bring our considerations a step further.

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler employed what would become an oft-cited example of the drag performer, saying:

I would suggest as well that drag fully subverts the distinction between inner and outer psychic space and effectively mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity. (Butler 1999, 174)

She adds a few paragraphs later that “*In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency.*” (Butler 1999, 175; emphasis in original):

I said drag was *liberating* cuz for me to see a man who’s 100% better in what was spozed to come natural to me made me realize that it’s *not* in anyone’s *nature* to be masculine or feminine. (Sullivan, 7/13/1973)

Butler is arguing that while performativity is constitutive of gender, the performance of drag not only exemplifies this, but also reveals and troubles several layers of gender, from performance, to attire, to embodiment. It further demonstrates that our belief in a material body that underlies all performance is actually itself performative: “The notion of gender parody defended here does not assume that there is an original which such parodic identities imitate. Indeed, the parody is *of* the very notion of an original [...]” (Butler 1999, 175; emphasis in original) Drag performance, while demonstrating how our bodies are entirely discursive, thus also seems to provide fodder for a subversive counter-attack: While drag performance denies a “real” body, it implies a subjective starting point—through the activity of parody—from which we might manipulate or expose the discourses that invest us. Given this, Butler’s discussion of drag led to an interpretation (or misinterpretation) of her work: a presumption that Butler argues not only for the fluidity of gender, body, sex, and performance but also that gender and sex are—or always could be—a type of subversive play. This understanding assumes that we always have input into how we live our genders and that we could always choose to undermine the very discourses that limit us.¹² In fact, Butler’s (1999, 1759) reference to “the giddiness of the

¹² Butler’s theory of performativity also resulted in the opposite interpretation, namely, that we are always already determined by discourse, that we have no input or agency at all. See, for example, Lisa Käll’s article, “A Path between Voluntarism and Determinism: Tracing Elements of Phenomenology in Judith Butler’s Account of Performativity” (2015). Käll identifies these two extreme interpretations of Butler, also citing Butler’s rejection of both of these descriptions of her theory.

performance” seems to have led, in some instances, to a presumption that her theory of performativity—and by implication, the queer theory that developed upon her work—was itself a “giddy” enterprise:

J. said I just can't take the male role like that. That you have to come on real easy & relaxed & not like a bomb. Like make flirty eyes & strike up a petty conversation & maybe say, "I got some real good weed at my place, wanna come over & smoke some?" (Guess I'll have to keep a little weed around.) I asked if it was ok to go up to a guy & offer to buy 'm a drink. Nope, that's the male role again, but I can share my drink with them!!! It's so hard to play these roles. (Sullivan, 4/14/1972)

Such readings led to analyses of the body that demonstrated how its very materiality seemed to dissipate under pressure. Judith Halberstam—who now publishes under the name of Jack Halberstam and is referred to mostly as Jack, “because it stuck”¹³—discussed the “postmodern lesbian body” in his article “F2M: the Making of Male Masculinity” (1994), arguing that:

The postmodern lesbian body as visualized by recent film and video, as theorized by queer theory, and as constructed by state of the art cosmetic technology breaks with a homo-hetero sexual binary and remakes gender as not simply performance but also as fiction.” (Halberstam 1994, 210; my emphasis)

In this article, Halberstam focuses his analysis on masculinity, demonstrating the many ways that masculinity can be performed and lived, from drag performance, to living in drag, to male identification, to surgical intervention (and many manifestations in between and beyond these). The notion of “trans,” he recognizes, “becomes less and less clear (and more and more queer). We are all cross-dressers but where are we crossing from and to what?” (Halberstam 1994, 212). The notion of crossing, of trans, seems to presume exactly that which has been demonstrated as false, namely, some kind of original body, male or female, that engages in some kind of sex, homosexual or heterosexual, and that crosses over to some “opposite” kind of body. Rather, Halberstam finds that we are all living and performing our genders such that the binaries of male/female and masculine/feminine are completely broken down. In fact, the modes of breaking down these binaries are proliferating: “guys with pussies, dykes with dicks, [...] lesbians who like men, [...] gender queens, [...] women who fuck like boys, dyke mommies, transsexual lesbians, male lesbians” (Halberstam 1994, 212). Thus, he concludes, those surgeries which operate under the assumption of some kind of original body that crosses over to the “other” type of body should be challenged. Instead, any surgery meant to modify gender ought to be included under the general umbrella term of cosmetic surgery

¹³ See, for example, his interview with Sinclair Sexsmith on February 1, 2012, <http://www.lambda-literary.org/interviews/02/01/jack-halberstam-queers-create-better-models-of-success/>, and his more current publications on Bully Blogger, <https://bullybloggers.wordpress.com>

“and that we drop altogether the constrictive terminology of crossing” (Halberstam 1994, 216).¹⁴ For Halberstam, then, when a person who identifies as transsexual refers to a material body, that reference belies its own fiction; when we refer to a material body—even implicitly—we are engaging in a fiction that reinscribes traditional and problematic binaries. The notion of transsexual, Halberstam (1994) argues here, is merely one more performance among countless ways to perform gender; it is a performance that may or may not include cosmetic surgery that alters material appearance.

The effect of Halberstam’s analysis is not only the fictionalization of gender, the dissipation of gender and sexual binaries into a multitude of performances and alterations, however, but also the fictionalization of transsexuality as a specific experience that points to “material” bodies. He pointedly proclaims: “We are all transsexuals [...]. [...] There are no transsexuals” (Halberstam 1994, 212). We are all transsexuals, because we all engage in some form of “trans” as we perform genders, all of which are fictional; and there are no transsexuals, because cosmetic surgery has rendered the body simply a prop for these performances, one that can be altered in a variety of ways. Transsexuality as its own specific experience is merely another fiction.

While arguments such as these by Butler and Halberstam are compelling and this line of thought has its followers, there are also critics of such positions that take the body as completely discursive or even fictional. One strong critic of Butler’s position, and of the line of thought in queer theory that reduces the body to subversive play, is Jay Prosser. In his book, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (1998), Prosser finds that reference to transgender often conflates the activity of “crossing” and/or performing gender in a variety of ways with the desire for some form of physical modification in order to live a certain gender. In fact, he argues that transsexual experience has become the paradigm for undermining, challenging, and revealing the performativity of sex and gender within queer theory. While this conflation makes sense according to Butler’s argument that even the “material” body is materialized through performativity, Prosser argues that some transgender experiences are importantly distinct. He points out that:

[T]here are transgendered trajectories, in particular *transsexual* trajectories, that aspire to that which this scheme devalues. Namely there are transsexuals who seek very pointedly to be nonperformative, to be constative, quite simply, to *be*. (Prosser 1998, 32; emphasis in original)

I have to stop thinking of “passing as a man” & start thinking of *being* a man.
(Sullivan, 1/31/1980)

¹⁴Halberstam notes in a footnote that the description of such surgeries as “cosmetic” points to a larger debate regarding the accessibility of such surgeries, namely, that “cosmetic” surgeries will not be covered by insurance companies, while surgeries to improve the “health” of an individual will be paid for. This is a major issue concerning not only whether an individual can afford surgery but also whether such surgery is restricted to only certain individuals on the basis of medical assessment and diagnosis, as well as the stigmatism that may or may not arise through such diagnosis. We will look more carefully at this issue in Chap. 4.

So, a person who follows this particular transsexual trajectory faces a problematic dilemma when faced with this position in queer theory: either she is condemned for reinscribing an oppressive sexual norm (man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual) by insisting upon material alteration of her body in order to live the “opposite” sex fully, or her existence as a transsexual is held up as a prime example of performativity which brushes aside or ignores her insistence upon the importance of her material body. Prosser continues:

What gets dropped from transgender in its queer deployment to signify subversive gender performativity is the value of the matter that often most concerns the transsexual: the *narrative* of becoming a biological man or a biological woman (as opposed to the performative of effecting one) – in brief and simple the materiality of the sexed body. (Prosser 1998, 32; emphasis in original)

So, according to Prosser, those whose experience highlights their material embodiment and a desire to transition materially from one gender to another face a difficult situation: Their embodied experience is dismissed by those (queer) theories that (1) establish the materiality of the body only in discourse and/or performativity; (2) employ the transsexual (or transgender) body as emblematic of subversive gender performativity; and (3) ignore the distinction between gender identity and a sensed “material” body (a distinction for at least some of those who identify as transsexual). Prosser’s (1998) conclusion, then, is to suggest that queer theory and transsexuality might be irreconcilable on certain points:

There is much about transsexuality that must remain irreconcilable to queer: the specificity of transsexual experience; the importance of the flesh to self; the difference between sex and gender identity; the desire to pass as “real-ly-gendered” in the world without trouble; perhaps above all [...] a particular experience of the body that can’t simply transcend (or transubstantiate) the literal. (Prosser 1998, 59)

Prosser’s definition of transsexuality is quite specific (narrow, even), namely, he speaks mostly of transsexual experience wherein a person insists upon material alteration of the body in order to live as the “opposite” sex. Nevertheless, the overall import of Prosser’s critique still stands: A queer theory that subordinates the specificity of transsexual experience (narrowly defined) to a general definition of gender performativity seems to miss an important aspect of material (or, I would argue, sensed) embodiment, and thus it is not a theory that accurately describes all lived, embodied experience.

Prosser was not the only critic of this movement within queer theory. Vivian Namaste (2000), whom Prosser also cites, argues that drag performance has become a common example within queer theory and gender studies but that the situated reality of the drag performer is hardly ever addressed. Drag performers are relegated to the stage, while they face serious restrictions within the gay male community as well as a precarious existence beyond the world of the gay bar:

While Butler reads drag as a means of exposing the contingent nature of gender and identity, I suggest that we point to the essential paradox of drag within gay male communities: at the precise moment that it underlines the constructed nature of gendered performances, drag is contained as performance in itself. Gay male identity, in contrast, establishes itself as something prior to performance. (Namaste 2000, 13)

Namaste notices a preference for drag as the quintessential example of undermining the presumption of an embodied original.¹⁵ Along with homosexual desire, the drag queen demonstrates how sex and gender are produced through our activities of them, rather than on the basis of an original body. Meanwhile, however, a transsexual desire to “cross” genders (once again rather narrowly defined) seems to reaffirm a gender binary that is restrictive and compulsory, and thus it is often ignored, dismissed, or equated with drag performance:

I’m sitting in a bar getting blasted & realizing I’m not invisible & that everyone sees me & draws an opinion about me, and thinking of the difference that one transvestite group draws between themselves & the drag queens: that the DQ’s are sexual-signaling by their dress & the TVs are only expressing their “female sides.” I wonder which I do by cross-dressing. (I am now able to comfortably wear a man’s suit and a bra at the same time). (Sullivan, 7/10/77)

But there is another reason for this tendency to equate trans experience with drag performance: the indication of an “original” body as well as an “inner sense” of gender¹⁶—which arises in at least some trans experience, such as the narrowly defined transsexual embodiment referred to by Prosser—appears to challenge the argument that gender is wholly performative. For this reason, we see both queer and transgender theorists taking trans embodied experience quite seriously and, in some cases, problematically.

Both Prosser and Namaste take Butler to task for her theoretical treatment of Venus Extravaganza, a trans woman prostitute in the film, *Paris is Burning*. For Butler (1993, 131), Extravaganza is a subject produced by “a phantasmatic pursuit that mobilizes identifications.” In this “phantasmatic pursuit” (presumably, her transition to living as a woman), Extravaganza must live a promise that cannot be taken too seriously, or it will “culminate only in disappointment and disidentification” (Butler 1993, 131). During the filming of *Paris is Burning*, Extravaganza is killed, presumably by one of her clients, but Butler avoids the concreteness of her trans embodiment. She mentions, on the one hand, that Extravaganza is a victim of “homophobic violence” (Butler 1993, 130) and then states that:

If Venus wants to become a woman, and cannot overcome being a Latina, then Venus is treated by the symbolic in precisely the ways in which women of color are treated. Her death thus testifies to a tragic misreading of the social map of power, a misreading

¹⁵Namaste (2000, 9–23) also cites Marjorie Garber, Eve Sedgwick, Carole-Anne Tyler, and Diane Fuss, each of whom, in different ways, either employ drag or transgender experience to forward a theory of gender construction or give preference to homosexuality as appropriately “queering” gender in a way that transsexuality, narrowly defined, supposedly does not.

¹⁶The notion of an “inner sense” of embodiment is, of course, not solely experienced by trans people, nor do all trans people experience a heightened inner sense of embodiment, as we will see below. However, this and related notions are often invoked in transgender theory.

orchestrated by that very map according to which the sites for a phantasmatic self-overcoming are constantly resolved into disappointment. (Butler 1993, 131)

Thus Butler not only reduces Extravaganza's trans embodiment to a "phantasmatic pursuit," but she also sidesteps her embodiment by focusing on homophobia and Extravaganza's Latina status in the case of her being killed. Prosser responds to Butler's description of Extravaganza's death by saying that "the presence of the penis on Venus's body renders neither her a homosexual man [...] nor her death an effect of homophobia. Venus presents herself unambivalently as a transsexual woman" (Prosser 1998, 46). Namaste (2000, 13) responds even more harshly: "In this interpretation, Butler elides both Extravaganza's transsexual status and her work as a prostitute. Here is the point: Venus was killed because she was a transsexual prostitute." These criticisms, and the fact that Butler chooses two different (and somewhat inaccurate) explanations for Extravaganza's death—homophobia and violence against women of color—point to a discomfort on Butler's part with the concrete situation of trans experience, especially when that situation points directly to the "remaining organs" (Butler 1993, 131) of a (preoperative) trans woman.

In more general terms, the use of the notion of "the transsexual" for theory—especially to promote certain theories—has led to a forceful backlash within transgender studies, and rightfully so.¹⁷ Dean Spade cites Riki Anne Wilchins, who:

describes how trans experience has been used by psychiatrists, cultural feminists, anthropologists, and sociologists "travel[ing] through our lives and problems like tourists [...] [p] icknicking on our identities [...] select[ing] the tastiest tidbits with which to illustrate a theory or push a book." (Spade 2006, 316)¹⁸

Spade (2006, 316) then adds: "In most writing about trans people, our gender performance is put under a microscope to prove theories or build 'expertise' while the gender performances of the authors remain unexamined and naturalized." Transsexuality and transgender become paradigm examples for theories, whether in medicine, psychiatry, the humanities, or the social sciences, without any thought for the individuals who live that experience. Even more troubling is the neglect, even resistance, to let trans people speak for themselves.

C. Jacob Hale (2009) argues that "the transsexual" has been "colonized" for a multitude of theories, including queer theory:

Because different regimes of power compete to control cultural discourses of the sexed or gendered subject in relation to these distinctions, we become contested battlezones: psychiatry and other medical specialties, different psychological and psychiatric schools of

¹⁷I am ashamed to admit that one of my own, earlier published articles (Rodemeyer 2014)—on a different, but related, topic—refers to "the transsexual" in just this way. While I am still learning to recognize my own presumptions of transparency and neutrality as a cisgender (white, able-bodied) woman, I can only apologize for my speaking on behalf of transsexuals while also rendering only one type of transgender experience visible in that article, namely, a more narrowly defined notion of transsexuality.

¹⁸Spade is citing Wilchins' *Read My Lips: Sexual Subversion and the End of Gender* (1997, 22).

thought, psychology, sociology, anthropology, feminist theory, and queer theory compete for hegemony over the terrain of transsexual representation and production. (Hale 2009, 53)

Thus, on the one hand, medical and psychiatric disciplines study and describe—and attempt to control—“the” transsexual as well as any individuals who identify as trans, and on the other hand, cultural and gender theories appropriate “the” transsexual or “the” trans person in order to validate their own theories. In all of these cases, as Hale (2009) insightfully points out, the authors presume a cisgender sexual paradigm from which to propose their theories:

Another silencing technique is deployed when transsexuals are folded into nontranssexual paradigms, and our words, subjectivities and subject positions are understood in nontranssexual terms. [...] Transsexuals are convenient sites for colonization predicated on our discursive erasure [...]. (Hale 2009, 52)

Told him I don't feel like “a man trapped in a woman's body” & he laughed & said nobody does, that's just a catchy phrase coined by the medical profession & that being a transsexual does not dictate anything other than your feelings about yourself, and I have a perfect right to be a gay man if that's what I want. (Sullivan, 10/3/1979)

So the position within queer theory that describes embodiment as entirely discursive faces a few, serious challenges: First, it needs to account for the specific, embodied experiences of trans men and women who point to a material body or an “inner sense” of embodiment, or both; second, it needs to acknowledge the social and lived situatedness of the individuals it chooses for examples of its theorizing; third, it needs to attend to the specific diversity within the general term of “transgender” or “trans” rather than assume that all transgender is transsexual or that any term referring to trans implies a unified basis for gender experience; and finally, it needs to examine how it is talking about, or through, trans embodied experiences without allowing trans individuals to express themselves.

Criticisms such as these have been taken seriously, which is evidence that queer theory is, in fact, not simply a “giddy” enterprise. Both Butler and Halberstam have taken pains to explain or modify their positions in the wake of such responses. In the last chapter of her *Bodies that Matter* (1993), entitled “Critically Queer,” Butler (1993, 231) returns to her example of the drag performer in an effort to make clear that her position is not one that argues that we are all, always capable of playful subversion: “I never did think that gender was like clothes, or that clothes make the woman.” In fact, she states firmly: “The reduction of performativity to performance would be a mistake.” (Butler 1993, 234) On the contrary:

What is “performed” in drag is, of course *the sign* of gender, a sign that is not the same as the body that it figures, but that cannot be read without it. ... Insofar as heterosexual gender norms produce inapproximable ideals, heterosexuality can be said to operate through the regulated production of hyperbolic versions of “man” and “woman.” These are for the most

part compulsory performances, ones which none of us choose, but which each of us is forced to negotiate. (Butler 1993, 237)

Thus, Butler amends, or clarifies, her position in three ways. First, gender is not simply performance, performance and performativity being, of course, not the same thing: The show put on by the drag queen, for example, what she sings and says, is her performance, acted out on stage, but her repeated gestures, nuances, ways of speaking, etc. both substantiate and mimic what it means to be “feminine,” and the latter indicates the performativity of gender. Second, Butler explains that because most performative gender is compulsory, then gender is rarely (if ever) a voluntary, subversive play—we do not get to choose: women just “are” feminine, and men just “are” masculine. Third, she admits that some type of body does exist within the theory of performativity. This body is subject to the compulsory practices of heterosexuality, and it can only be “read” through the sign of gender; this body never appears without some kind of gendering sign. Thus, while Butler makes clear that she does not deny the existence of the material body, her analyses of this materiality still embed it well within discourse. For critics of her position, then, Butler’s clarification could be considered only partially successful (and for Prosser, it was no real improvement at all¹⁹). Nevertheless, in her responses to her critics, and in her analyses overall, we see here (and we saw earlier) that Butler does recognize some kind of body that is “read” through gender, that experiences pain, and is subject to compulsory performativity. This body also “haunts” (Butler 1993, 188) dominant discourses in its tendency to “never quite comply” (Butler 1993, 2). According to Butler, then, compulsory heterosexual performativity will always be troubled by other gendered experiences, although, as Prosser and Namaste point out, she continues in *Bodies that Matter* to be uncomfortable with the materiality of transsexuality, in spite of her clarifications.

Several years later, in two chapters of her *Undoing Gender* (2004), Butler offers a more specific response to critiques of her approach to transsexuality. One of these chapters discusses the famous case of David Reimer, a boy who was raised as a girl.²⁰ Reimer’s case was touted as the example *par excellence* that proved the social construction of gender, since the young boy could be seen in childhood pictures dressed as a girl and seemingly living as a girl with no problems. Reimer, however, did struggle (and suffer) quite a bit—his living as a girl required quite a bit of enforcement—and eventually, he returned to living as a man. Butler’s (2004) treatment of the case identifies the many discourses that worked around Reimer, ultimately concluding that Reimer is:

¹⁹“Butler’s essay itself [“Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion” in *Bodies that Matter* (1993)] is structured on an ambivalence toward transsexuality in its relation to the literal, caught (twice over) both between reading transsexuality literally and metaphorically and between reading the transsexual as literalizing and deliteralizing” (Prosser 1998, 49). Prosser also notes Butler’s tendency to link transsexuality with “transsubstantiation,” and that she continues to ignore the more material aspects of the transsexual lived narrative.

²⁰See *As Nature Made Him: The Boy who was Raised as a Girl* (Colapinto 2000) for a detailed journalistic description of the Reimer case and its outcomes.

the human in its anonymity, as that which we do not yet know how to name or that which sets a limits [*sic*] on all naming. And in that sense, he is the anonymous – and critical – condition of the human as it speaks itself at the limits of what we think we know. (Butler 2004, 74)

While Reimer's case is not that of a transsexual (and Butler notes this explicitly), it challenges the social construction of gender in ways similar to how the experience of some transsexuals appears to do so. Butler's response is to demonstrate how Reimer's reference to a material body itself was invested in discourse, and thus, his body was discursively constructed (just as anyone else's) rather than evidence of a material origin prior to discourse. This response, however—in addition to referring to Reimer as “the human in its anonymity”—demonstrates a resistance on Butler's part to acknowledge some type of body that can influence discourse rather than one that is always constructed by discourse. This resistance is noted by Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, the editors of *The Transsexual Studies Reader*, vol. 1 (2006), where Butler's chapter is reprinted:

For many transgender readers, Butler's insistence that gender is always ultimately about something else devalues their experience of gender identity's profound ontological claim – that it is precisely about the realness and inalienability of that identity, rather than about anything else.” (Stryker and Whittle 2006, 183)

Butler, in other words, still seems to be avoiding the concreteness of embodied experience (whether transgender or not).

The next chapter in Butler's *Undoing Gender* (following her discussion of Reimer's case) addresses transsexuality more specifically. Here Butler argues against the medical and psychiatric restrictions in place that regulate how people who identify as trans can obtain the hormones and/or surgery that they seek. Her argument here is much more in line with that of trans activists (Butler 2004, 83–4),²¹ and she makes a point to clarify the distinction between gender or sexuality, gender identity, and sexual orientation:

[W]e cannot predict on the basis of what gender a person is what kind of gender identity the person will have, and what direction(s) of desire he or she will ultimately entertain and pursue. [...] [I]t would be a huge mistake to assume that gender identity causes sexual orientation or that sexuality references in some necessary way a prior gender identity. (Butler 2004, 79)

It appears that these two chapters in *Undoing Gender* are intended to work through two issues for Butler: First she is addressing specific embodied experiences that challenge her argument for gender performativity, namely, the Reimer case and transsexuality. Second, she is working to correct the mistaken presumptions and elisions she made about drag and transsexual experience in earlier works. She seems to have successfully carried out the latter, to some extent.²² However, while Butler

²¹ Butler mostly focuses on her summary of an argument offered by Jacob Hale, which he presented in a paper entitled “Medical Ethics and Transsexuality” at the Harry Benjamin International Symposium on Gender Dysphoria, 2001.

²² Butler sets up the dilemma of whether to keep the DSM-IV's definition of gender identity disorder in a variety of rhetorical ways. Most interesting to note, however, is the emphasis she gives to

is here much more sympathetic (and informed) about trans experience than in earlier texts—and she no longer confuses transsexuality with homosexuality as she seemed to do when she analyzed the murder of Venus Extravaganza in *Bodies that Matter*—she still seems bothered by a sexual, material body that might be understood as the basis of embodiment. The body—not mentioned for itself in the citation above—is indicated only as “what gender a person is” as she distinguishes it from gender identity and sexual orientation. Further, she continues to forefront her position on gender performativity without providing any more clarity on the body as a material ground for experience.

Halberstam also faced quite a bit of critique after the publication of his article, “F2M” (1994). In his book *Female Masculinity* (1998), he returns to that article and the critical responses that it received:

The avowed intention of the article was to examine the various representations of transsexual bodies and transgender butch bodies [...]. Much to my surprise, the essay was regarded with much suspicion and hostility by some members of FTM International [...]; these reactions caused me to look carefully at the kinds of assumptions I was making about transsexuality and about the kinds of continuities or overlaps that I presumed between the categories of FTM and butch. (Halberstam 1998, 145)

Halberstam uses this criticism to refine his position and to recognize that his ultimate goal had been to assess and work through the subject position of what he here calls the “transgender butch.” Sensitive to criticisms from the perspective of FTM transsexuals (including Prosser), Halberstam counters that if the materiality of transsexual experience is thought to be essential to transgender experience in general, then many manifestations of transgender must be considered incomplete until surgery. All of the “masculinities” described by Halberstam in his earlier article would have to be found on some type of continuum, with the FTM transsexual as the final goal (Halberstam 1998, 151). But such a continuum is a false representation of many transgender embodiments for whom the material transition from one material body to another is not desired. The drive for any type of material alteration, while it is true to some transgender experiences, does not describe all. In fact, the transsexual narrative that seeks a material transition has sometimes denied or trivialized other types of transgender experience in its attempt to establish itself. Halberstam cites specific transsexual FTM narratives in which, in attempting to distinguish themselves from the narratives of lesbian experiences, the authors are dismissive of the notion of lesbian butch with which they are often confused. Thus, he argues, we need to be wary of theories that assimilate transsexuality or transgender as paradigms of gender subversion, of theories that understand transsexuality as a reaffirmation of heterosexual normativity, *and* of transsexual narratives that dominate descriptions of transgendered embodiment. In a statement that distances him a bit from his claims in “F2M” (1994), Halberstam (1998) says:

the possibility that maintaining the diagnosis of GID would lead to suicide in young persons who had been diagnosed with GID, without ever mentioning that lack of access to desired treatments could equally lead to suicide (Butler 2004, 78, 82–3).

We are not all transsexual, I admit, but many bodies are gender strange to some degree or another, and it is time to complicate on the one hand the transsexual models that assign gender deviance only to transsexual bodies and gender normativity to all other bodies, and on the other hand the hetero-normative models that see transsexuality as the solution to gender deviance and homosexuality as a pathological perversion. (Halberstam 1998, 153–4)

Halberstam seems to sympathize with Prosser on certain points, although he criticizes Prosser for oversimplifying a divide between queer as fluid, subversive performativity on the one hand, and transsexual material embodiment on the other. In this dichotomy, the transgender butch, and other types of masculinity (or gendered experience in general), cannot appear:

[Q]ueer hybridity is far from the ludic and giddy mixing that Prosser imagines and more of a recognition of the dangers of investing in comforting but tendentious notions of home. Some bodies are never at home, some bodies cannot simply cross from A to B, some bodies recognize and live with the inherent instability of identity. (Halberstam 1998, 164)

Here Halberstam is also critical of a queer theory that is “giddy” and that presumes that fluid subversion is always possible—although I would suggest that he, himself, had been somewhat swept up by the “giddiness” of this movement in his earlier “F2M” proclamations: “We are all transsexuals [...]. [...] There are no transsexuals” (Halberstam 1994, 212). However, as Halberstam adjusts his position, he calls for a queer theory that is an inquiry into all types of gendered experiencing and that allows for different types of manifestations without forcing them onto the same continuum or insisting that all follow the same narrative.

Thus Halberstam (1998, 173) concludes, correcting his earlier claims: “There are transsexuals, and we are not all transsexuals; gender is not fluid, and gender variance is not the same wherever we may find it.” In fact, Halberstam (1994, 212; 1998, 147) emphasizes in this later work an important claim that he made already in his article, “F2M” (1994), namely, that “[d]esire has a terrifying precision.” Now, this is, on the one hand, a problematic assertion, given Foucault’s argument that desire is already discursive, and then Butler’s criticism of Foucault’s invoking of “pleasure” as somehow exceeding discourse. Nevertheless, we see, once again, an attempt to point to something beyond the hegemonic discourse that produces only heterosexual normativity (and its own margins). The desire that is precisely *not* heterosexual, but yet is not vague or ghostly (while still marginalized), calls for expression within that discourse. This desire leads to counter-discourses in many forms of gender variance. And while counter-discourse is clearly discursive, and gender variance is clearly performative, the desire that motivates these seems to rise up from beneath or beyond the discursive and performative world. It is, instead, quite precise—and of its own accord.

Prosser, too, realized that some of his original criticisms of Butler and queer theory did not acknowledge the complexity inherent in these issues. In *Light in the Dark Room: Photography and Loss* (2004), Prosser returns to his last chapter of *Second Skins* (1998) wherein he had argued for the reality of material reference through an analysis of photography. Photography, he admits in this subsequent

palinode,²³ is precisely a demonstration that reference to a “real” thing undermines its own project: The thing in the photograph is no longer there, and it never was something that could have been *had* completely in the first place. Prosser (2004) gives a melancholic impression as he admits that the absence of a “real” is precisely demonstrated in transsexual experience (once again, Prosser defines this term quite narrowly):

Refusing to accept the loss of something we never had – a real sex; and this refusal brings transsexuality closer to melancholia than mourning – we turn in on our own skin. The hope is that surgery will provide us with immediate access to the referent – like photography. (Prosser 2004, 171)

But that referent, he is clear, is not “real.” After detailing the failure of cosmetic surgery to reconstruct a penis for female-to-male transsexuals, Prosser (2004, 172) concludes that “[t]his failure to be real *is* the transsexual real.” The first sense of “real” in this statement is obviously an ideal, a limit case, something that no one can achieve. For Prosser, it seems unspeakable, given the questionable success of sexual reassignment surgery. But this questionable success also applies to *all* embodied persons with relation to the ideal:

What this unspeakability is I am trying to suggest [...] is the failure of us all, transsexuals and nontranssexuals alike, to achieve the real however much we desire to; indeed our failure to achieve it perhaps in proportion to our desire. (Prosser 2004, 176)

Thus, Prosser concedes that the “real” to which he pointed in his earlier work is ineffable, hardly obvious, and unattainable:

Anyway, in all my reading, it seems the female-to-male change only involves a hysterectomy and/or a mastectomy...but no penis. What’s the point? I have birth control pills...as good as a hysterectomy...and what boobs do I have to remove? And if there’s no penis, well, that’s what’s important, isn’t it? That’s what makes you a *man*. (Sullivan, 5/31/1973)

But bodies with some kind of materiality still exist, or they must be “real” in another way, for it is precisely bodies that fail to achieve this ideal-real. Further, there is differentiation among these bodies, as the bodies of transsexuals fail to achieve the ideal in different ways than nontranssexuals. This is the second notion of “real” in the citation above: The “transsexual real” is, according to Prosser, an embodied experience that fails to attain the “real” that is ideal, in a very specific way.

With Prosser’s “palinode” and Halberstam’s critical rethinking of his earlier claims, we can see the development of a theory about the body that recognizes *both* the important ways in which the body is discursive, socially constructed, in negotia-

²³Prosser (2004, 163) defines a palinode as a “return that realizes that realization could only come with loss from the original.” More simply, it is a form of recantation.

tion with gender norms, *and* a material site that is felt, that speaks for itself, that resists certain configurations, compulsory norms, modes of (discursive) materialization. Prosser (2004, 177) argues that “the body part [the penis] is more than a symbol; [...] it is literal too.” Other trans theorists also acknowledge this important tension—a tension that, while it may apply to everyone, has a particular specificity for those who identify as trans. This tension is between a body that is always, already discursive and one that works as a felt resistance (or compliance). Patrick Califia (2006), for instance, describes his feeling after chest surgery that intertwines a personal feeling of embodiment with social recognition of his body as male:

I was afraid I would feel mutilated or injured, and I don't. I feel relief. I feel lightness of being and hope and optimism. It feels right to have smaller nipples, a chest that tells grocery store clerks and people behind the counter at the post office to call me sir instead of ma'am. (Califia 2006, 435)

Califia points to how it “feels right to have smaller nipples,” something that attests to how his body feels to himself, as well as how having a chest that “tells grocery store clerks [...] to call me sir” feels right, which is clearly a feeling that entails social interaction. Califia continues in the article not only to analyze—and trouble—the notion of manliness but also to describe quite specifically the effects of taking testosterone.

My male body is awakening all these pleasures for me – I even played with my nipples a little last night during masturbation, which was just gross & out of the question before. (Sullivan, 1/31/1980)

Jamison Green (2006) offers a similar description, troubling gender binaries while also speaking from a position that recognizes a “fit,” or lack thereof, between his embodiment and how he is socially constructed. He also points to a specificity of his experience as trans; he experiences his body differently than most cisgender people do:

My psyche seems to fit nicely into male packaging: I feel better; people around me are less confused, and so am I. [...] I am a man who lived for 40 years in a female body. But I was not a woman. [...] Likewise, I am not a man in the same sense as my younger brother is a man [...]. (Green 2006, 503)

Once again, we see a description that points to different modes of living the body, from an “inner” feeling, to the reaction of oneself and others to that body, to distinguishing the history of that body from other types of bodies.

Wilchins (2006) invokes these same notions but turns them against each other—and against the stereotypical narrative of transsexuality that proclaims that one is “coming home” through genital reassignment surgery:

Like me, she [a transsexual female friend] may find herself growing further and further from direct sensation, so that in small, gradual steps it becomes successively less important what her body *feels like* than how she *feels about* it. [...] [S]he may find that her lack of

contact with sensation grows along with a nagging sense of bodily disorientation. [...] What does it cost to tell the truth? (Wilchins 2006, 549)

According to Wilchins, then, trans experience can lead to a splitting away from ones “inner sense” of self, precisely because one is trying so hard to be seen by others in a specific way. As she learned to see herself through the eyes of others, she says, “I learned to make my body over, to embrace the various social truths about it, and to see on it what I was told” (Wilchins 2006, 548). Wilchins’ experience, then, both undermines the presumption that trans experience is one that leads to more comfort within one’s body, an alignment between “inner sense” and outer body, and, at the same time, demonstrates that that “inner sense” exists—although it exists for her as something from which she becomes more and more distanced as she learns to read herself from the perspective of others:

That is, she asked why I abandoned my pursuit of the switch-over & I told her becuz I felt smothered by my own fantasy. That as a man I felt whole inside but uncomfortable on the outside, trying to communicate with others, etc. Now as a female I feel empty inside but feel freer to relate to others. (Sullivan, 1/24/1977)

But the notions of an “inner sense” and of a body that resists or interrupts discourse in some way should be understood as already discursive or performative if we were to accept the argument for performative gender fully. We see this in Gayle Salamon’s engagement with transgender studies in *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality* (2010). Salamon takes the criticisms of queer theory made by trans men—especially the criticism voiced by Prosser—seriously. Her response is twofold: First, she claims that materiality can only be understood as dense, unthinking matter such that presuming a material body can only lead to contradictions: “What the ‘real’ body tells us [...] is nothing. Considered only as a blunt materiality, severed from any psychic investments, it has no meaning at all” (Salamon 2010, 88). Pointing to material reality, according to Salamon, is not an indication of a fault line in the logic of social construction,²⁴ since matter is

²⁴Salamon (2010, 76) makes clear that social construction (the argument that all experiences, including sensory and embodied experiences, are socially constructed) and queer theory (a theoretical position addressing the many ways in which reality, sexuality, and gender are discursively constituted) are not the same thing: “Social construction is not synonymous with performativity or queer theory, though it is importantly connected to both.” Salamon’s own argument focuses on social construction rather than queer theory—although she refers quite extensively to Butler’s work (where Butler’s argument is for performativity—the reification of sex and gender through repeated actions, discourses, nuances, etc.—rather than social construction). In addition, in Salamon’s critique of Prosser, she is also defending both queer theory and Butler. Butler, for her part, also engages a discussion of social construction versus gender essentialism in *Undoing Gender* (2004, 66–7). Although Butler does not completely step into the position of social con-

inaccessible to any meaning whatsoever. Further, she argues, those who invoke the notion of materiality often also imply an agency that can create a gender out of that unformed reality—an experience which is already belied by trans experience (Salamon 2010, 96). The appeal to a material body, Salamon argues, is one that collapses in on itself:

It is a body that belongs to no one, in the sense that what it describes is unrecognizable as a phenomenologically lived body and hardly recognizable as human. It is unclear what is served in revering this body or what ideal of embodiment it offers in return; no one could claim ownership of such a body – and who would want to? (Salamon 2010, 88)²⁵

Given this (quite narrow) understanding of materiality, Salamon (2010, 37) is right to be puzzled as to why there is a “trend in trans studies that appeals to bodily materiality in order to secure a firm foundation for both the specificity and difference of trans subjectivity.” However, she neglects to consider whether the invocation of “materiality” is more complex for trans writers than the definition she offers. In fact, when she does consider the material body as complex, it is a materiality that is always, already socially constructed. She then employs this more complex understanding of (socially constructed) materiality against the claims about materiality made by trans writers.²⁶

struction in this discussion, it is clear that she favors it over that of gender essentialism. Simply put, although they can be distinguished from one another, these positions clearly overlap with one another. In fact, Namaste, in her *Invisible Lives* (2000, 20), offers an extensive demonstration of how queer theory has been informed by poststructuralism and, further, how queer theory’s interpretation of poststructuralism “determines the selection and presentation of evidence within the field.” While poststructuralism is not social construction (nor is it performativity or queer theory), Namaste’s argument makes clear how specific theories not only are related to one another but, more importantly, how they are themselves modes of power relations that affect what is included and excluded as valid research evidence. So, while Salamon spends her fourth chapter working through how transgender studies could relate to the institution of “women’s studies,” and in doing so she is sensitive to the exclusionary tactics that have been employed in some feminist work against transgender experience, she does not carry out a sustained critique of the power employed by the theory of social construction itself (nor of herself as a cisgender academic writing about trans experience and theory). On the contrary, she makes some troubling claims with regard to the positioning of transgender studies in relation to women’s studies, saying on the one hand, that trans studies requires women’s studies in order “to understand gender as a historical category” (Salamon 2010, 96), and on the other, that the trans subject is a “useful” subject position “perpetually *outside* the referential system of gender,” one that both ensures the constitution of the gender binary and undermines it at the same time. “The transgendered subject is the constitutive outside of binary gender” (Salamon 2010, 98). The remainder of this chapter in her book challenges neither this formulation nor the work that trans subjectivity is required to do from the margins of the gender binary.

²⁵ See also Salamon’s discussion on pp. 40–1, where she criticizes Prosser’s insistence upon bodily materiality. She concludes that such a materiality, “[...] is a motionless and meaningless stasis equated with radical abjection and death – not a productive position from which to theorize subjectivity, trans or otherwise” (41).

²⁶ In setting up the debate in this way, and especially in defining “matter” so narrowly, Salamon – who in general maintains a relatively sympathetic position to trans experience – is at risk of describing trans theorists once again as “dupes,” a classic treatment of transgender people in medical history and in certain feminist theory treatments of transgender. In Salamon’s descriptions (as

The second prong of Salamon's (2010) response to transgender studies' critiques of queer theory is to demonstrate that our "inner sense" of the body is also already socially constructed. She begins by equating this notion of inner sense with the concepts of proprioception and bodily ego:

Phenomenologists understand this felt sense as *proprioception*, psychoanalysis thinks of it as the *bodily ego*, and it has sometimes emerged in transgender theory as the grounds for claims about identity and "realness." (Salamon 2010, 2)

She continues her argument by working through the psychoanalytic notion of the bodily ego, focusing especially on Freud and Schilder, but also turning to Anzieu and Butler. The bodily ego, she argues, is developed not through an inner sensation of my own body, but rather through my interaction with others and the world. Thus even basic sensation arises through a constructed, social body image, rather than the other way around:

It is the *constructedness* of the body image that Schilder wants to emphasize in his account, a construction that always takes place in a social world. [...] Touch is not external to, but constitutive of, the postural model of the body, whether it be the touch of external objects, or the touch of other human beings. (Salamon 2010, 30)

Touch, then, is the result of interaction between my body and the world around it, one that also leads to the formation of my sense of bodily self and continually contributes to the evolution of that sense. Importantly, though, this interaction is always implicitly social for Salamon, even with her mention of the touch of "external objects" in the above citation.

Salamon (2010, 48) then turns to Merleau-Ponty (1962) in order to work through his descriptions of proprioception and the sexual body, arguing that proprioception and sexuality (and sex) are relatively equivalent: "In this description, sex is not simply compared with or analogized to proprioception: sexuality *is* proprioceptive (and so, too, is sex [...])." In other words, sexuality is how the living body relates to itself (and the relation of its parts to each other) and how it relates to others, especially the others it desires. But here, Salamon (2010, 48)—following Merleau-Ponty—seems to indicate a material body that is in play in these relations: "There is the visible body, the body for-itself as viewed by others, the material stuff of flesh that is animated and inhabited by a sexual schema." In fact, she moves in her analyses toward Merleau-Ponty's later formulation of flesh as a new understanding of embodiment (Merleau-Ponty and Lefort 1968). Here she describes flesh as "neither matter nor mind, but *partakes of both these things* and yet cannot be described as mixture of them." (Salamon 2010, 65; my emphasis) Further, she says:

seen partially in the citations just given), trans theorists appear rather naïve for not recognizing that their appeal to materiality is an appeal to something without meaning, i.e., brute matter, and that such an appeal is clearly counter to their intentions. In addition, she takes great pains to explain that social construction actually does include the material body and "inner sense" to which many trans writers refer, implying that they never fully understood the meaning of social construction (and in Prosser's case, the meaning of Butler's arguments on gender).

Merleau-Ponty's description of flesh sounds in several crucial aspects like a description of transgenderism or transsexuality: a region of being in which the subject is not quite unitary and not quite the combination of two different things. An identity that is not secured by the specificity of the materiality of the body, nor by a particular mental quality, but is *something involving both*. (Salamon 2010, 65; my emphasis)

Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh, according to Salamon, might be particularly useful to trans writers who are describing their embodied experience.²⁷

The only thing I *didn't* tell her was how, when I have sex, I have to fantasize I'm a man making love to this other man before I can have an orgasm. (Sullivan, 7/7/1973)

But several issues arise with Salamon's analyses of "inner sense."²⁸ First of all, it is not obvious that "inner sense" can be equated with either proprioception or bodily ego. Both of these are quite specific terms, with particular goals and analyses that accompany them. Proprioception, for example, is a notion that explains how I feel the *position* of my body from "inside"²⁹—how I can reach for a glass of water without having to look at where my hand is going. This is not quite the same as the inner sense of nausea, temperature, "butterflies" in my stomach, or the ache of despair or grief. All of these are included in the "inner sense" of my body. "Inner sense," then, indicates quite a bit more than proprioception. In addition, the bodily ego is most often about the interaction of the *surface* of the body with the world around it. Salamon (2010) notes that Schilder uses the terms of postural model, body image,

²⁷ Given the fact that trans writers often speak of the specificity of transgender embodiment, the analogy between flesh and trans experience offered by Salamon is somewhat problematic, because flesh is something in which *everyone* lives. Simply put, while we might agree that we are all troubled by how we live our bodies in some way—an experience that can be expressed through the notion of flesh—the specificity of trans experience cannot be clarified through the general notion of flesh.

²⁸ See also Salamon (2010, 6–7, 29–34, 76–8, 82–3, and 121–7). Oddly, Salamon suddenly invokes the notion of "inner sense" in a sympathetic reading of trans men histories, neither indicating that the use of this notion is problematic nor asserting that this inner sense is socially constructed. In fact, she describes an "internal sense of dysphoria that becomes amplified as it circuits from his body to the gaze of an external world" (Salamon 2010, 117), which implies an inner sense that is in dialogue with an external, social world (rather than constituted by it) (Salamon 2010, 114–7). Since the chapters of Salamon's book do not seamlessly cohere to one another, giving the impression that they are a collection of different, though related, projects, this inconsistency could be explained away as merely a result of a different focus. Tamsin Lorraine (2012, 104) also notes this lack of coherence between Salamon's chapters in her review of *Assuming a Body* in *philoSOPHIA*. However, I find that this "slip" demonstrates that Salamon, at least at this point in her research, allows for a notion of an "inner sense" that is not fully socially constructed.

²⁹ Salamon (2010, 52) describes proprioception thus when delineating it from transposition: "[P]roprioception emphasizes the relation between one part of my body and another part, the assemblage that constitutes my felt sense of my body as whole."

and body schema interchangeably, contributing to the understanding that body image, as a sense of posture, might relate well to proprioception, but again, it does not seem to equate with the notion of inner sense at work in many phenomenological texts nor in trans writers' descriptions of their embodied experiences. "Inner sense," in other words, also means more than simply my surface interaction with the world.

But this issue could be written off as a quibble over definitions. More problematic, I find, is how materiality is supposed to coincide with Salamon's definition of social construction and how that plays out in her criticism of trans theorists' reference to a material body. Both the bodily ego and the notion of flesh point to a combination, interface, or intertwining of material and consciousness. Salamon seems to embrace this definition especially in her descriptions of flesh, cited just above. However, if flesh is to be understood as "partaking" of matter and mind—"neither matter nor mind, but partakes of both these things and yet cannot be described as mixture of them" (Salamon 2010, 65)—then it seems matter, as it is involved in flesh, is much more than brute materiality. Why, then, does Salamon (2010, 88) reduce trans writers' reference to materiality to only a simplistic understanding of matter as "blunt materiality, severed from any psychic investments"? Why is it not possible that trans writers are implying the notion of flesh in their descriptions, even if they are not using Merleau-Ponty's term? It is interesting to note that, after suggesting that Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh could be very useful to trans theorists, Salamon hardly mentions the term in the rest of her book. That point aside, Salamon's inability or resistance to recognize a more complex understanding of materiality on the part of trans theorists reveals that (at least) two definitions of "materiality" are in play in her analyses.

First, there is the definition of matter as "blunt materiality," which we have just discussed. Let us set that definition aside for now. Second, in Salamon's discussion of flesh, there is an understanding of materiality as a component of flesh. What is this flesh? Clearly, it is not reducible to consciousness, since it partakes of both matter and mind; it involves both. Salamon (2010, 76) appears at first to understand flesh as socially constructed in a way that does not deny its material importance: "To claim that the body is socially constructed is not to claim that it is not real, that it is not made of flesh, or that its materiality is insignificant." According to Salamon, as flesh "materializes" through partaking of matter and mind, it arises as socially constructed. Salamon's (2010) definition of social construction, however, precludes any aspect of materiality:

What, then, is meant when we say that the body is a social construct? It means that our bodies are always shaped by the social world in which we are inescapably situated. *This cultural shaping happens at the conceptual level*, in that what we are able to *imagine* about what our bodies are or may become [...] is structured by the history of how bodies have been socially *understood*, by what bodies have been. (Salamon 2010, 76–7; my emphasis)

Social construction "happens at the *conceptual level*" (my emphasis), at the level of understanding and imagination. Thus, flesh—if we understand it to be socially constructed according to Salamon's definition—really has nothing to do with matter

at all. The “materializing” of flesh as socially constructed is rather an exclusion of flesh’s materiality in favor of its mental component. So Salamon’s understanding of flesh is not a “third term” or middle ground between matter and mind, but rather it is solely mind. Salamon wants to include the notion of flesh, and the materiality implicit there, under social construction, but in doing so, she is converting flesh into a completely conceptual understanding of embodiment.³⁰

But Salamon (2010), exclusive of her problematic understanding of flesh as socially constructed (and thus, conceptual), points us in a useful direction: Transgender theorists often discuss a material body that must be more complex than simple, brute material. They could be referring to a notion much more akin to Merleau-Ponty’s and Lefort’s (1968) “flesh.” How can we understand this flesh? A full description of such an intermingling of body and consciousness, matter and mind, and personal and social is called for. Salamon’s insight to turn to phenomenology, in my opinion, is a good one, as phenomenology is a method of analysis that allows us to examine the different levels of embodied experience, from material to social. But the specificity of trans experience is not just one of embodiment, it is also a particular type of lived experience in the social world. For this reason, we will spend Chap. 4 working through a few specific texts that were widely influential as to how homosexuality and transsexuality came to be understood, especially in the United States, as well as responses by trans theorists. Then, in Chap. 6, we will turn to the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, whose work directly influenced Merleau-Ponty. There, we will analyze both how embodied experience might be very much socially influenced and, at the same time, how it produces sensory experience that enters into—and can change—the discourses at hand.³¹

³⁰My response to Salamon’s position is not a direct response to the issues within Butler’s work that we raised earlier, since Salamon is right to point out that social construction is not the same as performativity or queer theory. However, Salamon’s and Butler’s positions are clearly closely aligned: (1) Salamon employs Butler regularly in her arguments for social construction. (2) Butler sees Salamon as continuing in her footsteps: “I began the theory of materialization in response to the question of the physical matter that is said to constitute lived bodies. But I did not finish that job, and there are some people (Cynthia Kraus in Switzerland, Gayle Salamon in California) who are doing a better job than I did” (Reddy and Butler 2004, 117). Butler (2004, vii) also thanks Salamon in her introduction to *Undoing Gender*: “I thank Gayle Salamon as well whose dissertation on embodiment and materiality has prompted my own re-thinking on such topics.” (3) Salamon’s criticism of the reference to a material body by some transgender theorists can be very easily interpreted as a defense of Butler’s theory of performativity. In other words, Butler’s and Salamon’s arguments reflect one another enough that this discussion of Salamon’s argument could be said to touch on Butler’s position to some extent.

³¹Salamon (2010, 89–91) refers briefly to Husserl’s phenomenology, mostly in order to describe the phenomenological reduction as a useful method for the description of our presumptions about the world and then to show how Merleau-Ponty moves beyond Husserl’s reduction. It is interesting that Salamon makes no reference to Husserl’s *Ideas II*, which was extremely influential on Merleau-Ponty’s conception of the body, and it also carries out many phenomenological analyses that are not within the stance of the reduction.

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Chapter 3

Lou Sullivan Diaries: 1974–1975

1/6/1974

Ho-hum. I'm so blah since I've returned from Berkeley. So horny too. Fri nite had supper with Lawrence and his (new) lover, James. Lawrence looked so goddam good, but I couldn't do anything about it. Had to watch these two snootling around, and it just made me more horny and alone. But I don't know—since I left Tom, I just miss him so much more than I did before. I feel his absence so much more acutely, and actually I don't even want to be with anyone but him—I think of him all the time—how he looked, what he did and said... wish he were here so much. I dream of the day he'll return and wonder how it'll be—will he move back to *M.'s*? I don't think we should live together, but maybe only the first week or so he's back it'd be nice to be with him all the time. But I wish he wouldn't move back to *M.'s*. I hate that fucking place. I don't know—it's maybe I just have my hopes up too high; how wonderful it's gonna be when he returns, but I just keep thinking how nice it was to be with him and want it always. His quarter is over March 28—maybe I can convince him to come back right afterward—he talked of staying til July. But that's twice as long as he's been gone already, and I'm going crazy now that I know how nice things *could* be. So I've just been slopping around this place and thinking of him.

1/12/1974

Got my first letter from Tom since I was there. The letter was beautiful. Lately I've been wondering if I only imagined how wonderful it was out there with him and beginning to worry things aren't as good as I was sure they were. But his letter staved off those hauntings. He says he's going to quit school now. I guess just about everything is uncertain. But he has no doubts that he misses me and is homesick since I left while he hadn't been before and that he's ditching that married woman; she “impressed him as a robot” that time we three went out, he said. And he ends his letter “I love you the best.” I wish so much he'd surprise me at my door any minute now.

1/14/1974

I sure feel bum. I'm really lovesick. Left the GPU mtg tonite about ½ way thru. I began feeling persecuted, etc. For one I was teasing around with a lesbian who's always super friendly to me, and I said I hoped her lover wouldn't get jealous becuz she and I had matching cups for our coffee and she said real sharp something like "No, thanks, I know what YOU'RE into," like I was some pig. I felt like saying well fuck you, I know what *you're* into too! And no thanks. Shit. But when I came home, I got a phone call from a male TV in Michigan. I guess TVIS gave him my name as a correspondent. She was older (admitted to late 1930s but gave me some shit how I shouldn't ask a lady her age) and feigned a high voice. She was OK, but I could tell she was from the old school as she was surprised I had no male name, no mustache, or beard hairpieces, and I didn't make a man's voice. She spoke of her male side as her "brother" as do older, more conventional TVs. She was pretty interested in me, and when I told her a little about Tom, she thought our relationship interesting. I really didn't know what to *say* to her but she invited me there this weekend. Told her I'd phone her Thurs. But I don't think I will. For one it's \$44 round trip by plane (the boat doesn't cross the lake anymore). Another thing I don't wanna get stuck having sex with a 45-year-old grandma...grandpa? So I think I'll just blame it on the \$. She said it was nice talking to me, that it was fun to "look in the mirror."

Anyway she got me to thinking and I just can't see splitting myself into my he and my she side, tho I realize male TVs probably have to. But I just can't see having a fake name, etc. As for a beard/mustache, I don't *like* them, and I'd only look like a 16-yr-old boy with pasted hair anyway. Ugh.

1/18/1974

Altho I haven't heard from Tom, things are actually not too bad. Some nice stuff is happening. Wed Lawrence invited me over and we had over an hour alone before James came. We were standing together in the kitchen and he initiated a nice kiss and hug, and as we drew back from the kiss, we both said "I've missed you" to each other at the same time. It was really nice. He said how it's kinda been uncomfortable between us lately... both trying to think of things to say, etc., and I agreed. He said we should get together more often. It sure was great cuz I was really beginning to feel rejected by him (I almost wrote "by Tom" there, Freudian slip).

That Michigan drag (see 1/14/74) sent me about ten pictures of her, so I wouldn't think her a "decrepit old lady." But too bad, she looked like someone's bitty aunt. Ugh. I phoned her Thurs and told her I couldn't afford to come there. It was really weird: *he* answered the phone, I asked for her, and he acted like he was getting a different person and then *she* got on the phone. Gives ya the willies. She was disappointed I wasn't coming but said I should send a picture "not of you, of your 'brother'." When I explained I didn't feel that split in half, she was real shocked and said then I wasn't a TV, "not that there's any one way you have to be TV," which made no sense to me. She harped on my getting a masculine name for my "brother" like John or Bob ("but not Bobby"). Shit. Told her I was called Lou a while, but she

felt that just wouldn't do; it's "too ambiguous." Man, what a drag (ha, ha). A drag drag.

1/27/1974

So busy lately. I hadn't gotten a letter from my love since Jan 11, and finally the twenty third I got *the* most beautiful letter from him that I just had to cry. He just tortures me with his beauty and I'm so frustrated. I want him back so so bad, he's so godlike, and his cries of sadness, loneliness wrench my heart. Somehow he feels he's not ready to come back, that he would be cheating himself, as he said. At first I didn't understand, but now I think he has to come out *there*—for some reason he has to come out alone. And when he feels comfortable and worthy (he depreciates himself so much), he'll come back. And I can't wait to sleep with him in my arms again. Kiss him gently, softly.

Evan set me up to go to the ball with this other male TS Lisa used to hang around with but ditched cuz she feels he's just fucked up. But I talked to him over the phone, and he seemed rather embarrassed til I told him I cross-dress too. Name's George—female named Laura. So Fri the twenty fifth, James and I went out cuz I had a date to meet George-Laura. He didn't come in drag and turned out to be a real serious, depressed, and boring person. Just while I talked to him, he impressed me as just a TV who can't handle it, not a TS. He's hetero too. Wants me to go with him this week to buy women's clothes cuz he's embarrassed to buy them alone.

So I'm going to rent a tux to go to the ball. Over the phone I asked the clerk, "Well, should I just come in for a fitting then?" and he said, "Yeah, just send the fellow in next week sometime," even when I *told* him he didn't get it.

2/12/1974

The GPU Masquerade Ball Feb 9 was great. When I went in to rent a tuxedo, the clerk asked, "Is anyone helping this fellow?" Anyway Saturday George-Laura came 'bout 7 p.m. I was so excited about my tux and told Ma this made up for all those high school proms I could never go to. Soon as we arrived, Evan put me at the table to register those entering the costume contests. Some of the costumes were fantastically gorgeous. I was getting compliments all over how good I looked, and several drag queens kissed me. I was just drunk with excitement, but *G.L.* was El Bore, and at one point a drag told him on the side to smile more cuz he was coming off too butch (he *was* in drag by the way). And when Evan got up, he got a standing ovation and I was so proud of him. After the show act, there was dancing and Aaron and I danced and *G.L.* and I danced a slow one, but he was telling me he was turned on and shit, so one was enough for me. The thing I was most happy about was everyone included me in on everything and were so, so nice. I always remember how friends would ignore and exclude me when in a big crowd of other friends, but there was just no hint of that at all. I was just so happy—I was as important a friend as all the others! Well then *G.L.* began crabbing he wanted to go cuz he was hungry and it seemed others were leaving too, so we went to a gay restaurant that just opened. Home about 2:30 a.m.

Sunday went to mom's wearing my tux and she took pictures of me, suggesting all these butch poses, etc. and real interested in the ball and wanting to see my transvestite magazines.

At Monday's meeting, a lesbian told me she got a call on GPU's phone from a hetero TV who wanted counseling, but there wasn't much she could do and in the end he got scared and hung up and would I be interested in handling those calls? I really felt bad it had happened and told her yes please send them to me! Now I'm thinking of getting something together for counseling them and will tell all phone answerers to send hetero TVs to me.

2/21/1974

Lately my time's been taken up doing some counseling. One 42-yr-old and one 21-yr-old called GPU's phone line about their TVism. The 42-yr-old is kind of off the wall and asexual, I think, as he's NEVER had sex. The 21-yr-old I talked to nearly 3 hours on the phone the sixteenth and he came over the seventeenth for about 7 hrs. He's pretty confused. Anyway I've been thinking of starting like a TV rap [discussion] group or something and have sent letters to three Milw TVs who advertised for friends in my TV magazine. Maybe, if they're not too weird, we can get something going cuz there's only so much I can say to these problem TVs and I think others may help a lot. So I've been mulling that over. Also that guy I went to the ball with contacts me every 2–3 days to talk over his problems.

Tom sent me another super romantic letter saying he's "toying with the idea of an early departure."

Lawrence told me I may have VD, even tho I haven't been with him since mid-December. So tonite I'll have to get checked for that. Shit.

Hope this idea of a transvestite group doesn't backfire in my face. It may get going—but end up being a real pain in the ass. It's just that now TVs (esp hetero) have NOWHERE to go—GPU is gay and so are the drag bars. Just to know and talk to others makes your TVism seem less a problem.

Wish Tom'd get his ass back here. I'm going crazy.

2/25/1974

Finally someone beautiful and soft came in and out of my life. Saturday there was a party at Lawrence' boyfriend, James's place, and they hassled me til I came. Lot of not-too-bad-looking boys there but when Mitchel came in, I knew right then its *him*. Very thin and feminine, brown hair fluffed around his sharp-featured face. So I began cruising him. Seemed he was with no one in particular and finally *he* came up to *me* and asked to see my handcuffs—had them hooked on my belt. Asked my name and introduced himself and I kind of touched his back. From then on it was kind of a flirty-cruising-what's-next deal between us. He'd walk by me, turn to see if I was looking at him (which I always was) and then keep walking. He came up and asked me what I did. Taking it sex-wise, I answered "Just about anything." I asked what he liked and he said money. I asked how much and he said \$50 grand. Told him he wasn't worth his weight in gold. Later he took the handcuffs and said

he'd put them on me—I said no, *I* put them on *him*. He said no. Curious, I let him put 'm on me and then he asked for money. I told him first he takes the cuffs off, and we argued back and forth and finally I got 'm off. Like every 20 mins something'd happen between us. Finally I asked him if he was a lost case and he asked how I meant. Told him he knew damn well—for *sex*. He said well, to tell the truth he's kind of asexual, and I said well then we'd get along good. He asked was I too? I nodded. From then on he was a lot nicer. He kept kissing this one girl tho. Then he sat alone smoking. I stared at him and he kept looking over at me and finally I went over and he said he likes kissing and touching. I kissed him and stroked his hair. Later he came up behind me and began kissing me real hard. Finally about 4 a.m., he came over and shook my hand and said bye. I asked if I could come with him, and when he didn't answer, I said, too bad, I'm coming anyhow. So the one girl he'd been kissing real much, some gila monster guy, him and I left. Walking along he was with the other girl and then a car with a friend of theirs drove up and we all went to a restaurant. I got to sit next to him, and every few mins he'd ask me a question, "Why are you so contrary to your image?" "So people will leave me alone." He fed me some of his food. His attentions to me were very hesitant, afraid, yet I *knew* he was attracted to me. I could almost feel he liked me. As they were driving me home I asked him if he'd like to come with me. He asked if I had music and booze and when I answered yes, he said OK, for a little while. We sat on the couch and drank wine, listened to records. He pulled me over and we hugged and kissed. I stroked his hair, touched his face. We laid together in each other's arms, high, drifting but not sleeping. He asked more questions: my age, if I lived alone, where I worked. Told him I was transvestic and a little about TVs. Told me he was looking for someone to share their money with him. He told me I was beautiful inside, and I told him he was very beautiful, that I wished I was him. He said he was like me once. But I don't know—the feelings between us were like we knew each other but didn't. Said he liked my music and the way I touched him. It began getting light out and he went and looked out the window a while. When he came back to the couch, I asked if he wanted to go lay down with me and he said we could for a little while (but we didn't) and he went and phoned a taxi. (When he said he wanted to share someone's money, I said then he could be a "kept boy" and he said *he'd keep himself!*)

Seemed in seconds the taxi arrived. Leaving, he asked was I sure I didn't have any money. I hit him on the butt and told him to get out that all I've got to say is he's lucky he's getting out of here alive. He left.

Somehow I think he'll be back—but then I thought that about Sean too. So I've been toying with the idea of keeping him. Maybe if he comes to see me first, I'll talk it over with him. But he was absolutely beautiful, and it was like we understood each other in some strange way.

2/27/1974

Just saw the guy who had the party. He said he knew Mitchel "sort of" and I said oh, cuz he mentioned a business deal and I think I might be interested. Anyway if he ever does run into him, or something, the word *does* get around. Think I'll just sit back and wait. Evan puts great faith in the "gay grapevine."

3/5/1974

‘Bout 2 a.m. March 1, Tom phoned. I figured he would—I think he’ll call the first of the month now. Was very loving. Said he’d be back the middle of June and that he was going to do all kinds of nice things for me like wear a fur jacket and go to the bars and be real good to me so I could show them all what a beautiful lover I have. Said he’s been going to a lot of new places and making a lot of friends “mostly fags” (told him those are the best kind) and he’s getting into a little circle of friends. Really good.

No word from pretty boy Mitchel. Told two people to try to get the word to him but I’m still hoping he’ll come around to visit me on his own. Would be so nice to sleep with him.

By the way, my VD test turned out negative!!!

3/10/1974

Well, I’ve been a sick motherfucker again. For 2 wks. I’ve been fucking around again with sinus shit. Taking off a day here and there. Fever. Anyway haven’t been to work since the morning of the 6th. I swear I’ve felt every inch of the inside of my sinuses. So my life has slowed down plenty. My big adventure is going to the mailbox. I wrote to a TV I was attracted to from a magazine I have and he wrote back and sent another picture I’ve just been staring at since. A super fantasy picture. Then Tom sent me a real good letter enclosing two pictures—one of him and one of his latest boyfriend. The one of him was double exposed but good and his new lover is just gorgeous. My fantasies of them together have just been running wild. So that’s me lately. My latest article is in Feb/March GPU NEWS.¹ Hope I get *some* feedback from it, sure got none from my first article. I’ll be going to work tomorrow. Hope I’m thru with sickness now this winter.

3/22/1974

Wednesday night Lawrence, James, and I took a train to Chicago to attend an opening party for a new gay bath. There were tons of people but only ‘bout two cuties. Lawrence said he’s going to start calling me “he” and “him” and I told him to call me Lou tonite. So he introduced me as Lou and I didn’t talk and was really fooling a lot of people into thinking me male. No liquor was served and the party, held at the bath, wasn’t very good. We got to wander around and see it tho. The rooms were like closets, a bare mattress on the floor and I think a chair. That was it and barely room to move in. At the end of the evening got heavily cruised by this old guy in leather. I was in my leather too and wearing my cuffs on the left side which in Milw means you’re the aggressor and suddenly I realize someone told me that it

¹“Looking Toward Transvestite Liberation” (Sullivan 1979). According to Sullivan’s vitae, after being published in the March issue of Milwaukee’s GPU News, it was published in *Gay Liberator* (Detroit, MI, Sept/Oct 1974); *Shocks: The Androgyny Issue* (Momo’s Press, San Francisco, CA, 1976); *Female Impersonator* magazine (Neptune Productions, 1974); and *The New Gay Liberation Book* (Ramparts Press, Palo Alto, CA, 1979).

means just the opposite some other place and I wasn't sure if they'd said Chicago or not. Shit! I finally had to flee and break up James and Lawrence's kissy-kissy to save me from this man. He'd just *stared* at me, standing there looking hard and I tried to look everywhere but where he was but then he stepped in my line of vision. Yuk! At midnite they began getting ready for business and everyone left but those who were gonna stay. They all went to get undressed and walk around with only a towel wrapped around their waists. Lawrence and I waited in the lobby for James to get screwed by this guy and no one tried to kick me out or was freaked by me there and I was sure they all thought I was a guy. A guy who'd been there all nite and had talked to James and Lawrence before came to talk to Lawrence and said to him, "What's his name?" "Lou." I nodded, shook hands. This one kind of cute but too chunky guy stood in his towel on the other side of the hall cruising me hard. When we finally left, I stared back at him and we stared all the way as I walked out. Because Lawrence knew the bath owner (I'd met him several times too), we got free rooms in this gay rooming house for the nite. At first they gave me a key and when we went in, there's a guy in the bed! We got another room. James said I should just stay in the room with Lawrence and him but apparently Lawrence wasn't hip on that. So I got as far into a gay bath as I possibly could, being what I am. Doubt if many women have. We got 2 hrs sleep and on the bus back to Milw at 6:30 a.m.

Found out my first article published in GPU NEWS was reprinted in the *Detroit Liberator*.² Smile. Will get a copy. I submitted my new one to *MS.*, who sent it back with a form letter saying gee we just can't use it, and *Playgirl*, who sent it back saying they already "assigned a piece on the same subject." Fuckers. I'm trying others tho.

4/2/1974

Feel as tho I'm slipping back to where I was a year ago ... I'm getting insecure and afraid again. I know it's becuz Lawrence went back to NY about 10 days ago and becuz my cruising attempts of these past 3 months have been fruitless (pun intended). I feel I'm just pining away for Tom and now I'm beginning to think I'll only be disappointed when he does return: told we shouldn't see each other very often, that he's in love with Miss Anybody and can't help it, that he wants to pretend he doesn't know who I am in the gay bars and then want to go to straight bars, that he'll go back to live with *M.* and I'll be so grossed out by that pig again.

I'm feeling the same want-to/don't-want-to feeling. Wanting to beg and beg him to come back soon and wanting to lose myself in him from need but being constantly reminded that I'm not that important to him.

I know I'm feeling this from pure loneliness: from Lawrence being gone, from all my unsuccessful flirtations, that Mitchel living upstairs from me for over 2 wks (can you believe it?) and never once acknowledging I'm there. Tom not calling the first of the month as he had in Feb and Mar. I'm just feeling so alone and desperate. There is no one I even care to be with now.

² "A transvestite answers a feminist" (Sullivan 2006) was Sullivan's first published article. Sullivan's vitae lists his second article with GPU News ("Looking Toward Transvestite Liberation", Sullivan 1979) as being published in Detroit's *Gay Liberator*, rather than his first. See also entry on 9/10/1974.

4/10/1974

James and I got the 6:30 train to Chicago Friday night. We got a private compartment and drank wine and talked as we watched the moon. We got really close—the first time I felt he *really* liked me. Stayed at a friend of James' place and we three went to *the* heavy Chicago S&M (sadism/masochism) bar. Bought the belt I'd been dreaming of since the baths. While waiting for it, a 60-yr-oldish man put a note in my hand. I looked at it, then at him and he gasped, "Oh, please take it!" When he left I read it: "Master, I beg you to train me as one of your slaves! Master, please, I beg, train me to ream, suck you dry! Your slave, T." Too too incredible! He *must* have thought me a boy! Nothing else there. Sure can't see why the place has such a horrendous reputation—I guess maybe just the presence of S&M'ers is freaky to some. Not me. I saw a guy there from GPU and he was delighted at my baths escapade. Think these guys get a real kick out of a girl trying to pass as male. Saturday morn James and I went to the Art Institute. But I had my eyes on the most perfect art—the pretty boys. One especially. A real symphony. Then we walked all over downtown, New Town, Old Town. In and out of at least 75 stores. Bought handcuffs for James to give Lawrence as a gift from me (he went to NY to visit him Tues). The clerk said, "Can I help you sir?...uh, ma'am?" James and I got along famously. Bought him makeup for the evening and he did himself up extravagantly with glitter around his eyes and rouge and wore only a white sequined jacket meant to go over a sleeveless gown. Told him he was my contribution to art. In the evening we went to THE place. \$4 per person to get in tho no band or liquor there, but it was *so* worth it. The place was beautiful: two floors, the top a balcony you could look on the first floor from. Dance floor on both levels. Balcony had all couches and booths to sit at. And *yummy* boys! And then I saw him. Said to James, "That guy is really strange. I don't know what I think of him." He was dancing: thin, my height, very short 1-inch long David Bowie haircut all standing up on top, reddish, small round face, tiny kissy mouth, and large gray transparent eyes ... the kind you feel you're looking thru. Makeup enough but not overdone. Like a girl. A silver and black top, buttons open down his chest, and a long lilac-purple chiffon scarf around his neck pinned on the side by a diamond circle pin. Nice blue jeans. Black platform shoes. He looked like he wasn't real—not of this world. So ethereal I was afraid of him. But the more I watched I couldn't stop. James and I danced and I could see him watching us. I had to talk to him. Stood off worrying what I should do, lost him a while, then saw him standing off—somehow alone—looking out onto the dance floor—the lights assaulting his beauty, his eyes. No one spoke to him, noticed him, but he was all I could see. Pretended I was walking by him, took his arm, said in his ear, "I want to tell you you're beautiful," kissed him quickly on the ear and was going to run off in case he vomited or something, but he took my arm and said he'd watched me dance and couldn't believe it. He was smiling, acting so pleased. Asked if I knew Suzy Quatro. Said no and he said I look just like her—she's a British singer and dresses like me. Well we kept up the conversation, I bought him soda. Told me how he was to meet someone there who didn't show and he had no way to get home. (What a line.) He asked who James was. Told him I met him cuz he and I shared a lover once.

He asked a little later who got the lover and when I said James, he was delighted. (I don't know his sexuality but we spoke of only gay bars.) We danced some. He was so interested, delighted, attentive, and lovely. We lost sight of James a long time and my David Bowie said he just knew James got mad and left. What a sweet pretty! He stayed by my side all the time. Found James, decided to leave. Asked if he wanted to come with us and he did. Outside it was light. He had a black leather jacket with the collar up, white silk scarf, and silken silver gloves which he wore and delicately held his cigarette. I love the way boys walk in platform shoes too—so sexual. And he was so normal: talked normal, acted natural. Not trying to BE anything. Only one double mattress left at the house. Tactless James doesn't offer to fuck off so we all had to share it. Damn. I was in the middle and David Bowie and I snuggled up and fell asleep. I left all my clothes on, he only took off his sweater. But I hardly slept. Too aware of him. Woke about 9:30 and began touching him. He was ½ awake and ½ asleep. I drew off his covers and ran my fingers lightly over his chest and back, sometimes using my nail to give him pleasure/pain. A few times he opened his eyes and looked at me but I just smiled and continued. Sometimes I'd stop and lay quietly next to him but later start again. Stroked his hair, eyes, and ears. A few times he pulled me under him, kissed me real hard. His makeup was so lovely. James slept the whole time. Around 10:30 he got up and washed the red out of his hair and his makeup off, scratched off the black nail polish he had only on each middle finger. I watched him. He fussed with his hair for a long time trying to get one sticking-up part to lie down. Teased him. He got dressed and asked for my address. We kissed and he left. Another fleeting angel I hope to possess again ... Went back to bed til 2:30. James and I were awakened by our host and James said to him, "You should have seen the cute little David Bowie we brought home with us...or Sheila brought home." And I thought yes, that's just what he was, a "cute little David Bowie." We just made the 4:30 train to Milw. Another nice ride almost totally alone in the sunlight together, both of us pretty damn content. Only home around ½ hr and I get a phone call from Tom. Soon as he spoke, I knew he was in a bad mood but I was *so* high from the weekend. Told him in general about Chicago. He was quiet; when I asked the matter he said nothing and was silent, like he wished *I'd* quit phoning *him*. "Are you still coming back in June?" "I don't know" (a leave-me-alone tone) "I guess so." Said he'd been trying to call me 3 days. Told him I expected him on the first and felt bad when he didn't call. He humphed "April Fools." Asked him 'bout his boyfriend, he said he probably wouldn't see him anymore, "it's just a fruitless relationship." Told him a little of David Bowie and when I said nothing happened in bed he said "I'm sure." He was just pissed at me. When I asked the matter for the fourth time, he said he just wanted to go home and sleep. So we hung up. Why does he DO that! Thought of our hassle in the bar in Berkeley. Deduced things aren't well with him and becuz I was happy, had a good time, he was envious and prickly to me. Just like in the bar. I honestly don't know what to do when he gets that way. My fears of April 2 could be real fears. But this is the first time I haven't been bummed by his moods. It happened 3 days ago and I haven't wanted to write him asking for an explanation or cried or anything. Just think I don't need his grief. Like I said before, those around me affect me a lot more than he does. My cute little David

Bowie. I finally feel Tom needs and wants me as much as I do him, and he can just learn to come back to me for a change. He wants to be the girl, okay—let him. I'm finally insane enough to wait for him to come to me like a girl should.

4/15/1974

Things are fine—boring but fine. Tom mailed off a letter to me the very next day after that pissy phone call, and it was a very revealing letter about his confusion and very loving. I mailed my response today. Seems he feels out of place, at the same time he feels he belongs in the gay world, plus somehow he feels he has to explain himself to all his asshole acquaintances here. Dumb. Went to the bars twice this weekend by myself—the first times I've ever gone alone. It was good tho cuz I find out I'm not alone for long, I know enough people. Aaron said I should “keep up the S&M look” cuz I've really got this one guy convinced. Told Aaron the closest to S&M I get is heavy scratching. Left out telling him of my fantasies which nearly always involve S&M shit. He said if I could convince that guy I was “S,” he'd be groveling at my feet. Showed Aaron my note from the man who wanted to be my slave and he was real surprised and exclaimed, “He didn't know!” meaning if I was male or female. Then Aaron asked my drag name, which surprised me. “Lou.”

4/17/1974

Got a lovely phone call from my love last night. He was worried cuz he hadn't gotten a letter from me yet and again apologized for the snotty phone call last week. Said he'd be back “real soon, only 2 months” and that he'd like to start traveling and not just stay in Milw and he's thinking of Europe. He was very interested in visiting NY this summer, so if he's got the travel bag, maybe we could go as soon as July. He was even romantic, saying he misses my body, adding “and your mind too!” I mentioned the middle of June, his due date back, was around my birthday—seems he hadn't even thought of it that way.

Monday's GPU mtg was on S&M (sodomasochism). The jerk doing the talk (the only guy in GPU I can hardly stand, even his presence) wasn't even into S&M and just gave this hack psychological rap how they're all from unhappy childhoods and are unable to establish loving relationships. I was so pissed and the four or five other guys there into S&M didn't bat an eyelash. Talked today to this one guy at the talk; he said how I was the only one “in their (S&M) subset” who spoke up. Surprises me how people take for granted I'm S&M. I am to a degree: 90% of my masturbation fantasies involve S&M; I've always gotten off sexually on prisons, handcuffing (I've already handcuffed myself at night in bed and gone to sleep that way); those short stories I wrote while 12–16 years old always had whipping, etc. I esp like biting and scratching my partner during sex, holding their arms down above their heads. I could easily get into S&M. I'm already into the fantasy and that's a large portion of it.

4/18/1974

Talked to *M.* last night. He said he'd prefer if Tom *didn't* move back there! I'm so glad! In my last letter, I told Tom I have no desire to place any limitations on him

but that I ask he doesn't move back to *M.*'s cuz I seriously cannot tolerate him. It would be *the best* if Tom got his own place! And with *M.* letting Tom know he'd rather not have him there, I might have a chance of him getting his own place! Sweet luck!

4/26/1974

Finally getting around to writing about Tues nite. To the RQ with James. Many pretty boys there. But one approached me and asked about Tom, saying he'd seen us two together for years. He was mystified by us both. We danced, were both very drunk and he said I could do anything with him I wanted. He was small, thin, soft brown hair, and made-up eyes. Took him to my place. He told me I reminded him of his adolescent jack-off fantasies. I told him that's all I was. He was afraid of me and I played on his fears, which he wanted, the fantasies. He'd ask if I had whips. I'd say you'll see. Undressed him but his necklaces and bracelets left on. I refused to remove any clothes (didn't all night—fantasies). Told him I was a hermaphrodite. He doubted me so asked didn't he think there were people like me? Did he think we all went to NY? He told me to fuck him then if I have a dick. So I made him lie on his stomach, he turned to see if I was removing my pants, but I roughly turned him over and violently shoved two fingers up him. He cried out, begging me to take them out, asking if he was bleeding. I held them quietly in place (tho I wanted to cruelly pump them in and out, add a third finger), and he got used to them there ... Later I put two of his fingers in his mouth, he closed his lips over them. I said in his ear, "Suck." His lips, his tongue moved, he lightly sucked. I drew his fingers in and out, fucking him with them. "Suck it." His mouth tightened, he sucked harder. I was immensely turned on by my words, his submissiveness. Genet's words were caught in my throat, "Go on, suck it, you little bitch." And Rechy's "fantasy words": "Suck me, bitch." I need a gun. Instead of my fingers (Genet) I would fuck him with the muzzle—make him suck it—"Suck it til it shoots." Turn him over and force the end of it up between his buttocks, pump him with it, and if he cries out in pain, begs me to stop, only force it further in him, pushing it all the way in, bring it almost all the way out and shove it in again—savoring his cries and pain. If there was blood, I'd lick him clean after the rape, hoping when I turn him back over to gently kiss him I'll find silent tears. At one time he was laying on his back and I was kneeling between his legs. Took his foot and licked it, putting my tongue between each of his toes and licking there. Somehow he started telling me how he wasn't a "faggot." Doubted him, asking what he was doing at the gay bar then. He said looking for sex—he didn't care if it was from "a girl or a boy or a boy-girl or whatever." Later we talked of a mutual acquaintance. He said he'd *love* to get into *his* pants. His nakedness while I was clothed bothered him. He argued with me about it a long time. When I sensed his curiosity waning, I opened my pants, revealing my jockey shorts. He was surprised and I kissed him, his kiss now stronger, more persistent—as he got more forward his fingers touched the edge of my binder. "What's this?" I moved his hand away. I told him he shouldn't get so drugged cuz little girls shouldn't do that. He asked if that's what he was to me, a little girl. "Uh-huh." Then he asked if I had anything I wanted him to put on. "No." I watched him as he slept. My fan-

tasy: I am a 45ish-yr-old convict. They put a pretty new kid in my cell. It's night and the guard finds him sleeping in my bunk. "All right, Joe, put the boy back." I don't want to be separated from this pretty young soft warm body. "Please, Olson, just let me have him tonite...please...he's all I got." The guard knows I'm not a trouble-maker and that this is the first boy I've had tho a con for 12 yrs, so he walks away, lets me have him. I slept 2 hrs and went to work, leaving him there. When I got home at 5, of course he was gone but had left a note that he'd taken a copy of my article, "TV Liberation" [Sullivan 1979] one. I went right to bed, buried my nose in the pillows—his scent still lingering there.

5/17/1974

So I finally got myself a cock. Lawrence gave me the catalog some months ago but I didn't order. Some kind of fear prevented me. The only thing I can imagine was I felt it would come to mean too much to me and the whole thing would get outa hand. But lately I've been getting out of hand anyhow. I've begun lush masturbation scenes, performing anal rape on myself, a boy. Needed something to do it with. Finally gave in and sent for one. Got it yesterday and I was even afraid to open the box. But finally harnessed it to myself and it was like it was supposed to be. No big deal. It felt real and I wished it had sensations. Slept with it on all nite. Have it on under my clothes now, writing this. I fantasize it is erect becuz I am alone with a beautiful boy. I want to wear it to the bar tonite and let some beauty see that he gave me a hard-on. I fantasize being fully clothed with my cock bulging in my pants as I lay in bed beside a beautiful youth—we are two boys together, tenderness, we kiss, I stroke his hair and he thinks I am really a boy—can't understand why I won't undress for him, desires to make love to the boy with him. I fear it will come to be as important to me as my jockey shorts and I won't be able to be without it. Embarrassed to let Tom know about it—just as I was at first with my underwear. I know I will want to use it in anal intercourse on a pretty boy. Afraid. Want Tom to touch it, stroke it while I'm wearing it, as tho it were really me. Afraid. He will be back soon: 4 wks. I want him to love me, accept me—all of me. Let me be his young man.

5/28/1974

State of inertia, mentally and physically. Letter from Tom saying he'd paid up his rent thru June 15 so would make train reservations to leave July 3 or 5. I just about died reading that, since he'd promised he'd be here by my birthday and I'd honestly been counting the weeks. And then this. Only a few letters back he chided me: "You know very well when I'll be back." He lies and toys with my deepest feelings. Since then I haven't been able to think or feel much. Feel that I am definitely growing away from him—that is just as I fluctuate between independence of and dependence upon him, I fluctuate between needing him and wanting him. Now I feel I don't necessarily *want* him, he could be anyone who would fulfill my *need*. I need someone, someone like him. I just met a new boy. Have seen him around the bars and he looks a lot like Tom and Nureyev mixed together. But this past Sunday was a GPU picnic and he was there hanging all over some fat girl. Cruised him and he knew,

smiled. Aaron played matchmaker and introduced us. Lovely, tall, graceful in a ballet dancer's way, giddy, vain. He attempted to teasingly pour beer down my bosom but realized I had none. Told him I had less there than he did. He giggled something how I had a mastectomy. Told him I *did* and would get the rest of the operation next year. He was real shocked and said he only knew of two others (other *what*, I don't know). But I'd've put the move on him a lot harder had fatty not been there. I knew I could love him, he would relish all the attentions I would heap on him, how I would nurture his vanity. Maybe will see him again. (After I told him I had a mastectomy he ran his hands over my chest, freaked. "She did!" Superego booster. He felt nothing. I am a boy.)

But these are only dreams and they don't fulfill my need. I would be sufficient unto myself if they did.

James's leaving for NY tomorrow.

Maybe Tom will phone me the 1st—Friday-Saturday.

5/31/1974

Do you believe that it always happens? That when I think I just will not survive, when I feel so, so bad I can hardly function—that something insanely marvelous suddenly happens and I'm jet-propelled so high! Again! That guy from the picnic *called me up!* Honest to shit! I was so rattled! Didn't know what to say so asked why he called and he said "well, anytime, any place...." My god! So we made a date, after hemming-hawing on both our parts, to meet Sat nite at a gay bar I was only to once. Said he goes there cuz that's where the rich ones are—seems he's a hustler! Asked me if I was really "gonna have it put on downstairs," meaning get an operation for a penis. Told him I'd bullshitted him for my own ego, to get compliments. Said he really didn't feel any breasts, told him I wore a binder. Said he'd never been with a girl and I told him I had a lot of tricks so he wouldn't know the difference. He was really feeling me out to find out where I was at, like saying he'd dress me all up like a drag queen. Told him *he's* the queen, I'm the *drag-butch*. He made other references to me being a girl, told him *he's* the girl! Told him I would handcuff him and take him home and he said he'd have his girlfriend to protect him. Told him I'd "kick her in the cunt." He said WHAT?? I repeated it. He was so shocked, said he never swears in front of girls. Told him there he goes again! Came out that C. he was with at the picnic was only a friend he goes out with. Asked me if I took the pill and I said no I have a whole buncha kids in the attic; I stick some under the tub, some in the basement—of course, I do! Said he just wants to warn me cuz he wouldn't care. I said neither would I, that's why I take 'm, cuz "I'm not ready for those feminine problems." Told him I thought he was beautiful and I'd've put the move on him if he hadn't been hanging all over that C. He was so giddy and freaked—said he can't believe this, he's never been seduced by a girl like this before. Told him wait'll I see him, I'm not so hot over the phone. We talked pretty long, I thought. I just can't believe it really happened. So so glad but so apprehensive. I *must* be tender and loving and not up-tight about undressing! Haven't been honest, undressed with anyone since Tom at Christmas and then we hardly did. I'm so ashamed of my breasts, etc., I don't want to make him heterosexual being with me. He couldn't get sick looking

at me cuz he does know what he's getting into and, he initiated it. I wish at least I had no breasts. What if it was a joke, and when I get to the bar, he and his friends laugh because I really came. I just have no confidence left. I want it all to turn out so nice. I want to feel loved but I'm afraid of the risk I must take. He was so, so lovely and I want him to like me, think I'm attractive, stay a while.

6/1/1974

And so I spend the rest of the night talking to friends. Knowing it was too good to be true, knowing it would turn out wrong. Was only in the bar with him 5 mins and:

Him: "Oh, my God! I can't go home with you. I thought you were kidding! I thought you were a lesbian!"

Me: "I told you I wasn't."

Him: "But...you're a girl, and I'm a gay guy!!!"

Me: "So? You knew that from the start."

Him: "Oh, God! But you went into the guy's *bathroom*! You *think* like a guy!"

Me: "The queens go into the girls' bathroom and they think like girls. You know that?"

Him: "I know...I think like a girl when I'm in drag...but..."

Me: "Why did you call me? You *knew* I was a girl. I *told* you what I was into."

Him: "I *know*, but...oh, I'm sorry! I just can't go home with you. Maybe next week..."

Me: "Oh, bull shit."

Knowing it was going to happen. And he's acted so damned worldly. Like he'd seen it all. And then he's goddamn stupid enough to let something like this shit happen. And he was going to be my big breakthrough. I was actually going to take my clothes off for the first time since I visited Tom in Dec. I was all ready to be vulnerable becuz it had all been so clear that I was a girl and he wanted to come home with me. And then after two phone conversations about it (and I didn't jive him once), he says he thought I was kidding, that I was a lesbian altho I'd made it very, very clear I wasn't.

6/15/1974

Tom sent me a happy birthday "letter," with all kisses on it. I'm so moved, so surprised. I never expected anything like that. Yet I can't feel it—he's been gone too long. Damn I wish he'd get his pretty little ass back here. July 5.

Nice things happening. Awhile back Evan had a porn film showing and I was the only girl invited. Well since then he's never told me he's having another, so I really felt the guys complained to Evan they didn't want a girl there, since he'd said he'd have one every other week or so. The whole thing really made me feel I revolted them—that I really wasn't accepted, they didn't want me around. Thought of asking Evan if that's what happened but was afraid he'd say yes and I couldn't stand to know for sure... But then today he calls and tells me there's one tonite and he sure

hopes I can come, cuz some other woman, who's hetero but "sympathetic," is eager to come. Evan told her another girl'd be there too. I went sky high again. It's so hard for me to really believe they accept me.

A girl I've had my eye on at the RQ grabbed me last nite. Told her to watch out cuz I like her. She said OK see you when the bar closes. Scared me. Would like to sleep with her but no sex and she's a little too out-front, I think, to go along with that.

7/3/1974

Am passing the time without even thinking—my mind's a blank. There's nothing to do at work so I'm just reading and sitting like a vegetable. Evan set up a deal with the underground hippie paper to do our typesetting at their office, and I'm elected. There about 3 and 1/2 hrs last nite and impressed everyone how good I worked the justifier. Probably will work there all tonite and tomorrow. I enjoy it—makes me feel like I'm *doing* something half worthwhile.

It seems I'm walking around like a zombie, no thoughts, but the image of Tom in my mind. No feelings—I don't even think I'm excited. Just wonder what he'll look like, how he'll act. My main worry is that he'll treat me strange in the bars like before. But he reassured me many times things will be so good. I really just don't realize or understand he'll be here in 2 days. With me this weekend. It's been too long to even remember.

7/7/1974

I think it can work but I must go at it slowly and with a vision of myself at all times. I'm still in shock at his presence and *have* felt that my past had indeed come back to haunt me. It first hit me when he said he was moving his stuff to *M.*'s—the one and only thing I asked him not to do, for me. And *M.* himself hinted he doesn't want another roommate. Luckily *M.* wasn't around Friday.

Saturday we took his stuff to *M.*'s. I told him I didn't know if I wanted to go there but did as I wanted to be with him. Soon I was sorry I did. So long since I placed myself in so straight a scene. *M.*'s and friends' conversation bored me so and I felt my past go before me. They have nothing to offer, their lives and thoughts very much like television, like 1970, they have gone nowhere—have no promise of salvation from themselves and their situations. Wish Tom would stay away from lethargy—that's one thing I hate about him, his boredom, lack of enthusiasm and love of life. He's got to help himself tho. Told him I won't go there anymore. He agreed and I think really understood why, tho it was not voiced. I must constantly keep a vision of my present being in dealing with Tom as a part of my life. His lethargy was one of the main reasons I didn't like him when we first met—the beat goes on. We had planned on going to the bars, and as we were about to go, he said he didn't know if he wanted to cuz it was my scene and they were my friends. I was so stunned as he'd told me he'd resolved those conflicts, but after expressing my surprise and lack of comprehension, I let him decide and we left together. The evening was enjoyable and turned out fine. He relaxed after about 1/2 hr. We even danced—first time!! He was at ease talking with those I introduced him to. We got to my place and had

gentle, loving sex—tho drunken, unenthusiastic on my part, so tired. He was excited! We both said how we'd forgotten how nice it could be, and I was enough in shock that it was as tho I wasn't even participating, but watching. I felt emotion, gentleness, and love but didn't feel able to express it naturally. Also was tight and sore and after a while I only hurt. But it came easier than I thought. I began remembering how it all went. Today we cooked a big breakfast together and went out with friends. Them too I must stay away from. I think I'll be able to sort it all out as we go along. We talked of NY, probably the 20–28 or 27 to Aug 4.

7/10/1974

We had beautiful sex. Tom stayed last nite and we were all over each other almost the entire time. One of the first times I've really been turned on KISSING. I swear his body's more lovely. He's wearing these wonderful bikini underpants that are so full. He's really gotten to be an anal erotic too which I just love. He wears an earring all day long! Somehow his back is more muscular, his waist smaller, his ass rounder, his arms more graceful, his neck longer, his lips fuller. I can hardly believe I have him for more than a few fleeting voyeuristic hours. He swears I've gotten more beautiful and I can't understand how he thinks. I have no fear or shame of my body when he is around, but I can't feel the same way he does about it. Wish I could see myself as he sees me.

7/12/1974

Tom is so depressed it's getting me. Phoned Lawrence and James to make plans, and after I hung up, Tom said he didn't think they were going to like him, etc., etc. Told him if he was his own sweet self, they'll like him but not if he's going to be a pouty baby and he just has no self-confidence, and he said glumly "confidence in what." He thinks he's no damn good. Lawrence and James told me they were worried what they were going to do with their lives and I told them it's catching—so's Tom. Then Tom wanted to know all how old they were, their occupations, etc. Said to Tom "you don't even think I like you, do you?" He shook his head, said sometimes he thinks I just like him cuz he's "cute." Told him that wasn't so—I like him cuz he's intelligent and good and just cuz he's not doing something at the moment doesn't mean he CAN'T do it. Said I wasn't doing anything til about 6 months ago, and he was always the one doing things. He said, "Now the tables are turned and I can't stand it!" It seems to me the whole thing has developed into self-pity. I don't know what I can do but encourage him. He's not even trying to get out of this state. He's very, very cuddly and almost like he's clinging to me to save him or something. I know he doesn't have to be like this. And it's so irritating cuz he feels if he gets into anything I'm into, he's *intruding* on my scene! Fancied the idea of this weekend in Chicago but he wasn't very interested in the idea even. He better snap out of this shit soon. Heaven help me!

7/15/1974

Sunday Evan and I had a 2-hour talk. He told me a lot of people in GPU are finally coming around to understanding where I'm at and have told him how much they like me. Said at first many of them couldn't figure out what I was doing and were a little scared of me. But now they're coming around. Told him how much that meant to me and he said it was apparent. He'd had two lesbians to his house a few nights before, and they'd told him how much they like me, and Evan explained to them I like to be treated like a gay male. They told him they thought I was pretty far out but it took them til now to "get where I was." Evan said I was going to kill him for asking, but what did I wear to work? Freaked when I told him my usual male clothes. Tom and I leave this Friday nite for NY. Can't wait to see Lawrence and James! Hope all runs smoothly and Tom feels comfortable.

7/19/1974

This afternoon we leave for New York. I'm reading thru the NY section of *City of Night* and remember how, a little over a year ago I was so alone, desperately trying to find where I fit in this gay world—where I knew I belonged somehow. And how, grasping in the dark, I knew I had to go to NY. I just came on this line in *City of Night* that I'd marked then: "Because even before I got there, New York had become a symbol of my liberated self, and I knew that it was in a kind of turbulence that that self must attempt to find itself." [Rechy 1963, 20] I remember so well my desperation at that moment. How I somehow had to throw myself into that world because I didn't know how else to find it. And, again in Rechy, only a few sentences later: "*—suddenly!*—with the excitement of someone exploring a new country I discovered that world. As abruptly as that, it happened; that sudden, that immediate: One day, nothing, and the next it was there...as if a trap door had Opened." [21].

And now, a little over a year later, I find myself on my way to NY but not in desperation. In a self-assured easiness I know I can get into an insane no-rules fag bar in NY and become part of it like that. Am going to two male lovers whom I dearly love, who mean so much to me—and I, somehow, to them. About the third thing Lawrence ever said to me when we first talked was that he thought I was from NY—that I really looked like I was.

It happened so different than I felt it would. Me, ready to go crashing in. But the world welcomed me without the fear I had of it.

Only last week I told Evan how I'd thought and wanted to contact GPU long before I did but I felt I couldn't becuz I wasn't gay and I felt I didn't belong there either. And Evan said back, "Oh, but you do belong!"

And now, like the prodigal son, I go to NY at peace with myself—thinking of it not as the insane place I had to throw myself into and learn to survive but as my home. I know I belong there.

7/29/1974

Tom and I arrived in NY at 9 p.m. Fri the nineteenth and returned to Milw Sun the twenty-eighth 'bout 7 p.m. All week our schedule'd been: wake up around

3 p.m. and to bed about 5 a.m. Some days we had Lawrence for a guide, others James, sometimes both, once neither. It wasn't all as exciting or different as it had been cracked up to being. All the tourist sites were just like I'd seen in pictures 1000 times and felt I'd seen them before. All the myths (subway sleazy, Central Park dangerous, "Every night is Saturday night") were proven bullshit. It was fun and new to be in a place like Times Square where all the lights are, etc., but not worth moving out there and giving up what I have in Milw. In fact, by the end of our visit, Lawrence and James decided to move back to Milw in Sept.

I'm still in shock after being there, haven't adjusted back to Milw yet. But I had a good time. It was a miracle how well Lawrence, James, and Tom got along. They all fell in love with each other and that's not bull. I had been worried (so had they)—figured they'd *like* each other but never dreamed it would be so easy. Fact is Lawrence and Tom plan to get an apartment together when he returns and I'm really glad. They hesitated at first, Lawrence said he was reluctant becuz they could very easily become involved with each other. But I feel Lawrence will have a definite good influence on Tom on such things as taking care of his health, getting away from drinking so much, getting a better outlook on his future, etc. So good to be with those two again. They love *me* so much too, and we all said over and over we should all move to the same city cuz we're so happy together. I needed Lawrence too—he's so good for talking out problems and he likes to too. He has a lot of emotions and feelings and isn't ashamed to express them—that's so important to me.

So saw gay NY. Went to 12 gay bars including leather and glitter ones, to a gay movie, and to the cruisy gay area of Central Park twice. Saw the hustlers in Times Square (where *were* they all??), to the gay dance at the Firehouse Community Ctr, saw the Stonewall Inn. Our attempts to see a drag show were foiled: the big show bar I knew wasn't anymore, and when we went to one place where we thought a drag was doing impersonations of female stars, it turned out to be a real woman. I even passed a few times: once in the leather bar (A burly leather man grabs my arm as we are leaving, hostilely, "Are you into the real leather scene?" "What do you mean, the REAL leather scene?" "You know what I mean!" Didn't know what to say so said "Well, I'll tell you one thing—I'm a girl." His teeth drop, he's shocked. "Now do I have to answer your first question?" "Oh, that's really wonderful! Do you know Libra and them?" "I'm not from NY." "Well come by tomorrow and I'll introduce you to the girls." "OK, if I can." But it just didn't work into the schedule) and another time at an uncrowded gay bar, me wearing my suit (I ordered a drink. Bartender: "How OLD are you?!!" Lawrence: "She's at least 19." Bartender: "That's a girl?!?! Oh, my goodness, I'm sorry! I thought you were a young boy!" Other guys at the bar "A girl?? That's fantastic! Oh wow!!") Bet I pass more than I realize. Tom said he really likes me in a suit too, and he never says if he likes something I wear or not.

He and I had a little riff too. He was really getting on my nerves walking around with us like a vegetable, never talking, never liking or disliking anything, saying he's "just baggage" and meaning it, cutting me down cuz I was enthused about something. Once told him if he dislikes me so why does he hang around me, no one's forcing him to. By Saturday I'd really had it, and when he said some snide thing, I locked myself in the bathroom and cried cuz I knew our relationship is going

to hell. When he finally came, I told him I didn't know what but something was really wrong with us and I felt it wasn't going to work anymore. Said he just didn't like how I wanted to change him (like saying such and such a shirt would look nice on him, etc.) but I said it was cuz I worry so much about him cuz I know he's not satisfied and that something's wrong. We held onto each other and he began to cry too but quickly stopped but I said see you know something's wrong too. Told him I wanted to love him so much and I know I can but it's getting so hard. He hesitates to be serious about "love" tho we say i love you in romantic moments. Maybe we were just together too much—I'd thought that might be bad even before we went. Anyway I'd talked at length to Lawrence about him and he feels Tom just isn't well physically, that he's an alcoholic and that's the main problem. I'm hoping when they move together things will improve. I know he's insecure about his worth but feel once he gets his own place, a job, someone like Lawrence who he can relate to, a fresh and new, liberating self like Lawrence, and gets himself out of this self-pity sitting around drinking all day slump, things will be 100% better. We both need Lawrence and James back.

8/5/1974

Am tired. Worked all weekend typesetting GPU NEWS with Evan. This past week also showed an improvement between Tom and me. Tues he'd come to my place in the evening very down and stayed 'bout an hour—very strained feelings but I decided he has to help himself, all I can do is love him. So Thurs he comes to my office very cheerful—he'd just rented a room in the derelict section downtown, not far from my place. He was very affectionate. Told him I'd maybe see him that evening at Teddy's (straight bar). When I showed up, he was genuinely surprised and pleased. And surprised me by saying he was uncomfortable there with all those goons. I agreed fully, of course (I really feel out of it at straight bars now). So we walked to the RQ. There he acted even more uncomfortable. And then when he jokingly mouthed a record and I teased he could be a big rock star, he poured ½ of his beer on the floor in front of me. I was taken aback and immediately walked away and stayed on the other side of the bar. In no time I was talking with friends but saw him occasionally. When the bar closed we left together. Strained. He tried to tell me his beer pouring was in fun, but he has never done things like that in fun and to me it was a public display of his rejection of me. But he made out like the poor rejected soul with no friends, while I was the hit of the party. I still felt rejected and at my place had abortive sex play as we're both sore in the genital area (me with vaginitis, him a rash). Fri morn was way too tired, hung over to go to work. Took the day off. Tom was pleased and went to his room to change and returned to my place to henna his hair. I made us a great supper, and we went to see Warhol's *Frankenstein*. He took his things to the movie so I figured he'd go to his room, but walking he asked if he could come to my place. Of course!! We watched TV. Sat morn he made us a wonderful breakfast. The whole time was so relaxed and loving. He said again "Let's move out of Milw." When I asked to where? San Francisco? He said he didn't know. I said OK, but let's wait til the end of the year. He frowned, he'd have to get

a job then! I told him I'd be his sugar daddy. Once at my place, told him I was afraid he would move away from me again, and he said no, he would never do that again—just like that and sincere as hell. When talking Thurs nite how he acted, I told him no one else had this problem of accepting me in the gay world. Everyone accepted me as a boy except him, and he said, "I know you're a boy. I know that better than anyone." I was shocked—the first positive thing he's said that way. But the time together was so markedly changed—his depression gone, at least visibly, most of the time. Gave him a key to my place if he was depressed at the derelict room. And yes I've been getting sick and tired of UWM job. Don't *like* it anymore—would like a change. I *would* like to move out of this city. I'm just saturated with all it has, I think. If Tom and I can only get along this well always...

8/19/1974

Very good feelings/things now. When Tom came to my place, I was so glad to see him we had beautiful loving sex for about 1 and 1/2 hrs! He even tried anal intercourse on me for the first time. I felt so close to him and loved him so much I never wanted to let go. We went out fancy for supper and actually had a heart-to-heart about our personal feelings. Told him how I contemplated a sex change and he said "Don't do it, Snuffy," but said that if I did get it he'd still come to me as a boy and be my lover. I was so surprised and pleased he said that so seriously and lovingly. Told him I doubted I'd go thru with it, but what's most attractive is the mastectomy so I could have a nice flat chest. At first he said no, but soon he seemed to realize how sensuous that would be and said I'd be like a boy with a girl's doodie (what we call it) and I said yeah. The image came to him and he smiled and said yeah, that *would* be naughty! He really was attracted to the idea. (Told him how I felt somehow in puberty I failed to accept the different body girls get then, while boys keep their same childhood body thru life.) He also talked personally about himself that he has an identity problem in the gay-straight sense and while he really likes boys and they turn him on, he knows he'll always be impotent with them. Said he's never cum with a boy and there's a 50–50 chance with a girl. Told him it must be purely psychological cuz he's never had that problem with me. He said that's cuz he loves me so. He also talked about his dressing, saying he's lost the desire to "dress heavy" with all the jewelry, etc. and esp. makeup. Said he did it often in SF but never here. The reason he felt was cuz it's "passé" here. I suggested maybe it was also cuz he felt inhibited here. He agreed. Talked about his going to NY, he wanted to for a while. Said I wish he wouldn't cuz I'll be so sad without him again. He was just unsure of anything. He'd already gone to apply for jobs here (mostly short-order cook). He was just unhappy. Asked if he'd like to move to my place (my feelings for freedom to be alone with others so nil). He said "yes" immediately but then, almost as immediately "I don't know." As we walked home, I stopped to buy milk, the checker said, "Can I help you sir?" but after 5 seconds said, "oh, ma'am!" and apologized profusely, so embarrassed tho I told him it's the best compliment I could've had.

Saturday I went to Goodwill where I bought four shirts and a red-velvet suit coat. (Haven't worn my female clothes since last year, around April—except that once on

Thanksgiving. Am making plans to have them cleaned and packed away—maybe at the parents'. It strikes me as a big step.)

Sunday he was kind of down but only as usual. Went to see a movie and out to eat fancy again. He talked about going to SF again. But suddenly (and it seemed sudden to me!) he suggested he have a cooling-off period—just working for a while here, make some money and then we'll go there like next year. I was so glad, said that's what I'd like to do and we could spend the winter in Milw and by, say, next summer move to SF together. He said OK. So that's what it looks like now. So glad!

8/23/1974

While Tom and I were at my place Wednesday, guess who comes scratching on my window screen: that Mitchel from Feb 25. Ever since that time, I've known he's lived upstairs from me and I've seen him on the streets like three times, but we both pretended we didn't see each other. 'Bout a week ago, we passed on the sidewalk and said hi. So he stood outside and we talked thru the window about 5 min. Introduced him to Tom. Mitchel said he'd seen me at the RQ once, but I just gave him a dirty look (didn't recognize him cuz he had a beard). Tom and I had just ended a talk on how he just felt he was another one of my many boyfriends, etc. Told him he felt that way cuz I no longer feel like I'd kill myself if he left me. He said he would if I left him (told him no he wouldn't). But at the same time: James's back in Milw, gave me a call Thurs. Said Lawrence received Tom's letter about him coming out there to live awhile. Lawrence says fine. When I told Tom he said he'd hoped Lawrence would say no so he wouldn't have to make the decision whether to go or not. Of course I don't want him to go away from me, but on the other hand, feel his being with Lawrence a while will have such a good influence on him.

When Tom wasn't around Thurs nite that Mitchel appeared at my door. Gave me a theme paper he asked if I'd type. Then he sat around about 20 mins talking about astral traveling and other psychic stuff he's into. I just watched how physically lovely he is—what a fine body. I wanted to kiss, touch, undress him. Such a pretty mouth! Thought of he and Tom in each other's arms. Said he had a nickname for me "Tweety Bird"—probably—he said, from my hair and face. Said I'm such a pleasant person to be with, so contrary to the image I project. Said he'd come down more often to listen to my records. Said OK, tho I know Tom'll be hurt if he's there. Didn't tell him Mitchel came. Doubt if I have any chance to sleep with Mitchel or anything. He appears to be too mind oriented, or anti-physical, tho he sure takes care of his body and skin nice and knows how to dress himself attractively.

9/10/1974

I've been busy and preoccupied and feeling I'm not all here. Spending more than usual time with Lisa and she gave me the address of the gender identity clinic in Chicago she goes to. I've drafted a letter asking to talk to someone about my transsexual fantasies, etc. but don't know if I'll send it. A little scared they'll tell me things I don't want to hear. Also my wishes for no breasts increase and decrease so while one day they make me sick, the next I don't even think of it.

Got a letter from the Detroit Gay Liberation that my “Looking Toward Transvestite Liberation” will be reprinted in their paper. Part of the letter read: “I think [the article] is excellent & deserves much wider publication. In June I was part of a group which produced a ½ hr TV special about gay liberation & gay lifestyles. Your article provided considerable insight & information for our remarks about transvestism.” All right! Last week I packed up my female clothes for cleaning and hope to store them at the parents’. I’ve been turning away from my super macho leather and leaning more toward straight men’s clothes—suits, short sleeve shirts, and esp. suit jackets.

9/26/1974

The other day Tom said that he likes it very much when we’re together in public and I’m passing as a boy and then people think we’re gay. Yesterday I was walking down the street and passed a group of four to five high school boys and girls. One girl said to me “Hey, are you a man or a lady?” I just smiled and walked by. She repeated the question, and when I still didn’t answer, one of the guys with her says to her, “Ah, he’s a faggot.” Have just been enjoying wearing suit coats *so much* (finally found my size—boys’ 18) and plan on getting some whole suits soon—esp. want a gray wool one for winter.

10/1/1974

I’ve just sent off a letter about myself to Lisa’s psychiatrist thru UWM’s Student Health Ctr. What prompted me was Lisa’s urging and reassurance that he wouldn’t try to take anything away from me or do anything I don’t want—such as give me exercises so I’ll get to like my breasts better. Yek! She says he’ll only ask me what I want and then help me do it. I told her no way am I going to be able to go in there and tell him I want to have my breasts cut off and for him to help me be a femmy homosexual! But she said he will. Anyway I’m still pretty skeptical. She said it was good I had diaries and also told me in confidence as a friend that I was not masculine and my “masculinity” is as studied as George’s “femininity” (a statement she later retracted).

Lisa asked why I buttoned the top button of my shirts all the time and I told her cuz that’s how Tom does it and I like it, it’s almost like a fetish to be like him, to be all the beautiful things I love about him. She advised me to leave it unbuttoned as I looked dumb with it buttoned.

Lisa was very firm in urging me to see *someone* professional and I really believe she’s pretty together and I know how hard she dissuades people she thinks are phonies and how selective she is with people she feels are “worthy” of her help. She also last week told me the name she’ll change hers to after the operation and said me and an old girlfriend of hers are the only ones she plans on keeping in touch with after her operation.

I just talked to Tom on the phone about my seeing this guy. His first reaction was to ask if I was thinking of making the “crossover.” I assured him not. He felt it was a big step or something and said I must remember that this psych doesn’t know any more than I do and that he’s just some jerk off the street and no “authoritarian.” Told him I know I feel he *is* and that he’s going to tell me some big horrible thing to change

my life. He said that's why he hasn't gone to see anyone, probably meaning about his impotence problem (he told me while visiting him in Berkley that he'd considered going to some sex clinic there about it) that he feels he can usually figure it out himself. Told him I usually can too, but I just seem to be getting deeper and deeper in this cross-dressing bit. Anyway was at work and had to cut the conversation short.

I hope he's at my place tonite so I can talk to him more about it. His thoughts help me a lot and mean a great deal to what I'm doing.

10/16/1974

Got an answer last week from that letter to Lisa's psychiatrist. Said I should probably see someone, but the drift of the letter was he'll see me if I pay. Fuck'm. Last nite I felt so damn confused—couldn't keep the tears back. Felt like such a nonperson, a nothing, fitting nowhere. Tom came and we talked til 1:30. Told him I really felt I have to see someone about it all, and all I really need is someone, anyone, who'll talk and be unbiased—like Lisa and George just make it worse. He did. Told me I shouldn't seek to fit myself into a definition of "what I am," becuz I know I don't want to tamper with my body—I'd rather learn to become as detached as I once was: disassociating what I think of myself and what I actually am. I'm now trying to actualize my fantasies of being a guy which I know I never could, and even if I did take hormones, etc., I'd still never be the guy I wish I was. So Tom helped mostly by listening to me SAY these things; to verbalize them is so important to accepting and understanding them. He helped a lot too by complimenting where I'm at right now: while I said I felt like I didn't FIT anywhere, he said he thinks that's good and commendable. Told him I don't know where to start relating to other people—I have to know where I stand in relation to them before I can even talk to them, and he pointed out this wasn't a problem of my own identity, but my usual old problem of not knowing how to like others. Very true. Was upset cuz I didn't know why the gays accept me so readily, like me so much and he said how many people can you really say WHY you like them. You just do. Said the only crowd I feel relaxed in is the gays and I can't be 40 yrs old and still hanging around them and he asked why not? He was so logical, I realized I was building it all up in my mind. Why not indeed! I said I should maybe stop reading all I do on the gender identity subject and he said no, keep on, he feels I'm doing something really valuable. Told him I like the gays so much that I wish I was more like them—the old problem of wanting *to be* that which you admire.

Tom pointed out all the attributes of liking myself just the way I am like I was able to last year. Not to complicate myself and I know I've been cuz I've gotten so bogged down in my own self-pity I wasn't even thoroughly enjoying my friends like I always had. I feel so relieved today—on the way to clearing out the cobwebs again. I know that all I need are pep talks like that once in a while and I'll be able to keep myself as uncomplicated as I am.

A friend came up with a term I really like to apply to myself: sissy butch. Says it's used to describe lesbians that come off with the real butch trappings but actually aren't—like me. Tom liked it too.

Lou Reed in Milw Oct 31!

11/1/1974

Talked to Mitchel again. Told him of my fancying male hormones and he said he'd feel uncomfortable about me if I did. Couldn't understand that and he said he must be prejudiced. He asked me how I felt about males and females in general and told him I felt males were much more *real*, down to earth, all in one place, altho they've been fucked up along the way by the masculine ideal. Said he felt just the opposite—that females are the more earthy. Turns *me* off to *him*—that my being a boy would turn him off.

But I have begun to think of those damn hormones and have stopped fearing them. The changes would be so erotic to me—to think I'd get a boy's voice! And I read they will decrease breast size slightly if you're in your early 20s (and I only need a little “slightly” before they're gone!) But the changes that make me hesitate: enlarged clitoris (ouch!) and an increased sex drive (god I can't stop masturbating as it is). I've resigned myself pretty much to the fact that I'll never want children—I just doubt I suddenly will, if the hormones would fuck that up (they may). But then the pill may also. So I'm risking that already. I could really see a redistribution of fat to more male contours (tired of my fat ass), and I've begun seriously thinking of exercising to build up my arm muscles—oh those arm muscles! I only fear exercising will firm up my breast tissue and make them harder to flatten down.

I would be such a pig if I had a mastectomy! I'd always want to walk around with my shirt all open, or none at all. Be hard to get me to cover up.

But I'm sick of hearing of all these F-to-M TSs that have the mastectomy and the hormones but still have all their genitals and still use them—still get off on the sensations, etc. That's what I want but I get these guilt feelings that I can't be half and half like that. Wish there was a fucking gender clinic in this asshole city.

11/8/1974

Laying around thinking last night: wish I had the mastectomy right now. I know I'll be sorry in 5 yrs for all the time I wasted *thinking* about it and not *doing* it, trying to delude myself into thinking they aren't there, worrying if my binder is making me flat enough, it hurts like hell, it slips down, trying to have an orgasm fantasizing like mad I have a flat chest—I'm a boy kissing Tom. I want it all so much. And if I ever in 40 yrs regret it, I can get silicone inserts or something. I keep thinking when we go to Calif I'll get hold of Stanford's Gender Clinic there, one of the best. But then there's the one in Chicago, I could go there sooner...

12/9/1974

Talked to a friend and he told me he sees this psychiatrist who's one of the three ones in the state who specializes in human sexuality for free cuz he's interested in his case. He told the psych about me and the psych was super interested cuz he's never seen a female case and now wants to see me too. Told him fine with me, I'd love to. Won't be til after New Year's tho cuz the psych is on vacation.

George-Laura starts going to work at his same job as a woman today. His co-workers *have* to be freaked out. I really doubt they'll be able to accept it—there's gotta be one troublemaker out of the 30 people.

12/19/1974

I've been hanging out with Mitchel a lot lately—and he's living with me now! Has been for about a month...

Can it be possible to “love” two people at once?

At my place last night with Mitchel and I felt such good close feelings between us. I guess my affection finally was defined to myself and so I could at least relax with him. Anyway maybe he picked up on that cuz at one point as I washed the dishes, he stood very close while I teased him, showing him “the *right* way to wash dishes” and he put his arm around me. I kissed him, he kissed me and I stopped washing, put both my arms around him, kissed again. I felt so good—free at last. We decided to go out and Tom was going to meet us at a restaurant. And it seemed so simple: at last I finally realized how I felt for Mitchel and unashamed to act on my feelings. And he accepted them.

But then when Tom walked in! Oh, he was so lovely. My heart and attentions were his. I knew I could never leave him. I realized then and there I must do what I feel—I can't rationalize this one out, it seems. How could they *both* spark such deep and intense feelings in me?

I guess I can only wait my feelings out til I'm forced to make some definite decision.

I think Tom, Mitchel, and I are really performing a service by just being in public—showing them there is something different as an alternative to themselves.

12/23/1974

Some of this shit finally came to a head. Fri nite while Tom worked, Mitchel and I went to a movie and then to the RQ. Drank like crazy, both of us, and got into a long passionate kiss. Couldn't keep my hands off him and he submitted, smiled, and initiated more. Told me he was infatuated, that everyone's infatuated with me.

Went to pick Tom up from work and as he came out he caught me kissing Mitchel. We all left and two of Tom's female co-workers called him back to introduce his friends to them. He introduced me as Lou, but they were most interested in Mitchel. They're sure Tom's a fag. Also there the bartender asked Mitchel and I “what would you boys like?” and it was the first straight place where I went to the men's bathroom. Gay messages penned in the stall.

We all went to a restaurant cuz Mitchel was hungry, but when Tom found out they weren't serving liquor, he made us leave. Mitchel drove us to my place and then went back to eat. That pissed me off that Tom was so selfish we had to leave cuz *he* couldn't drink. Told him so and little by little we got into a hassle over Mitchel. I was honest about my feelings, tho trying not to be too blunt, what else could I do? Mitchel returned, went to bed. Tom and I continued until Tom got up to leave and said I should give him a call whenever I wanted to see him again. He left and I didn't go

after him. Went to Mitchel's arms and cried, telling him I didn't know what I just did and that I think I love him. He was very sympathetic, comforted me. Told me I shouldn't melodramatize my feelings and I was crazy to throw away 6 yrs with Tom—I don't even know him (Mitchel). Told him I knew it was only an infatuation of my own making. Told me to call Tom in the morning and I told him I didn't even know if I wanted to. He began talking of all the other places he could go (emphasizing the Rescue Mission), and I told him I didn't want him to go away.

Fell asleep and about an hour later Tom came back, got into bed and Mitchel went to the couch. He begged me not to leave him, that he was sorry he's so stupid, that I'm so smart, he was playing games and realized how fucked up that was. Told Tom I'd told Mitchel he had to leave and so Tom insisted we go wake him and tell him he has to stay. We did—Tom said "we all have to stay together, okay?" and that he had only been playing games.

I was wasted, wanted to sleep, he was determined to regain my love by making himself sexually attractive to me. He put on make-up, nylons, panties, and a dress. He was beautiful but I felt he wasn't sincere—he couldn't get hard. Told me he always told people he has a "man" that he can't call me his girlfriend. That he wanted me to be his boyfriend and seduce and fuck him. I began thinking: hormones, hormones, I want them so bad, I could be his man then, it would be true then... He asked me if I liked boys—he's not even sure of that! Really! I would be able to get thru these hassles so much easier if I took hormones and were a boy.

If I see that psych doctor I'm going to ask for hormones. I feel they'll help me through this time—that my fears of Tom leaving because of them are gone. That now is the time to test them—seeing as there are so many other changes also.

1/9/1975

Last night Tom and I had anal intercourse and I pretended I was Mitchel. The old slave-master fantasy still held and I was Mitchel, captured and being taken off to be sold, and on the ship each of the men raped me several times. Beautiful, beautiful Mitchel—though there were women captured also, none of them compared in the least to Mitchel's beauty. Tom held me tight and the men caressed Mitchel, the feel of him excited them. I had no trouble opening up. And I could switch back and forth. I would love more than anything to enter Mitchel's small little virgin ass like that. To force my way in and then inhale the fragrance of his hair, lick the back of his neck, caress his chest and shoulders, and come inside him clutching him in ecstasy. My beauty, my beauty. Mitchel.

– I won Secretary of Gay Peoples Union for 1975 unanimously. I can't believe *everyone* there likes me. I just can't believe that.

1/21/1975

I've sensed a change in Mitchel's and my relationship. I've tried to cope with it by drawing the analogy that I'm a gay male who's fallen for his hetero roommate... and there's nothing he can do to express his feelings for him. It's really hard for me to watch him make like he's trying to date all these girls—he even had me "feel out"

one girl to see if she'd say yes if he asked her out. All the while my arms ache to press him against me. He has the habit of taking off his shirt in the house and walking around like that, and my eyes burn to drink in the sight of him—I have to intentionally look elsewhere and avoid him. Only once every other day or so can I allow myself to touch him fleetingly when it's not necessary.

2/14/1975

I feel I'm getting more insight into Mitchel's "asexuality." While I, to a degree, shun sex cuz I'm uncomfortable with my *body*, he shuns it cuz he's uncomfortable with the accompanying emotions, attachments, dependences, the whole "love" syndrome, while he cannot accept sex without these feelings. Understandable. I'm really glad now I didn't succumb to my weaker moment the other night and tell him how taken I am by him. Talked about SF and Mitchel said he felt it was too bad Tom and I are dependent on each other so that I felt I couldn't go out there without him if he decided not to go. Then, to feel out any present jealousy scene, he said the whole scene when he first moved in with me was "heavy, heh?" Said I felt Tom was over it and realizes my relationships with others don't affect his and mine.

Tonite, Valentine's Day, I'm going to buy roses for my two ladies, Tom and Mitchel.

2/18/1975

Long scene with Tom last nite. He was pissed about the attentions I paid Mitchel at the bar last Fri. Went all the way from Tom's saying he wants to discontinue our relationship, to where we promised we'd never leave each other, no matter what. Said he didn't like me trying to make like Mitchel, he, and I are a "threesome" or a "family" cuz all Mitchel is, is a typical fucked-up junkie ripping me off. So Tom and I went to some corner bar and talked about moving to SF (July or August), Mitchel, New York, us. Told him 'bout my talk with Mitchel Sunday nite. It was like looking at Mitchel thru a whole new and true light when I began seeing him as Tom does—a junkie, which he is—if not in actuality anymore, he just did junk so long it's part of him. Tom told me I should get a dildo cuz he wants to be fucked—told him I already had one and showed him but expressed my hesitation to use it on him—rather suggested he get a boyfriend. He laughed, "Lawrence!" But I'm really ready to go to SF. I'm honestly plain old tired of Milw, my friends here, GPU, my job, everything. I've been making excuses not to get together with friends, been very lazy and irresponsible at work, haven't visited the parents in so long, sick of the bars, GPU people, the streets and buildings, and weather in Milw. I need a new atmosphere and I finally am ready. Both of us agreed we hated to even hang around til July or August.

3/3/1975

It's finally reached a peak—I don't want Mitchel at my place anymore. But I don't know how to throw him out. I feel as tho I despise him. He repulses me. What

happened? Really nothing. I just finally got fed up. Same shit. Sat afternoon Mitchel and his girlfriend were out all day together. He brings her over. She whimpers “Don’t throw this magazine out, I want to read this, OK, Louie?” I hate her calling me Louie. It’s a private, affectionate name she has no business using. I reply “Don’t worry. They’re not going anywhere.” She must know I despise her.

3/12/1975

Tom’s getting his hair cut short tomorrow and I think it’ll be real erotic—like when I first met him. In bed I apologized to him for not being able to make love to him like a boy and he said that’s OK, he loves me anyway. Imagined I’d had the mastectomy, had a beautiful boy’s chest, and with that image in mind and Tom in my arms, we fell asleep. Sometimes I’m not aware of how much he means too me.

3/13/1975

It’s a clear, cold, sunny day. I feel like I used to when coming out of confession as a child. This morn told Mitchel he has to move “for two reasons—Tom and me.” I feel no regrets, only a load off my shoulders. It will be so good for Tom and I, and also for Mitchel and I ... we’ll like each other much more when apart, I think. And I think it’s the right time too: I’m ready to be rid of him, I know Tom is and I think having a girlfriend’ll make it easier on Mitchel.

3/18/1975

While looking at Christmas photos, my aunt asked dad why I was wearing those clothes (a suit). Dad told her “She don’t like wearing those girl’s clothes. They’re too feminine.”

3/27/1975

I’m still interested in this girl I met awhile back. I was talking to some older lesbian friend and she mentioned she heard I met someone. Told her that if I met her again (the girl that is), I think I’d make a move cuz it was so nice, she was so small, and she made me feel so big or something and it was the first time ... I felt I could be her boyfriend.

4/3/1975

Depressed all yesterday. Mitchel said he knew why, too, cuz he’s leaving. I said “I know.” He promised he’d still be around most of the time, but I have to set up some limits. Went to visit George-Laura who just got back from having his sex-change operation in NY. I *have* to start referring to him as she, her, Laura, etc. now—but it’ll be hard. He’s so unnaturally female, not at all like Lisa.

4/17/1975

Beautiful night with Tom. He was so relaxed and open it was great. He’s got some junk to make his hair healthy and I helped him with a scalp massage, etc. He

wore dark pants and shirt, white shoes and a white suit coat. He looked so suave! So Bryan Ferry! He'd bought me a box of candy, something he hasn't done in centuries, and I'm always so happy when he does—it really makes me feel he cares. And it was a kind of candy I just mentioned in passing was so good one day and he remembered. And suddenly I'm not instinctively treating him like a girl anymore. We are gay male lovers. He made reservations for us to eat and we had a wonderful dinner and then to my place where we read the paper, watched TV, went to sleep. It couldn't've been a better evening. I really think we can make it okay. I really, really want it to be like this and I feel so at ease—none of that bullshit “is everything just perfect” worrying. When I'm with him, I just feel like a part of myself is walking around in another body and we're out together. I'm turning over a new leaf—no more running around, etc. I don't even want to—it's so unsatisfying and I'm only looking for Tom anyway. Sat the twelfth while sitting around my place we were kissing and suddenly it got heavier and we tumbled into bed fully clothed—both in suit coats—and we only loosened our clothes leaving them on and had the most intense (for me) gay male love. It took only minutes til we came and laid, two boys together, exhausted.

4/22/1975

This morn about 6:30, that girl called. We talked about 40 mins and made a date to see each other Sat nite. It seems fine but I kind of dislike having to sneak around hoping Tom won't find out. I suppose I shouldn't be so worried he'll know, but somehow I think it'd really hurt him if he found I was sneaking behind his back with her and also hurt him if I told him outright. I guess cuz it's the first time I've had *sexual* contact with someone else. I'm going to not see her more than once a week, plus it'd be hard to swing a sleeping-overnite arrangement cuz how can I be sure Tom won't pop in unexpectedly? Can't say don't come over—otherwise I have no assurance. I really don't want to start any big deal with her. Only 2 more months in this city. Evan's so bummed, cuz who'll typeset? That's the only thing I feel guilty quitting. Suppose I should talk to my boss at UWM and tell him of my plans just to warn him. Don't think he has any idea.

This aft told my boss bye-bye, my last day June 27. They can't give me a “leave of absence,” but they have some kind of “reinstatement rights” which means if I come back in 3 yrs, I'll be hired into the first vacancy in any state agency with no cut in pay or position, retaining all accumulated sick leave and benefits, etc. So that's *something*.

5/12/1975

Creepy: had a dream last nite that thru some accident Tom got his cock chopped off, and while he was still unconscious, the doctors were showing me the brown leather dildo they were gonna sew on him and I was super upset and horrified—thinking what he *had* and what they were gonna replace it with. Freud would've loved that one. Like my fear of the female-to-male transsexual operation.

5/20/1975

Reservations for the 12:20 train to SF July 19. Tom and I beautiful. Seems all I want to do is be with him—everything else bores me to death. To the bars with (George) Laura and Lisa and had a perfectly horrible time. George such a cunt and Lisa so irritating. Swear that's the last time I go out with them. Worried about SF. Tom says don't think about it and you won't worry. Ma telling me she wants to get me a going-away present. Told her she could take me to a tailor and get me fitted for a nice gray suit that fits me just so. She said *OK!*—It's becoming more clear to me the gravity of "moving forever." But I feel so distant now from my family and friends. The closest person to me is Lawrence, in New York!! So I guess that's good. I'm so that I don't even want to answer the phone unless it's Tom. I don't care about anyone or anything. —Those jerks. I can take my cat Topsy from Chicago to SF on the train, but not from Milw to Chic. Guess I'll have to smuggle her. Wish it wasn't such a hassle to take her along. She may be in the way til we find an apt in SF too.

5/23/1975

Got my hair cut at that same barber, who again called me "young man." I was a little more bold this time and even initiated a little idle talk. But much more concerned how I looked when I went in—even changed my shirt so I felt my chest was flatter looking.

6/16/1975

I'm now 24. It doesn't seem I'm this age, yet it's the age I feel I should be. Only 4 more weeks of work, 5 more in Milw. Tom and I went out to two quiet bars Fri and got along very well. Sunday 11 a.m. went to the laundromat and two boys (bout 11, 12 yrs old) began hassling me "Juneau Park (gay cruising area) is that way," "queer," "fag," and shooting squirt guns at me. Tried to ignore them sitting inside, but they pounded on the window trying to intimidate me. Tried to confront them, "Tell me what's wrong with being gay?" But nothing got rid of them. Suddenly two more kids joined them, one saying, "That's a *girl!*" but the others assuring him I'm a boy. They got bolder, coming right into the laundromat and squirting me in the face. Spotted them hiding water balloons. There were about five other people in the laundromat but no help. I was trembling by now, they'd been after me at least an hour and knew they were waiting for me to come outside. Decided to beeline to Evan's only a block away, but on my way they hit me with two water balloons, the back of my head, shirt, and laundry sopping wet. Burst out crying as Evan let me in but only a little. A friend there drove me home after a half hour. The initiating kid has seen and hassled me before—"Look at that fag! Is he a fairy!" Shit. Evan told me there's no "right" way to handle situations as these. Sure I'm glad I passed and I love to be thought of as a fag, but *really!* Spent the day at the parents' for my birthday and got several "dear brother" cards. Tom and I slept together, I babied him cuz he felt sick—loving each other very much.

6/17/1975

He *must* be insanely jealous of my relationship with Lawrence—and it's not cuz he's possessive of *me* either. At my place having a nice quiet evening—he bought me an album for my birthday and some wine. All was beautiful until Lawrence phoned to say happy birthday and we chatted a while, Tom did too. When we hung up he asked what they'd said, snapped that all I was interested in was their tricking adventures and he suddenly stormed out of the house. Ran after him what's the matter? Was he pissed cuz they called? *He* doesn't give a shit if they phone! So, I thought, go ahead. I went back inside and to bed. *You* figure it out. I don't feel I deserve to be treated like that, not even a reason given. One minute he's *so* glad to be with me, kissy-kissy, and the next minute he tells me right out he doesn't care if he's with me or not. Speaking of “throwaway kisses”! Decided then and there that if he pulls some funny business how he's changed his mind about SF, I'm going alone. I'll do it. So tired of being his lap dog, a puppet. —He phoned me just now. Asked if he was still mad at me and he said he wasn't mad. Asked why he left then and he said he “was just tired of” me. I told him he changes so fast and he said “so do you”—he simply cannot stand my contact with Lawrence. That really pisses me off: “Just tired of” me, like a fuckin' lap dog.

6/18/1975

Incredible talk with Tom. Still waters run deep? He is *super* jealous. Said he's changing his mind about SF cuz he knows if we go there it'll be the end of us. Told him I'm going alone then—I swore I would. Finally we talked and he brought up incidents from years ago—Sean? Really! Even tho he says he *knows* I love him and won't leave him, he's afraid I'm just “using” him to get to SF so I can run around there too. Said he knows he's probably run around much more than I have but can't help being possessive of me. That I have all these friends and people phoning me and coming over: I told him yeah but he can see how much they mean to me cuz I can't wait to leave them all behind in Milw. I was amazed at how much he talked about what the matter was—if only we'd've had this talk months ago. And he said he wants a “tell all” policy where if we have someone else, we tell each other. But he began seeing how foolish this whole jealousy was, realizing it's no threat. He only doesn't like me to act like I do when he's not around. He also said if he were “involved” with someone and I *wasn't* jealous, he'd doubt I loved him. But the really incredible thing was he said sometimes he really just wants to marry me so that there'll be something stricter! So I said well how 'bout if in SF we get a place together and that'll bring us closer and we agreed on that, to try it again. And everything was fine—we had beautiful sex. —Will get Mitchel to clear out *all* his leftover crap, give back the key, even tho I hate any contact with him.

7/3/1975

He did it again. Met him at the Southside bar and he barely greeted me, acting like it sure was a drag to see me. When I touched his hand he told me to cut it out. Wouldn't even talk to me. So I asked him why he never talks to me or acts like he's

glad to see me. He denied it, said he *is* glad and then he was a bit more congenial. I just sat and thought how this was the main reason I didn't like him when I first knew him and why I felt I would go crazy having him for a boyfriend: cuz he might as well be dead, cuz he sure acts like he wishes he was... no energy, no joy, no love of life. So we went to his place, to a restaurant, and then to my place—thru it all he acted the same. He turned on the tube, got a beer, and sat looking like if he were any *more* bored he'd be a vegetable. I sat thinking how all day at work I'm alone and rarely talk to or see anyone and when I'm so glad to be with him for a little attention and companionship, all I get is the cold shoulder. And it's double worse cuz he acts like he doesn't understand why I interpret his actions this way. And then—the phone rang! I knew that was it. Knew he was pissed cuz it rang and I said shit, should I answer it or not? He said yes. It was Aaron and we began talking. So good to hear a cheerful voice, someone who wanted to converse with me, who liked me! But I knew that was it for the evening with Tom cuz he doesn't like me to have phone calls. In about 15 mins, he got his coat on and left. And this time I've had it. His excuse for walking out after Lawrence called on my birthday doesn't hold here. I'm sick of tiptoeing around his jealousy. I have a perfect right to have my own friends and not be punished for it. I know I dare not make a single friend in SF or he'll make it hell for me. This time I'm going to stick up for my rights!

7/7/1975

Just waiting to get out of here. Had it out with Tom Thurs nite in the Southside bar and said he feels his “tantrums” (which I call them) won't happen in SF. He seemed amused I was so pissed about it but concerned. Said he didn't like my attitude and the way I acted when a friend called and I said well I should think he could treat me like anyone else who's a jerk sometimes and not just say to me “fuck you!” and walk out like that. Finally it calmed down (neither side relenting) and we went to two gay bars. As we got drunk we expressed our fears of each other, and both admitted we wouldn't argue with each other, trying to patch things up, if we didn't love each other. Everything fine; but think I can deal with him better now as male-to-male (told him I didn't like it cuz I feel he treats me like a girl. He said “That's what you are.” Fuck that!) He doesn't like all my “I'm so glad to see you” shit, so I'll stop it.

8/4/1975

This is really the first time I've been alone to write. Tom just went out to apply for a job. The train left 12:20 p.m. July 19—the trip was nice. Glad we had a sleeper car—most of the scenery was barren land. The twentieth we just sat in the observation car and drank. Arrived about 5 p.m. the twenty-first, and we stayed at an old acquaintance's of mine. The twenty-second Tom and I went looking for an apartment thru the newspaper and by walking up and down inquiring after for rent signs. There were tons of them, unbelievably! After an hour decided to take the first place we looked at. A studio—kitchen, bathroom, living room with couch that opens to a bed. \$165 month and about six blocks from the main downtown street, five from a major gay area. Perfect location and the apt is clean and in a “ritzy” building. We

moved in the twenty-sixth and to our delight found that the former tenant left us his console combination stereo/AM-FM radio/television! Went to secondhand stores and got basic needs—all we needed for probably \$15. Since then we've just been bumming around the city, getting acquainted with it and the transportation system. Because Tom drinks too much we've enforced upon ourselves "dry" and "wet" days every other day, and on "wet" days we check out bars, "dry" days no drinking at all!! We've been to Golden Gate Park; Sausalito on a ferry; various shopping districts in the city; Twin Peaks; Berkeley and Oakland, Tom looking up a few old friends there; Fisherman's Wharf; the Pacific Ocean; etc. This week we decided to start looking for jobs. Puke. Neither of us want to. Wrote to the family with my address which they must have received last Monday but to this date no letter, tho they did mail me two boxes of stuff I asked them to. Got it into my head that I wanted a *bird*, but settled for getting a bird feeder I just attached to the fire escape out our living room window (on the fourth floor). Within 1½ hrs there were seven birdies eating out of it at one time! Tom and I are getting along famously. It's really just like old times when we used to live together. Even in the bars I've danced with others with no reprimand from Tom, in fact his volunteering what a good time he had. I think he finally realizes that he really does mean more to me than anything else. I find that even the bars here don't attract me as once bars did. Neither Tom nor I have been harassed for being fags, etc., and it really is amazing how many queeny men there are just mingling in the masses *all over!* Even saw an outrageous bull dyke on the bus. It's as tho we just blend in!

9/11/1975

So here it is a month later. I haven't written mostly because I've been writing letters to nearly everyone in Milw and figure those should suffice—I keep them all, letters received and copies of letters I send back. And also because Tom is constantly at my side and today was the first day nearly that we've been apart—he went somewhere with his friend and I had things to do, also I felt it's about time we had a day away from each other—too much really *can* be too much. Neither of us has jobs as yet, and Tom felt desperate enough a few days ago to engage an employment agency to help him find something. I'm in no fat hurry. At this point I'm really feeling I'm at home. Like it here in SF tremendously. We've stopped going out drinking except for once or twice a week and have turned to reading in the evenings, and I like that *much* better. In a way I very much miss the flirting, running around, being totally unattached feeling I had when Tom was in Berkeley, but in the long run and considering the long-term effects and dissatisfaction that behavior causes me—I have to say this "monogamous" bit is better. But right now it's time we get jobs or something cuz we are *always* constantly together and I can see it's wearing on both our nerves. And a lot of the time I just don't know WHAT Tom wants. A few weeks back, some old guy flirted heavily in a bar with Tom, and Tom promised to meet the guy that weekend for a dinner date. I was pissed and forbade him to go, and he argued that we can't just set up housekeeping and act like we're married and end living! I agree totally—but he won't allow me the same privileges. Few days ago, very drunk, in a *straight* bar with a *straight girl*—she and I hugged and kissed and

it was all over in minutes and Tom was pissed as hell! So *I* don't know. I'd really like to work out some arrangement with him so we still each have some individual freedom—but I'm afraid to bring the topic up, afraid it'll blow up in my face. But at the same time, I think he wants it, too. It seems he doesn't trust me. Even today when he left, I told him I'd probably go downtown and come right back and he scolded me, worriedly, "And no Snuffy business either!"

10/14/1975 [letter copied into diary]

Dear Evan,

Boy do I have news. I just found out last week that I wear funny clothes. And all this time I thought it was my excellent qualifications that were turning all those employers off. Last week Tues, I finally got desperate enough in my job hunting to get my ass over to the Society for Individual Rights Job Referral Office, and the jerk gives me a referral. I hesitated to even apply for it as on the job referral specifications was circled in red NO FEMS. But took their dipshit clerk exam and typing test from the Personnel Director, Ms. *B.* She's very encouraging, saying how wonderful I am and makes an apt for me to see the job supervisor, Ms. *G.*, next day. So I went the next day, of course I wore my Pierre Cardin suits to both interviews. *G.* and I talk a long time til suddenly she says, "I don't mean to be blunt or anything but why do you dress so masculine?" I tell her because I'm more comfortable and I think I look better in men's clothes than in women's. She says "but you're so feminine in every other way...that's why you're such a paradox..." She asks (the big lead-in question) "What does your **BOY** friend think about it?" I say he likes it, thinks it looks good. She says well in a job that deals with the public, such as a front desk job, that could be a real drawback to your being hired. I ask is this that kind of job. "Yes." She tells me then that she doesn't care if I'm a lesbian or not (!!?), but that I'm absolutely perfect for the job, just what they're looking for, but I'd make a bad impression on prospective contributors (the job was in their fundraising office). She asks how I've been finding the job market and asks incredulously "Hasn't anyone *said* anything to you yet?" No. It hit me like a frypan as I walked out of there and I haven't felt that self-conscious in a long time. Took me til Fri to go back to S.I.R. and this time I talked to their real job counselor (a woman) and she was great—got on the phone to *B.* who apparently is fully on our side and told her to tell *G.* this employment agency will sue for discrimination if they don't hire me. *B.* told this counselor that even to that date I was still the best qualified for the position. *B.* said she'd try to put the pressure on to get me the job. Monday my counselor couldn't contact *B.* and today she went to see *B.* about it, learning they'd changed the job description so it required shorthand which I don't know, and *B.* claims they'd thrown out every application they'd thus far received, which I doubt like hell. I knew they'd get out of it somehow but didn't think they'd go *that* far. Also found out *B.* had phoned *G.* to warn her she'd be interviewing a girl, not boy. I wish I believed I pass that well. Meanwhile I've realized why I didn't get probably ½ the jobs I applied for. Can they really care that much about what I wear? I just feel like shit. I've abandoned my policy of applying at all those "good people, friendly office" jobs, and maybe I can get lost in a big bank. Meanwhile my counselor put me to work in their employment referral

office, helping put their filing system together. I just visited *Vector's* office and told the guy I “just came from GPU NEWS.” He exclaims “GPU NEWS? FROM MILW?” saying what a fine publication it is with such *good articles* and “it’s surprising...for Milw.” Right now I feel so discouraged about finding a job. I’ve been applying so nonchalantly thinking all these people want is a top-notch sec, and as long as you don’t smell like piss, they don’t care what you look like. This is San Francisco! Now I feel like I’m rejected before they even see my application. Tom and I both want to put in an application at the State Employment Office. I’ve considered putting an ad in *BAR* and *Sentinel* (two gay mags here): “Exper Sec’y F-to-M TV seeks legit FT job \$600/mo. Tired of applying at straight places that won’t hire because of my male clothes.”

10/23/1975

Dearest Ma,

Well this past week has been another doozey for me. Tues morn I went to the Calif State Employment Service and put in my application for two jobs. When the interviewer called my name and I came, well he wouldn’t even send me for the two jobs. Instead he gave me the phone #s of several organizations I should go to for “help and advice.” He was real gentlemanly about it but I felt so upset, desperate, helpless that I called one place, the Pacific Ctr for Human Growth, and told them I seemed “to have an insurmountable problem. I’m a TV and no one will give me a job!” The guy on the other end of the line goes “Oh. Well. We don’t have any jobs *here.*” I felt like screaming well thanks a whole fucking lot!!! He referred me to the Center for Special Problems, where I went just about in tears. There I sat for 1½ hrs in the waiting room, finding later I’d sat that long becuz they couldn’t match up the name on the waiting-to-see-someone list with the young man in the waiting room. Finally saw their counselor—a very straight old lady—along with their staff psych who “did I mind if he sat in on our talk?” What seems to be the problem? And I told them I’m so sick of looking for a job, and it recently hit me that once they get a look at me, they aren’t even *considering* me for the job! My voice was wavering cuz I felt like crying. So they started asking all these questions to find out if I was a mentie or not and offering me to join their *transsexual* group, etc. and I told them no, no I had no problems with any of that identity stuff. How was my love life? And I told them it couldn’t be better. It’s just I’m sick of having to deal with all this discrimination and I just needed a pep talk to give me enough strength to fill out one more application! So they said well you’ve only been looking for a month, after all, and you haven’t had to look for work in over 5 years, so you really are getting discouraged too fast. And the psych says he suggests I surround myself with a supportive environment in between job interviews to alleviate the lousy feelings of job hunting. And that they didn’t think I was that strange, and sooner or later I’ll hit a place that doesn’t think I’m strange either. Well, just that little bit made me feel so much better. I guess I just needed to hear that I wasn’t nuts after all. Told them I guess I just had to hear that and that in Milw I’d just get together with friends and say aren’t all those people jerks and feel better but here I haven’t been able to do that. So Wed I had renewed strength and went to two interviews, sent out two resumes, and set up

three more apts. Feel much better and don't know how I let myself get so depressed. Sure made me feel good that these two couldn't seem to find anything mental about me and they seemed amazed at my "adjustment" to my predicament. So today went for two interviews and just came from one. I've been saying on my applications I type 60 wpm but I tested at this place at 87 wpm with four errors! Tom and I are getting along beautifully. We plan to rent bikes at Golden Gate Park and going to GG Bridge.

11/3/1975

Hi again Ma,

Well I just ended my first day on the job and I feel *real good*. I'm sure dad's given you the scoop already. The guy hired me on the spot right in the middle of the interview. "What are your good points?" "I'm conscientious. I feel guilty if I don't do something I'm supposed to." "And your bad points?" "I'm not career-minded, not trying to take over the company. I'm content being a secretary, if that's a bad point. Also I'm not too good in crowds." Etc, etc. "Sheila," he says, "you're the best person to walk in here in 2 weeks and as far as I'm concerned you got the job." He didn't seem to even LOOK at my suit. I almost started crying I was so glad it was finally over. Today I felt super confident and you know how on the first day it all seems like too much to handle? Well, *no sweat*. When I arrived the Office Manager who hired me gave me a big lecture how he was going to be watching me very closely and if it didn't seem to work out he'd fire me on the spot. And I was a little scared of the other employees but got no bad feelings from them, and two older women actually came up to me and were nice. But everything seemed loose enough and I didn't seem to be obligated to socialize. At the end of the day the Ofc Mgr tells me how *wonderful* I'd typed the weekly report and discussed reorganizing the files and what do I think? On my first day! The office is the sales division for this sporting goods co. I'm secretary to the Sales Division Manager, Sales Mgr, and Office Mgr—three different guys. Also got a badly needed haircut and the barber did an excellent job and never alluded to my sex. When I paid him he charged me a buck less and said "Thank you, ma'am." Outta site! Tho he knew, he had no qualms about giving me the best butchy hairdo I've ever had!

11/14/1975

Dear Lisa,

Mon Nov 3 I started, suit and tie, went to the corner greasy spoon for lunch—stayed away from the other "girls." Tues right before noon the Office Mgr who'd hired me called me in and said he could feel some tension among the other employees, although no one has *said* anything (I bet) and "I'd be very grateful if there's something you could do about it for me." The shit finally hit, I thought, and started getting upset, told him I didn't even have any other clothes, him saying he didn't want me to do anything that would make me uncomfortable that he "learned in the army to live and let live," me saying I was spoiled at my last job and now I couldn't go back to dressing like before, him saying I'd have a helluva time getting a job as

I am, me saying I KNOW THAT, him saying maybe I could get a job “in your own community,” me saying don’t you think I’ve tried... We went thru *all this* and when I finally said “what should I do??” he says “Just don’t wear the tie and roll up your sleeves!” I couldn’t believe it. *That’s* what would make the difference?? I was overwhelmed by relief, even laughed, told him OK, I’ll do that until everyone gets used to me and sees I’m not so weird (he says to me as tho he’s cluing me in on a secret “There’s nothing wrong with you, Sheila.” I said I know *that*.) So I walked out of his office and sat myself down with the *rest of the girls* [insert flowers here!] in the *ladies’ lounge* to eat lunch. The conversation: “Well, *Mel* won’t eat packaged cake mixes!” One paging thru a pattern catalog “Isn’t that a cute blouse?” Another paging thru a National Enquirer! Just so stereotyped! But I just sit and listen and right now I’m sitting here in *the lounge* writing you. And this ends my 2nd week and I think they’re beginning to not notice me. Thank God. I’m wearing everything I always wear including suit jackets, boys shoes, white shirts, etc. but no tie. And my hair is so short I really look good. So don’t worry about me going TS. If anything I’m *having* to get more fem to survive among all these BLATANT HETEROSEXUALS!!!

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Chapter 4

Discourses Available to Sullivan: The Kinsey Reports and *The Transsexual Phenomenon*

In Chap. 2, we worked through quite a few discussions regarding how discourse constitutes our sexuality, gender, and even sensory embodiment, and we took up a few challenges to this position as well. What we did not examine in detail, however, is how discourse is not just something that happens through what we say and do right now, but more importantly, how it is something that entrenches itself through repetition in history and the power of specific institutions. Trans embodiment (although often seen historically through the lenses of homosexuality, cross-dressing, and occasionally other terms) has been subjected to its own particular history of discursive power-knowledge. This history is one wherein certain institutions, especially those of medicine and psychology, took it upon themselves to define, and then to control, what was understood to be trans and how trans embodiment should be lived. This history is therefore also one wherein persons who identified as trans worked within these institutional definitions—and how they challenged them in a variety of ways. In fact, this dynamic continues to some extent still today. In order fully to understand the force of the discourses that underlie trans embodied experiences—discourses which also reveal the regimentation of gendered embodiment in general—I would like to turn now to a couple of texts that deeply influenced attitudes and understandings about sexuality, homosexuality, and transsexuality in the USA between the 1940s and the 1960s, namely, the Kinsey Reports (1948; 1953) and Harry Benjamin's *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (1966). These texts offer us historical insights with which we can further think through the multiplicity of ways in which gendered embodiment is experienced, and they make evident the historical depth that lies behind these experiences. In fact, the effect of these texts is still alive today, through the Kinsey Institute¹ and

¹<https://www.kinseyinstitute.org>

the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association (now known as the World Professional Association for Transgender Health).²

The Kinsey Reports and Benjamin's text are, by far, not the only influences on discourses about sexuality at that time. John Money (Money and Ehrhardt 1972), for example, was a major proponent of a "multivaried" explanation of gender, with "psychosocial" construction (somewhat akin to social construction and even to performativity) being a very important element (Bullough 2003).³ He co-established the Johns Hopkins Gender Identity Clinic which offered (and studied) gender reassignment surgery, introduced innovative analyses and terminology with regard to the notion of gender, and recognized both intersexuality and transsexuality as evidence of the multiple ways in which gender can appear and be lived. His work influenced attitudes of the general public through television interviews and publications, as well as academic and professional positions on gender and sexuality. But since Money's position is understood to be rather close to the positions of social construction and discourse/performativity discussed already in Chap. 2, and since his work is also the source of much controversy (especially with regard to his methodology and motives),⁴—which would distract us from our analyses of embodiment—we will not be examining his work.

[The doctor asked] if I read Money's book & I said yes. (I just assumed he meant 'Man, Woman, Boy, Girl' which I've tried to plow through twice but it was just too scientific & medically-oriented, I couldn't get much out of it.)
(Sullivan, 10/5/1979)

Indeed, although Money made his position popular through television interviews, his written work was usually not so accessible to the average reading audience.

Christine Jorgenson was also a major figure in the 1950s whose transition from man to woman was a major media event in 1952, resurfacing on multiple occasions thereafter.

²<http://www.wpath.org>

³See especially Bullough (2003, 233).

⁴Money's paradigm case that was meant to demonstrate that gender can be socially constructed, famously called the "John/Joan" case, actually ended very badly. The boy, David Reimer, who was raised as a girl reacted quite negatively to his socialization as a girl, especially as he grew older. Ultimately he returned to living as a man, and then committed suicide. Money's involvement in the case rendered him not only guilty in the public eye of doing serious damage to his young patient but also cast doubts on his theory of the social construction of gender overall. In fact, his position on the malleability of gender contributed to hospitals' standard procedure for intersex infants; infants were assigned a sex through sex assignment surgery as early as possible, a practice that since has been described as unduly harmful (Colapinto 2000). In addition to this issue, Money also supported a theory of "affectional pedophilia" as opposed to "sadistic pedophilia," linking him with pedophilia in general. This perception of him led to further dismissal of his work overall (see Downing et al. 2015).

March 23rd Tom & I went to hear a lecture by Christine Jorgensen, the first guy to have a sex-change to a woman. It was pretty interesting. It took some courage for me to go cuz I guess I'm still a bit hesitant to admit publicly I'm interested in this male/female thing. Tom didn't let on he was interested til the last minute. (Sullivan, 3/28/1973)

Jorgenson set a trend with regard to how trans people—especially trans women who wished to undergo surgery—would describe themselves. In fact, as Joanne Meyerowitz (2002) argues, Jorgenson carefully manipulated how she appeared to the public so that her story became one of overcoming insurmountable odds, personal courage, and the success of science rather than that of a sexual deviant:

She related her life history with an emphasis on her lonely struggles and the saving grace of science. She invited readers to sympathize with her and thereby moved herself beyond the realm of tabloid spectacle. The tale of despair and hope gave her story emotional appeal and reworked a formula already familiar to readers of popular magazines. (Meyerowitz 2002, 65)

Thus, the notion of “changing sex” was rendered visible to the American public, and Jorgenson offered a sensational—and palatable—image for many people for whom the very notion of sexual transition or gender variance was rather new. But there were also people for whom the desire for transition was already lived, for whom their inability to fit into the established gender norms was a daily struggle, and for them, Jorgenson provided an answer to their trials—or at least a language with which to express their experiences.

In the 1950s and 1960s hundreds of people wrote to, telephoned, and visited doctors to inquire about sex-change surgery. A few may have asked for information on a whim [...], and a few may have temporarily seen a change of sex as a way out of other personal problems. But most had what they described as deeply rooted, longstanding, and irrepressible yearnings, and they wanted medical treatment, sometimes with an urgency that bordered on obsession. [...] In the 1950s and afterward they used the press and the medical literature to label their longings, to place themselves in a recognizable category, and to find the names of doctors who might help them. (Meyerowitz 2002, 130)

Media reports of Jorgenson, therefore, indicate both the importance of discourse in how one describes and explains one's embodied experiences—even how they might come to be felt—as well as (in the overwhelming response to those reports) the existence of transgendered experiences that were already being lived and that resonated with the stories about Jorgenson and others.

In fact, Meyerowitz (2002) argues that Jorgenson was not at all the first transsexual to appear in popular media in the USA:

From the 1930s on, the stories in the popular press provided certain readers, who already had a general sense of crossgender identification, with new and particular ways to describe who they were and new and specific fantasies of what they might become. (Meyerowitz 2002, 35)

And again:

But in the 1930s and 1940s sensational stories in the popular press opened possibilities for people who already had some sense of crossgender identification and who recognized themselves in the stories of sex change. (Meyerowitz 2002, 49)

Thus, there were clearly many influences on the discourse about transsexuality by the 1970s in the USA.⁵ These reports contributed to an understanding of the sexual body in general, and trans embodiment in particular.

Nevertheless, the two texts that we will address here not only crystalize this intersection of discursive, material, and inner-felt embodiment, but, especially in the case of Benjamin, they also highlight the move toward medical and psychiatric authority that took place in the USA. This was a move toward medical authority in general, but it is quite explicit with regard to the assessment and treatment of transsexuality, and implicitly, the enforcement of a gender binary. After taking up these historical texts, we will then turn to responses by transgender theorists not only because they offer critical views on this authoritative positioning, but also because they provide further insights into the more material and inner-felt senses of embodiment that relate to our experience of gender.

4.1 Looking Back at Kinsey

Alfred Kinsey, Wardell Pomeroy, and Clyde Martin faced multiple myths and presumptions about male sexuality (or at least that of white males) in their *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948). Ironically, scientists had themselves often promulgated some of these unsubstantiated myths.⁶ With regard to what people believed about the existence of homosexuality, Kinsey et al. found two extremes: those who believed homosexuality to be practically nonexistent among human males and those who believed that almost all males were homosexual or had homosexual tendencies. In addition, there seemed to be certain presumptions about the physical characteristics of homosexual males: not only were there stereotypes about the attitudes and general physical stature of homosexual males (i.e., that they were supposedly more petite and less physically capable), but there was also a belief that anyone who was homosexual—or even bisexual—was actually a kind of “third sex,” i.e., that such a person had the genital components of both male and female.

⁵In fact, after the media appearance of Christine Jorgenson, the stories about transsexuals in the media increased. According to Meyerowitz (2002, 52–3): “With the Jorgenson story, the floodgates broke. A torrent of new stories on other transsexuals made sex change a constant feature in the popular press.” While it is clear that there were reports about transsexuality in both medical and popular publications, we can see in Sullivan’s diaries that they were perhaps not such a “torrent” of information. Sullivan (7/7/1973) himself describes going to the library to find stories of transsexuals in his diaries.

⁶For a useful description of the fluctuating opinions on human sexual biology, and especially the understanding of humans as essentially physically bisexual, see Meyerowitz (2002, 21–9).

The term homosexual has had an endless list of synonyms in the technical vocabularies and a still greater list in the vernaculars. The terms homogenic love, contrasexuality, homo-eroticism, similisexualism, uranism and others have been used in English (Legman in Henry 1941). The terms sexual inversion, intersexuality, transsexuality, the third sex, psychosexual hermaphroditism, and others have been applied not merely to designate the nature of the partner involved in the sexual relation, but to emphasize the general opinion that individuals engaging in homosexual activity are neither male nor female, but persons of mixed sex. These latter terms are, however, most unfortunate, for they provide an interpretation in anticipation of any sufficient demonstration of the fact; and consequently they prejudice investigations of the nature and origin of homosexual activity. (Kinsey et al. 1948, 612)

Interesting from our perspective is that Kinsey et al. were dealing specifically (and in this citation, explicitly) with the *discourse* about male homosexuality. Here they identify a host of terms that name or imply homosexuality, and various difficulties with many of these terms, including those that implied a “third sex,” and even specific physical, genital characteristics. Further, they note quite clearly the problem with such (or any) terminology: it prejudices an investigation before it is even begun. In fact, although Kinsey et al. do not follow this point here, the very notion of “objectivity” itself could be called into question on the basis of their insight, since no matter how carefully we begin our scientific investigation, we are already invested in the terminology we are using. Simply put, our investment in discourse influences how we carry out our experiments and/or how we see or interpret our outcomes.⁷

One of the main problems with the popular understanding of homosexuality at the time of Kinsey and his colleagues’ investigations was the implication that homosexuality was an all-or-nothing way of being. In other words, the belief was that every person was either homosexual or heterosexual, that each person was born that way, and that each person’s attitudes about sex and their tendencies toward specific types of sexual partners or sexual acts never changed throughout that person’s life. The term “homosexual” or “heterosexual,” in other words, stated a *way of being*, a permanent characteristic of a person, or the name of that person as a whole. Kinsey and his colleagues’ research showed, however, that the frequency of homosexual activity varied throughout the male population, and even throughout an individual’s life. “Either-or” was an inadequate way of describing homosexual activity:

It would encourage clearer thinking on these matters if persons were not characterized as heterosexual or homosexual, but as individuals who have had certain amounts of heterosexual experience and certain amounts of homosexual experience. Instead of using these terms as substantives which stand for persons, or even as adjectives to describe persons, they may better be used to describe the nature of the overt sexual relations, or of the stimuli to which an individual erotically responds. (Kinsey et al. 1948, 617)

⁷For a more thorough discussion of the interplay between social forces and scientific work, see, for example, Anne Fausto-Sterling’s *Sexing the Body* (2000).

I set him straight fast – said I’m NOT AT ALL trying to be a hetero man, I WANT to be a gay man! That all I said was that, as I get closer to being a man, women don’t look that bad to me anymore. That when I am doing this, I can see where women might not be so bad once in a while. He said, oh, ok then, cuz it’s fine to be a gay man!!!??? (Sullivan, 10/10/1979)

In response to this inadequacy in terminology, Kinsey et al. (1948, 638) invented a now-famous scale that diversified the assessment of a person’s sexual orientation. More importantly, they emphasized that this scale was not about how a person *is* but simply identified the *frequency of certain types of behavior*. In fact, when it came down to it, the rating of a person on this scale would reveal very little about the person himself, but rather it would quantify the frequency of his erotic behavior and whether the people with whom he was intimate were male or female.⁸ Let us take a look at what is now popularly known as “the Kinsey scale”⁹ (Fig. 4.1):

The scale rates individuals between 0 and 6. It identifies those with only heterosexual experiences and no homosexual experience whatsoever as “0.” Those who have

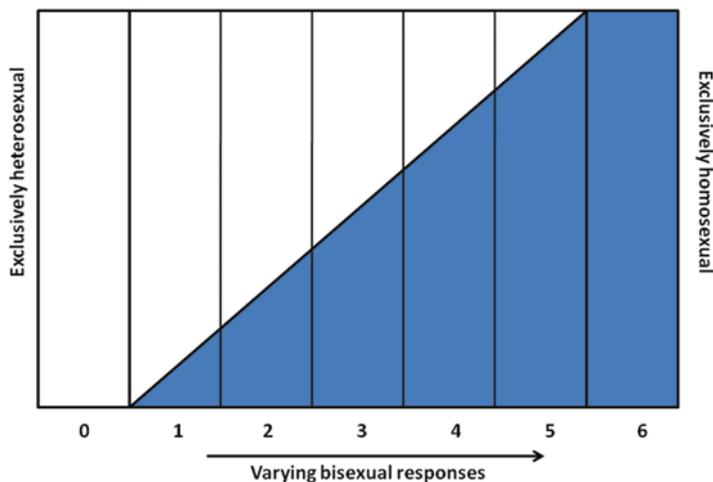


Fig. 4.1 Kinsey’s “Heterosexual-homosexual rating scale”

⁸This dichotomy is obviously overly simple. I addressed these complexities in more detail in Chap. 2 and will again in Chap. 6; for now, we will limit ourselves somewhat to the discourses with which Kinsey et al. were working.

⁹Available on the Kinsey Institute website: <http://www.kinseyinstitute.org/research/ak-hhscale.html> (accessed March 17, 2016). Courtesy of The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction.

had incidental homosexual experience, but only very little, are rated “1.” The ratings increase with increasing homosexual activity, with “2” showing more than just incidental homosexual activity in a person who is still behaving predominately heterosexually, “3” being a rather equal amount of homosexual and heterosexual activity, “4” identifying predominantly homosexual activity but more than just incidental heterosexual activity, “5” showing only incidental heterosexual activity in a person behaving predominantly homosexually, and “6” being exclusively homosexual, with no heterosexual activity whatsoever. Taking their research and applying it to the scale, Kinsey et al. concluded that around 50% of the white male population in the USA was exclusively heterosexual (at 0 on the scale), while about 4% was exclusively homosexual (at 6 on the scale). This left about 46% of the white male population who had had some number of homosexual and heterosexual experiences. Basically, almost half of the white male population was found to fall between 1 and 5 on the Kinsey scale.¹⁰

Since only 50 per cent of the population is exclusively heterosexual throughout its adult life, and since only 4 per cent of the population is exclusively homosexual throughout its life, it appears that nearly half (46%) of the population engages in both heterosexual and homosexual activities, or reacts to persons of both sexes, in the course of their adult lives. (Kinsey et al. 1948, 656)

In addition to this interesting fact, Kinsey et al. also found the following to be the case: Certain activities between two men were explained away as *not* homosexual, for example, because a sexual encounter was “only” mutual masturbation, or because a person who played a relatively dominant sexual role was not considered “effeminate” enough to be identified as homosexual. In other words, if there was no penetration or if a man was behaving in some way that was considered dominant or “masculine,” then the encounter was not seen as homosexual, even though it was a sexual encounter between two men. More simply, men would insist that they were not homosexual if their sexual activity with other men avoided penetration or if they played the aggressor. This resulted in the fact that many men who had engaged in homosexual behavior would identify themselves as 100% heterosexual. Unfortunately, this made the term for heterosexuality very, very cloudy, and the term for homosexuality became quite limited.¹¹ This was a problem of the discourse, as Kinsey et al. recognized: Since the discourse was set up as an “either-or” dichotomy, then many behaviors were ignored or emphasized in order to “fit” everyone into either one category or the other—and because of the social and moral implications, everyone wanted to fit, or appear to fit, the “heterosexual” category. This is, of course, a perfect example of Butler’s (1993, 2) point that bodies “never quite comply” with the discourse, and it also correlates with the example we saw in Chap. 2

¹⁰ Subsequent studies have revealed varying statistics, depending on the population and the type of inquiry. These statistics have ranged anywhere between 1% and 7%, so Kinsey’s early statistics fall neatly in the middle of more recent calculations. For a compilation of some of these studies, and reference to current studies in sexology, see <http://www.kinseyinstitute.org/resources/FAQ.html>.

¹¹ To put it in logical terms, if sexual behavior is defined as requiring penetration, and if penetration always requires an aggressor, and further, if homosexuals are never aggressive, then there could never be sexual behavior between two men where both participants were homosexual.

of the young gay teenager who insisted that he was heterosexual. Kinsey et al. saw that there was a “disconnect” between discourse and experience, and they responded by insisting that the terms be used to describe behavior and not type of person, in order to better resonate with the evidence.

Describing the other 46% of the population, who had had both heterosexual and homosexual behavior, Kinsey et al. (1948) continued,

The term bisexual has been applied to at least some portion of this group. Unfortunately, the term as it has been used has never been strictly delimited, and consequently it is impossible to know whether it refers to all individuals who rate anything from 1 to 5, or whether it is being limited to some smaller number of categories, perhaps centering around group 3. If the latter is intended, it should be emphasized that the 1's, 2's, 4's, and 5's have not yet been accounted for, and they constitute a considerable portion of the population. (Kinsey et al. 1948, 656)

So, is everyone between 1 and 5 bisexual, or are only the 3's bisexual? What do we do about those who fall in the ranks of 1, 2, 4, and 5? Kinsey et al. were faced with more than one problem: In addition to dispelling myths about homosexuality and bisexuality, they also were trying to *change the language* being used about sexual orientation and sexual behavior. The terms homosexual, heterosexual, and bisexual did not seem to be applied consistently, or accurately, in everyday language. Further, they were insufficient to describe the behavior frequencies apparent on the Kinsey scale (and, in fact, even the Kinsey scale has its limitations).

I said, “You wouldn’t happen to be bi, would you?” He looked startled & said “What?” “Bisexual.” I didn’t look at him at all, so nervous. “Well, I’ve been known to go out with girls...why?” “Cuz I’m interested.” “In me?” “Yeah.” He was pretty surprised & we just kept walking & he asked me what I was into. Told him my lover, a male transvestite, left last week for Calif & it’s pretty hard to replace someone like that. He asked me when did he dress, I said only when we were together. He kept going, “oh, this is really strange,” etc. He said he hasn’t gone to bed with a girl in 5 or 6 years. I felt like saying as far as I’m concerned if he went with me he wouldn’t be breaking his record, but didn’t. He said, “Well, OK, let’s give it a try.” (Sullivan, 9/18/1973)

In addition to the limits of the terminology and how it was applied, Kinsey et al. also discovered that popular discourse on sexuality had ended up influencing the attitudes (and studies!) of *experts* on sex. This could be seen specifically in the presumption by scientists about the genitalia of homosexual men: They believed that a homosexual male would have the genital and psychological characteristics of both sexes, and that these characteristics were hereditary. Specifically, one scientist in the early 20th century, Richard Goldschmidt, did some very enlightening studies on certain insects with intersex genetic traits. However, according to Kinsey et al., Goldschmidt then extrapolated these findings to make claims about the characteristics of *homosexual humans* (both male and female). These claims were then cited by subsequent scientists in the area of human sexuality:

Through a brilliant series of studies, Goldschmidt showed the hereditary bases of intersexes among insects. It is unfortunate, however, that he identified homosexual males and females in the human species as intersexes, and thereby reached the conclusion that there must be a hereditary basis for homosexuality (Goldschmidt 1916). The argument in his original paper was based on nothing more than an analogy between the intermediate secondary sexual characters which he found in the insects, and what he assumed to be intermediate characters in the psychology of the homosexual human individual. From this analogy he reasoned that there must be an inheritance of the human behavior phenomenon, just as there is inheritance of the morphologic structures which constitute the intersexuality of moths. (Kinsey et al. 1948, 661–2)¹²

Goldschmidt's analogy between intersex insects and homosexual behavior in humans led to the conclusion that homosexuality was hereditary, but not only that: It was based on, and thereby re-entrenched, the presumption that homosexuals were physically intersex. To explain, Goldschmidt determined that the intersex characteristics in moths were hereditary. Then, presuming that homosexual males were also intersex, he extrapolated to conclude that, first, intersex characteristics must be hereditary in homosexual males just as they are in moths, second, homosexual behavior in human males must be linked to the presumed intersex characteristics they possess, and finally, homosexual behavior must therefore also be hereditary. This led to widespread beliefs about the hereditary nature of homosexuality as well as the genitalia of homosexual humans. The latter belief, while already part of common beliefs about homosexual males, was now couched in and confirmed by scientific doctrine. However, contrary to this assumption, Kinsey et al. (1948) established that there was no evidence of a link between homosexuality and intersex anatomy at all:

In spite of the fact that Goldschmidt himself (1916) accepted the idea that the homosexual human male or female was an intersex, there is no adequate basis for reaching any such conclusion. (Kinsey et al. 1948, 658)

Thus, Kinsey et al. had to work through the discourses surrounding homosexuality, including claims about the physical attributes (specifically, the genitals) of homosexuals. In doing so, they made a point to distinguish between homosexuality and intersexuality (as well as a multitude of other terms), separating discourses that until then had implied one another.

This move actually demonstrates what Michel Foucault would point out in his *History of Sexuality* (1980) (although Foucault made no reference to Kinsey's work in this text): a multiplication of the discourses about sex. With the studies by Kinsey et al., descriptions of behaviors and genitals were distinguished from one another; they each became their own areas of study. Other areas were also parsed out: fetishism, masturbation, premarital and extramarital sex, sadomasochism, etc. Simply put, Kinsey and his colleagues' investigations produced more and more ways to

¹²Kinsey et al. (1948) equivocate here between the physical and psychological characteristics of homosexuals. I try to work through the steps that would connect a presumption of intersex physical characteristics with homosexual behavior in the next paragraph. In any case, the historical connection between the theory of human "bisexuality" and homosexuality, as well as how this theory played into explanations of transvestism and transsexuality, is explained well by Meyerowitz (2002, 22–9).

study and talk about sex. Further, each of these new terminologies produced more and more ways for sex to appear. How can sex appear on its own accord, Foucault (1980) rightly asked, if it is constantly being framed in ways that influence how we experience it? In this way, the investigations of Kinsey et al. prove Foucault's point. Nevertheless, as we saw above, *Kinsey et al. were attempting to construct new discourses precisely because the former discourses appeared inadequate to many people's experiences of sex.* The evidence, a scientist would say, proved otherwise. So we can ask, if nothing can appear except through discourse, then what was appearing *in spite of* the inadequate discourse? The investigations of Kinsey et al. seem to prove *and* disprove Foucault's point: On the one hand, these investigators certainly used the discourses at their disposal in order to carry out their studies. Most notably, they used the discourse of the scientific method as a way to dispel the myths in play in everyday and scientific discourses. Thus, following Foucault, they used one discourse (scientific) against the other (presumptions about homosexual males). On the other hand, given that the presumptions about the existence and physical make up of homosexual males was predominant in both everyday and scientific communities in the USA, Kinsey et al. might have expected to see what was apparent in the discourse (e.g., intersex genitalia on homosexual white male bodies)—instead, they saw something else. Their experimental evidence ran contrary to the discourses, and thus the discourses did not make intersex bodies appear when the investigators looked for them. Some experiences, then, might *not* be determined by discourse.

However, Kinsey et al. did have their own discursive limitations: They did not include any statistics about transvestite or transsexual people in this study, for example. In addition, while they called into question the presumption that homosexual males had female body parts (along with male parts), and further, that homosexual males were necessarily effeminate, they did not challenge or break down the presumptions about what would constitute masculine as opposed to feminine behavior. Their connections between masculinity and aggressive behavior, on the one hand, and femininity and passive behavior on the other, remain relatively unquestioned. Thus, in spite of the fact that they were able to challenge the predominant discourse about homosexuality in several ways, they remained rather blind to the existence of transvestite and transsexual experiences, and they refrained from challenging the notions of masculinity and femininity.

He did ask some pretty dumb questions, like "What typically 'masculine' things do you like to do and what typically 'feminine' things?" I DON'T KNOW! How the hell am I supposed to answer that?? Oh, I put cream & sugar in my coffee, that's feminine; I like to watch boxing matches on TV, that's masculine; I put bath oil in the tub, that's feminine; and I use Brut deodorant, that's masculine. GOD. (Sullivan, 10/5/1979)

In a second study, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953), Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, and Paul Gebhard (a new researcher brought into the project) did introduce the topic of “transvestism.” Here they very briefly defined “the” transvestite as someone who dons the clothing of the opposite sex with a desire to become part of the community of that sex. They recognized varieties in this tendency and desire: On the one hand, they admitted that the occasional dress-up for a masquerade ball did not make one a transvestite; on the other hand, they acknowledged that transvestites appear in more than one way, and with differing sexual orientations (some are attracted to men, others to women). However, they did not delineate these distinctions (the section on “Transvestism” is only about two pages long). It is also interesting to note that their discussion of transvestism focused on men who dressed as women. Women who dressed as men were relatively ignored. Even more odd is that the topic of transvestism is found in the study on human *females*. Perhaps male-to-female transvestism appeared so effeminate to the investigators that it was addressed alongside studies of women born as female. But it is probably more likely that transvestism and studies of human female embodiment were both relatively secondary to their interest in human males. In any case, their “blind spots” regarding transsexuality, transvestism, or any type of trans embodiment, and their presumptions about masculinity and femininity, continued in this second study as well. A more complete distinction between transvestism and the transsexuality would be left, as it turns out, to Harry Benjamin, to whom we will turn in a moment.

It is interesting to note that, in spite of the blind spots just mentioned, Kinsey et al. remained attuned to the influence discourse can have on scientific work. In the text on female sexuality, they explicitly address the manner in which a scientist’s belief system can influence her scientific investigations. This was already evident, as we saw, in the conclusions drawn by Goldschmidt, to which Kinsey et al. had referred in their first study, and in their discussion of the terminology, both scientific and vernacular, which surrounded the notion of male homosexuality. In this second study, they address *moral* discourse within scientific work:

The prominence given to classifications of behavior as normal or abnormal, and the long list of special terms used for classifying such behavior, usually represent moralistic classifications rather than any scientific attempt to discover the origins of such behavior, or to determine their real social significance. (Kinsey et al. 1953, 646)

So, implicitly, Kinsey et al. acknowledge here that discourse can affect what we see, or even what appears to us: certain behaviors *appear* normal because of moral structures already in place, and conclusions are drawn based upon what we believe rather than upon observation. At the same time, as we mentioned above, their investigations indicated things that *did appear* in spite of the fact that it was contrary to or invisible within the scientific and popular discourses at hand. Ironically, Kinsey et al. were undermining the presumption of objectivity in scientific research while they themselves continued to act according to this presumption. In fact, it was only on the basis of their own efforts toward objectivity that they were able to undermine the prior scientific conclusions. Overall, though, we can note the following: Kinsey and his colleagues’ work corrected multiple discourses about homosexuality that

did not resonate with experience, and they worked to shift the general understanding about homosexuality to a factual, rather than moral one. At the same time, their work contributed to the growing number of scientific discourses about sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular. In addition, their approach as “experts” on sex and sexuality provided a backdrop for the authoritative positioning of the medical and psychological communities that took place a couple of decades later. We will turn to a critique of such positioning after we discuss Harry Benjamin’s work.

4.2 The Appearance of Harry Benjamin’s Transsexual Phenomenon

As noted, Kinsey et al. (1953) neglected to delineate transsexual experience in their descriptions of sexuality, blending it into an already very brief description of transvestism in their second study. Thus, when Harry Benjamin wrote *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (1966), his first task was not only to apply the term “transsexuality” to a very specific type of experience but also to distinguish it from the terms homosexuality, intersexuality or hermaphroditism, and transvestism.¹³ Thus, after defining a transvestite as someone who, in varying degrees, dresses in clothing of the opposite sex and usually gains pleasure in doing so, Benjamin (1966) defines transsexuality in the following way:

The transsexual (TS) male or female is deeply unhappy as a member of the sex (or gender) to which he or she was assigned by the anatomical structure of the body, particularly the genitals. To avoid misunderstanding: this has nothing to do with hermaphroditism. The transsexual is physically normal [...]. But while “dressing” would satisfy the true transvestite (who is content with his morphological sex), it is only incidental and not more than a partial or temporary help to the transsexual. True transsexuals feel that they *belong* to the other sex, they want to *be* and *function* as members of the opposite sex, not only to appear as such. (Benjamin 1966, 13)

¹³Although Benjamin’s text was groundbreaking in its depth in treating the topic of transsexuality, especially in the USA, he was not the first person to coin the term in the way we understand it today. Rather, the term appears to have been introduced by David Oliver Cauldwell, who wrote an article entitled “Psychopathia Transexualis” (1949). Here Cauldwell discusses the case of “Earl,” a female-to-male trans man who wished to have surgery to complete his transition. Cauldwell was generally not sympathetic to such requests. However, in this article he makes a point to distinguish Earl’s case from homosexuality (even though Earl’s orientation was toward women), and he recognizes an “irresistible desire to have their sex changed surgically” (Cauldwell 1949, 276, cited in Meyerowitz 2002, 43). In fact, the awareness of trans people, as well as operations for those who wished to live as the “opposite” sex, actually had been taking place since the early 1900s in the USA and especially in Europe. Magnus Hirschfeld and Henry Havelock Ellis used the terms of “transvestism” or “eonism” to describe “crossgender identification as well as cross-dressing” (Meyerowitz 2002, 15). Hirschfeld’s Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin was also at the center of experimentation with and the performance of sex-change operations in the 1920s and 1930s. Benjamin had collegial contact with both Kinsey and Hirschfeld, referring patients to one another. See Meyerowitz (2002, 14–50) for an in depth presentation of the development of the understanding of transsexuality.

Benjamin goes on to point out that a transsexual usually turns to the medical community, especially surgery, in order to alleviate the frustration he described. Meanwhile, a transvestite usually wants very little to do with the medical community at all. According to Benjamin's distinction, then, a transvestite will find satisfaction in appearing as the "opposite" sex through clothing, etcetera, while a transsexual will only find satisfaction in appearing as the "opposite" sex through bodily modification (hormones and/or surgery).

Inspired by the scale for sexual behavior developed by Kinsey et al. (1948), Benjamin (1966, 22) developed a similar scale—one which actually includes reference to the Kinsey scale for sexual behavior—in order to identify different types of transvestism and transsexualism (Fig. 4.2).

This scale also ranges from 0 to 6, but that is where the parallels with the Kinsey scale end. On Benjamin's scale, "0" identifies those who are satisfied with their embodiment, their genitalia, and feel a sense of "belonging" with those who share the same sexual assignment. They have little to no desire to dress as the opposite sex or to change their body to match that of the opposite sex. This type is linked with "normal sex orientation"—whether heterosexual or homosexual.

Types I–III of Benjamin's scale identify different degrees of transvestites, from minor (Type I, occasional cross-dressing for "kicks") to major (Type III, the "true transvestite" who cross-dresses as often as possible). These three types fall under Group 1, transvestites. Group 2 includes only Type IV, which identifies an "undecided" form of transsexual, one who lives as the opposite sex, if possible, but does not seek out surgical alteration. This person is "wavering between TV and TS," according to Benjamin. Finally, Group 3 includes both Type V and Type VI, transsexuals from moderate (V) to high (VI) intensity. Benjamin lists (1966) it as follows (Fig. 4.3).

Benjamin admittedly tries to do quite a bit in this scale, but his primary goal was to assist psychologists and therapists in their treatment of the two main types of trans people he identified: transvestites and transsexuals. According to his distinctions, a psychiatrist should not prescribe surgery for a transvestite, nor should she recommend that a "high intensity transsexual" will feel better if he or she simply dresses as the "opposite" sex, nor ought a therapist presume that a trans client has an underlying physiological problem, such as a chromosomal abnormality or intersex genitalia.

Benjamin's tone throughout the book is sympathetic and explanatory. At the time, he was one of very few resources for trans people that existed in the USA and Europe. However, certain presumptions and blind spots in his book became standard in professional attitudes about trans people, resulting in serious limitations in how they were treated by medical and psychological professionals. First, we can point out Benjamin's confusion and struggle regarding the sexual orientation of the transsexuals he describes: in fact, as you may have noted in Fig. 4.2, above, Benjamin gives his scale the title "Sex Orientation Scale." The confusion can be seen in the following example: A trans woman who is attracted to men could be considered homosexual or to engage in homosexual activities, based on the gender she was assigned at birth (male). But this privileges an "outsider" view that only points to types of bodies (with an emphasis on bodies at birth). Since the trans woman's "gen-

TABLE 1. SEX ORIENTATION SCALE (S.O.S.)
SEX AND GENDER ROLE DISORIENTATION AND INDECISION (MALES)

Type 0 Profile	Group 1			Group 2		Group 3	
	Type I TRANSVESTITE Pseudo Masculine	Type II TRANSVESTITE Fetishistic Masculine	Type III TRANSVESTITE True Masculine (but with less conviction.)	Type IV TRANSSEXUAL Nonsurgical Undecided. Wavering between IV and V.	Type V TRUE TRANSSEXUAL Moderate intensity Feminine. ("Trapped in male body").	Type VI TRUE TRANSSEXUAL High intensity Feminine. Total "psy- cho-sexual" inversion.	
GENDER "FEELING"	Masculine	Masculine	Masculine (but with less conviction.)	Undecided. Wavering between IV and V.	Feminine. ("Trapped in male body").	Feminine. Total "psycho-sexual" inversion.	
DRESSING HABITS AND SOCIAL LIFE	Lives as men. Could be considered part out of "dressing." Not truly IV. Normal male life.	Lives as men. "Dresses" considered part of the "true" male underneath male clothes.	"Dresses" constantly as often as possible. May be considered as "dressed" as woman. May wear male clothes, if no other chance.	"Dresses" as often as possible. Insignificant relief from "dressing."	Lives and works as woman if possible. Insignificant relief from "dressing."	May live and work as woman. "Dressing" gives insignificant relief. Insignificant relief from discomfort in trousers.	
SEX OBJECT CHOICE AND SEX LIFE	Hetero, bi-, or homosexual. "Dressing" and "sexchange" may occur in masturbation. May enjoy IV hierarchy only.	Heterosexual. Rarely bisexual. Masturbation with fetish. Guilt feelings. "Purges" and relapses.	Heterosexual, except when "dressed." "Dressing" gives sexual satisfaction with relief of gender other than may "purge" and relapse.	Libido often low. Asexual or auto-erotic. Could also be bisexual. May have been married and have children.	Libido low. Asexual, auto-erotic, or passive homosexual activity. May have been married and have children.	Intensely desires relations with normal male as "female," if young. Later, libido low. May have been married and have children, by using substitutes in intercourse.	
KINSEY SCALE	0-6	0-2	0-2	1-4	4-6	6	
CONVERSION OPERATION?	Not considered in reality.	Rejected.	Actually rejected, but idea can be attractive.	Attractive but not requested or attraction not admitted.	Requested. Usually indicated.	Urgently requested and usually attained. Indicated.	
ESTROGEN MEDICATION?	Not interested. Not indicated.	Rarely interested. Occasionally useful to reduce libido.	Attractive as an experiment. Can be helpful, emotionally.	Needed for comfort and emotional balance.	Needed as substitute for or preliminary to operation.	Required for partial relief.	
PSYCHOTHERAPY?	Not wanted. Unnecessary.	May be successful. (In a favorable environment.)	If attempted is usually not successful as to cure.	Only as guidance; otherwise refused or unsuccessful.	Rejected. Useful as to cure. Permissive psychological guidance.	Psychological, guidance or psychotherapy for symptomatic relief only.	
REMARKS	Interest in "dressing" only sporadic.	May imitate double (masculine and feminine) personality with male and female names.	May assume double personality. Trend toward transsexualism.	Social life dependent upon circumstances.	Operation hoped for and worked for. Often attained.	Despises his male sex organs. Danger of suicide if too long frustrated.	

Fig. 4.2 Benjamin's scale categorizing types of tranvestites and transsexuals

Group 1	Type I	Pseudo TV
	Type II	Fetishistic TV
	Type III	True TV
Group 2	Type IV	TS, Nonsurgical
Group 3	Type V	TS, Moderate intensity
	Type VI	TS, High intensity (Benjamin 1966, 23)

Fig. 4.3 Outline of Benjamin's scale (Benjamin 1966, 23)

der identity"¹⁴ is female, we have a person who identifies as female in a relationship with (or desiring a relationship with) a person who identifies as male, so that their sexual relations should be considered heterosexual. Benjamin (1966) muses:

From all that has been said, it seems evident that the question "Is the transsexual homosexual?" must be answered "yes" and "no." "Yes," if his anatomy is considered; "no" if his psyche is given preference. (Benjamin 1966, 27)

Lawrence laughed that his brother was trying to save him from heterosexuality & I said you don't have to worry about that with me around & Lawrence piped up & says oh no! And he tells them how I accosted him on the street for sex. With Bill there! And I was so embarrassed & that's another thing that made me depressed cuz I'm such a gross pig & I have to make boys be heterosexual to have sex with them. (Sullivan, 11/11/1973)

Benjamin points out that, after gender reassignment surgery, the sexual relations of a trans woman with a man could be defined as heterosexual more easily. At that point, to privilege a person's *birth* anatomy over her *lived* anatomy, insisting that the postoperative trans woman is a gay man, he says, is an exercise of "pedantry and technicalities." Nevertheless, on his own scale, Benjamin rates sexual orientation based on birth anatomy rather than gender identity. In other words, a trans woman assigned male at birth and attracted to men is considered homosexual; Benjamin bypasses the fact that she identifies as and *feels female*. In his scale, then, Benjamin ignores his own argument about the importance of gender identity, ranking sexual orientation solely on the basis of birth anatomy. While Benjamin may have done this in order to minimize confusion (a scale can contain only so much information), having identified "high intensity transsexuals" as exclusively "homosexual" ultimately compounds the difficulty of recognizing gender identity.

¹⁴As mentioned in the introduction to this book, "gender identity" is usually described as the gender to which a person feels he or she belongs. It is understood as a deeply internal sense of embodiment that we cannot control. For cisgender people, gender identity usually aligns with their gender assigned at birth. For many trans people, however, gender identity often does not match up with their assigned gender, leading often to some level of discomfort with, or simply a desire to change, their body or genitals. The sense of disconnect between gender identity and birth anatomy is not limited to those who identify as transgender; it can also be experienced by those born as intersex, since intersex genitalia do not at all mean that a person has an intersex gender identity (see Meyerowitz 2002, 98–129).

Benjamin's focus on the material body over its inner sense leads to the second issue, which was already indicated above: By admitting that a trans woman in a relationship with a man can be seen to be in a straight relationship only after sexual reassignment surgery, Benjamin not only marginalizes gender identity, but he also implies that surgery is the only way for the transsexual to fulfill her gender identity, and for others to recognize it. In fact, Benjamin focuses primarily on "high intensity" transsexuals in his descriptions, even though his scale describes a variety of trans embodiment. This resulted in treatment guidelines centering around those who fit the description of "TS, high intensity." Decades later—even quite recently, as we will see—those who did not (or do not) express an ultimate and intense desire for sexual reassignment surgery have been refused other types of treatment, such as hormones or breast enhancement or removal. Transsexuality, therefore, became synonymous with Benjamin's "high intensity transsexual"—other variations, especially those who fit his descriptions of "TS, nonsurgical" (Group 2/Type IV) were usually deemed unqualified for treatment. In fact it is interesting to note that Benjamin recommends hormone treatment for this "nonsurgical" group on his scale. But as the treatment for transsexuality became institutionalized, even this group was hardly recognized, with "high intensity transsexuals" standing as the paradigm.

The third issue is Benjamin's presumption of the sexual orientation of transsexuals. Despite the fact that Kinsey et al.¹⁵ and Benjamin recognize that transvestites have varied sexual orientations, Benjamin claims that all "high intensity" transsexuals are homosexual (based upon gender assigned at birth). In fact, this applies to both trans women and trans men: "Transsexual women [sic] fall deeply in love with normal or homosexual girls, often those of a soft, feminine type. Besides wanting to be lovers, they want to be husbands and fathers." (Benjamin 1966, 149) Thus, given Benjamin's descriptions, gay trans men and women would remain invisible.

Have been reading my head off: Tea and Sympathy, Dancing the Gay Lib Blues, Tearoom Trade, Toward a Recognition of Androgyny, Is Gay Good?, Gay Mystique, and latest The Transsexual Phenomenon. ... So I've just read & read the transsexual book & as I nearly finished it last night, I began crying.... (Sullivan, 5/31/1973)

Sexual orientation then became another criteria used to qualify or disqualify potential candidates for treatment. If a person sought to transition in order to enter into homosexual relations after transition (based upon gender identity), they were usually refused treatment—and this was Sullivan's experience.

¹⁵ Kinsey and his colleagues' (1953, 679–81) section on transvestites is a bit unclear: The researchers might have lumped transsexuals in with their descriptions of transvestites, because, prior to Benjamin's work (in the USA at least), these two types of persons had not yet been distinguished from one another. Thus, Kinsey et al. may have allowed for both hetero- and homosexual transsexuals, had they been aware of the distinction. Nevertheless, their descriptions do focus on transvestites.

It is unfortunate that your program cannot see the merit of each individual, regardless of their sexual orientation. [...] I had even considered lying to you about my sexual preference of men, as I knew it would surely keep me out of your Program, but I felt it important to be straightforward, possibly paving the way for other female-to-males with homosexual orientations – and we do exist.

(Letter from Lou Sullivan to Judy Van Maasdam, Gender Dysphoria Program in Palo Alto, 3/22/1980 [cited in Stryker 1999, 68])

Finally, Benjamin follows in the footsteps of Kinsey et al. in his presumptions of masculinity and femininity. Trans women are feminine (according to the old nursery rhyme, “sugar and spice and everything nice”); trans men are masculine (“snips and snails and puppy dog tails”). Thus, in the treatment programs for trans people, professionals presumed, and sometimes continue to presume, that trans women should be very feminine and trans men very masculine—in addition to wanting to enter into heterosexual relationships.

I just told him I pretty much stick to middle-of-the road things anyone can do, and that if I weren't a secretary, I'd like to get into printing & publishing & told him how I enjoy doing the newsletter. I left there rather discouraged. I first went to a bar (masculine!) and then home to cry (feminine!), but when I reflect I think he'll cooperate with me. (Sullivan, 10/5/1979)

Thus, Benjamin's introduction of a discourse that addresses trans experience both opened up a world of treatment and, at the same time, led to extreme limits on those who would receive such treatment as well as what that treatment would be. Transsexuality was no longer invisible. But how it was allowed to appear was extremely restricted.

4.3 Challenges from Queer Theory and Trans Studies

Kinsey and Benjamin were mavericks during their time. They challenged widely held positions about our bodies, homosexuality, transsexuality, and many other concepts, both within the sciences and in popular opinion. Benjamin, for his part, was one of very few resources for people who identified as trans in the 1950s and 1960s, and most considered him a sympathetic supporter who believed their descriptions of themselves and did what he could to help (Meyerowitz 2002, 133–4). But the effects

of their work were not entirely benign. Ironically, while the tendency in medical and psychological attitudes in the USA moved away from considering homosexuality a disorder, it moved toward more intensive classification of “transsexuality,” as well as management of its “treatment.”¹⁶ The development (in 1979) of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association (HBIGDA) and its “standards of care” set up a system of requirements that trans people had to satisfy in order to obtain hormones or surgery. “Transsexualism” was entered as a diagnostic term into the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) in 1980—while “homosexuality” had already been removed in 1973. Although the motives—at least on the parts of some—may have been well-meaning, these “standards of care” had several negative effects: (1) the requirement of a diagnosis before allowing treatment pathologized those who identified as trans, (2) the diagnosis itself focused primarily on “high intensity transsexuals” who were “homosexual” based on gender assigned at birth, and (3) the “standards of care” set up doctors and psychologists as “gatekeepers” who allowed or refused treatment based on their own judgments of those who requested it.

Received Stanford’s application & it’s the same 15-page extravaganza I filled out 3 years ago. HELP! [...] Sudden thought: If the psychiatric profession has decided that being homosexual is no longer a sign of mental disorder, then how come wanting to be homosexual is so mental? (Sullivan, 10/5/1979)

Challenges to the “standards of care” as well as to the authoritative position taken by the medical and psychological communities with regard to trans embodiment can be seen throughout transgender studies. Susan Stryker, in her introduction to the *Transgender Studies Reader* (2006a), describes the objectification of transgender people quite pointedly:

Previously, people who occupied transgender positions were compelled to be referents in the language games of other senders and addressees – they were the object of medical knowledge delivered to the asylum keeper, the subject of police reports presented to the judge; they were the dirty little outcasts of feminist and gay liberation discourses whose speakers clamored for the affections of the liberal state. The psychotherapist whispered of them into the surgeon’s ear, while the lawyer nodded in approval. Only rarely did we speak to others on our own behalf – in the pages of infrequently published autobiographies, or from the shadows of the freak show tents. (Stryker 2006a, 11)

As these communications described by Stryker take place, transgender experience—and bodies—becomes the objects of various discourses, even those meant to “assist,” “help,” “cure,” or “alleviate” the “suffering” of transgender experience.

¹⁶In the USA, homosexuality was removed from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* in 1973. Meanwhile, “transsexualism” was entered into the DSM in 1980. The most recent version of the DSM (DSM-5) in 2013 still includes the broad notion of “Gender Dysphoria” as a diagnosis.

Trans people themselves become invisible as individuals, but their bodies become symbols or objects of medical and psychological discourse. As Dean Spade (2006) says:

In most writing about trans people, our gender performance is put under a microscope to prove theories or build “expertise” while the gender performances of the authors remain unexamined and naturalized. (Spade 2006, 316)

Spade is criticizing not only medical discourses but also certain discourses in the humanities, for whom transgender becomes a living example of either the reification of gender norms (of which transgender people have often been accused)¹⁷ or the fluidity and dissipation of “real” gender (a position we discussed in Chap. 2).

Important in these criticisms are two main points: First, when it comes to access to medical intervention, trans people are subjected to rigorous requirements, such as required therapy sessions and having to “live as” the gender they desire to become. People who wish similar treatments that do not fall into the category of “transgender”—those who seek breast reduction or enhancement, hormone replacement therapy, or plastic surgery such as a “nose job” or “face lift,” for example—are not subjected to nearly as many requirements. No one is required to “prove” that they will be satisfied with the results of plastic surgery afterward, or that they will be happy when the hormone replacement therapy is in effect. As Spade points out:

[T]he disciplinary power exercised by the gatekeepers (doctors, surgeons, psychiatrists, therapists) of SRS [sex reassignment surgery] requires the repetitive, norm producing exercises to which Foucault refers. The “successful” daily performance of normative gender is a requirement for receiving authorization for body alteration. (Spade 2006, 319)

The “proof” required of trans persons is, as mentioned above, focused on the model of Benjamin’s “high intensity transsexual.” Often, those who do not appear as “high intensity transsexuals” are rejected from treatment, meaning they receive no hormones or surgery. In fact, while this was clearly the case during Sullivan’s lifetime, it continues today, since “gender dysphoria” is listed as a diagnosis in the most recent publication of the DSM (DSM-5, American Psychiatric Association 2013).¹⁸ Spade (2006) reflects upon his own attempts to receive a double mastectomy while being honest with therapists and doctors that he had no desires for hormones at the time, nor was he particular about whether others referred to him as “he” or “she”:

¹⁷There are several texts that have vilified transgender persons from the perspective of feminism and other disciplines in the humanities. Some of the most notable include: Janice Raymond’s *The Transsexual Empire* (1979), Bernice Hausman’s *Changing Sex* (1995), and Marjorie Garber’s *Vested Interests* (1997). More recently, we see Julia Bindel’s “Gender Benders, Beware” (2004), and Sheila Jeffrey’s *Gender Hurts: A Feminist Analysis of the Politics of Transgenderism* (2014).

¹⁸The World Professional Association for Transgender Health submitted a formal response to the diagnosis of “gender incongruence” and its criteria during the process of the development of the DSM-5. (DeCuypere et al. 2010) Some of the concerns voiced in the article would seem to remain, including the question of whether, and if so, how, “gender dysphoria” should be a diagnosis. However the authors also acknowledge that these concerns are difficult to resolve, especially since the medical community remains an important factor in addressing some of the needs of trans persons.

I've quickly learned that [...] in order to obtain the medical intervention I am seeking, I need to prove my membership in the category "transsexual" – prove that I have GID [Gender Identity Disorder] – to the proper authorities. Unfortunately, stating my true objectives is not convincing them. (Spade 2006, 317, emphasis in original)

For Spade, then, admitting that he did not want hormones, that he did not feel that he was “a man trapped in a woman’s body,” made his attempts to obtain surgery extremely difficult. Treatment is available to those who fit the “high intensity” transsexual mold; all others are often left to their own resources.

For this reason, trans writers often reject the traditional descriptions of “transsexuality” that mirror Benjamin’s “high intensity transsexual.” As Patrick Califia (2006) states:

I am more than a little jealous of “primary transsexuals” who can honestly say they feel like men who were born into the wrong bodies; that they are correcting an error of nature. My gender dysphoria has had more to do with feeling that there is something wrong when other people perceived or treated me as if I were a girl. Not wanting to be female, but not having much enthusiasm for the only other option our society offers. (Califia 2006, 435)

Jamison Green (2006) also makes a similar claim:

I cannot say that I was a man trapped in a female body. I can only say that I was a male spirit alive in a female body, and I chose to bring that body in line with my spirit, and to live the rest of my life as a man. (Green 2006, 505)

And Spade (2006) also concurs, recognizing that gender identity may sometimes have more to do with our reaction against the imposition of gender norms than with some kind of core drive:

I've always rejected the strategy that adopts some theory of innate sexuality and forecloses the possibility that anyone, gender-troubled childhood or not, could transgress sexual and gender norms at any time. (Spade 2006, 320, emphasis in original)

By voicing their own embodied experiences in these ways, trans theorists work to make a broad range of trans experience visible as well as to challenge the medical appropriation of the definition and treatment of trans embodiment.

The second main point of critique has already been indicated. When the psychological, psychiatric, and medical communities hold so much power over how “transsexuality” is understood and treated, i.e., when being honest with professionals ends up excluding trans persons from important goals for self-actualization, then trans experience, in many of its manifestations, is erased—and along with it, the individuals who live those experiences. Trans experience becomes channeled through the narrative of Benjamin’s “high intensity transsexual,” and thus any other experience as trans is forced to disappear. Added to this is the fact that some trans persons, desperate to receive treatment, learn to tell the professional communities—those who hold the keys to treatment—what they want to hear. The medical and psychological communities, learning of this duplicity, respond by making the access to treatment even more rigorous. More troubling than this dynamic, though, is that trans persons are forced to be complicit in their own disappearance: By telling the narrative of the “high intensity transsexual” in order to gain treatment, their own lived experiences remain untold and unheard. Spade (2006) describes his own attempts to obtain breast removal surgery:

After attending only three discussion group meetings with other trans people, I am struck by the naïveté with which I approached the search for counseling to get my surgery-authorizing letters. No one at these groups seems to see therapy as the place where they voice their doubts about their transitions, [...]. No one trusts the doctors as the place to work things out. [...] I have these great, sad, conversations with these people who know all about what it means to lie and cheat their way through the medical roadblocks to get the opportunity to occupy their bodies in the way they want. (Spade 2006, 326–7, emphasis in original)

So I'm making an addition to my story: instead of saying I'm not interested in girls, I'm gonna say that, since I've really decided to do this change, girls are looking a lot better to me – which is true! Suddenly it's no longer a rejection of women, but an acceptance & almost an interest, because I no longer have to be one of them! (Sullivan, 10/5/1979)

It is for this reason that many trans theorists turn to queer theory—and often specifically to Foucault (1980) and Butler (1993 and 1999)—in an effort to describe their erasure through discursive manifestations of power. Stryker (2006b) writes—sounding very much like Butler:

[B]odies are rendered meaningful only through some culturally and historically specific mode of grasping their physicality that transforms the flesh into a useful artifact. Gendering is the initial step in this transformation, inseparable from the process of forming an identity by means of which we're fitted to a system of exchange in a heterosexual economy. (Stryker 2006b, 253)

Green (2006) also describes the limitations of a medical discourse that forces trans people to follow a certain narrative:

Transgendered people who choose transsexual treatment, who allow themselves to be medicalized, depend on a system of approval that grants them access to treatment. [...] They then become either the justification for the treatment by embodying the successful application of “normal” standards; or they become the victims of the treatment when they realize they are still very different in form and substance from non-transsexual people [...]. (Green 2006, 503)

And Spade (2006) employs Foucault's theory in order to criticize the creation of a certain type of “transsexual” within medical and psychiatric discourse. Introducing Foucault as useful for his own critique of the medical discourse about trans experience, Spade explains:

Foucault's model of power lends to a critique of the creation of categories of illness that serve, through diagnosis and treatment, to regulate gender expression. When such an analysis is applied to transsexuality, we must ask what will be the mediating principle behind the analysis. (Spade 2006, 318)

He then begins to work through such a Foucauldian analysis:

An alternate mediating principle for a critical analysis is possible. Such an analysis requires seeing the problem not as fundamentally lying in the project of gender change or body alteration, but in how the medical regime permits only the production of gender-normative altered bodies, and seeks to screen out alterations that are resistant to a dichotomized, naturalized view of gender. (Spade 2006, 319)

Living on the “borders” of discourse as well as living through multiple attempts at recognition within the dominant discourses of the medical world, Spade and other trans writers find that Foucault and Butler (and other theorists usually under the heading of “queer theory”) provide terminology and methodology that assist them in describing their experiences.

However, as we saw in Chap. 2, there are also some major tensions between theorizing the body as discursive and the concreteness of embodied experience. Within trans theory, there are at least three challenges to those positions that argue that the body is socially constructed or discursive: The first is that the inner sense of the body, i.e., the body as a material, sensing, lived thing, is denied or subsumed in such theories, and this aspect of embodiment is extremely important in some trans experience. Thus, we see a decided move among certain trans theorists to point to the material specificity of the body. As Meyerowitz (2002) says:

Among postmodern academics today, it is decidedly unfashionable to speak of a “true self,” an “inner essence,” or a “core” identity beneath a surface appearance. But transsexuals, like most people, had a deeply rooted sense of who they were. (Meyerowitz 2002, 138–9)

Green (2006) echoes a similar critique:

Academics are afraid of being called essentialists, but I am not afraid of saying that as an artist and as a human being I am motivated to express both the core and the essence of my being-ness, and I will stand by the truth of my experience and the logic of my analysis. (Green 2006, 506)

Trans experience, then, manifests itself through discourses in a variety of ways, but it also indicates an inner experience that is often essential to the person who lives it. This position was discussed quite a bit in Chap. 2, and we will return to it in Chap. 6.

The second challenge to theories that argue for the social construction or discursivity of the body is that such arguments ignore the particular individual and social struggles lived by trans persons, even when “transgender” is held up as a paradigm figure that challenges the binary of gender, the specificity of sexual orientation, etc. As Viviane Namaste (2000) says, these theories—usually in the humanities—focus on what is said about trans persons in the construction of transsexuality or transgender, but in doing so, they miss important lived struggles that are particular to trans people.

An exclusive focus on the medical and psychiatric production of transsexuality subverts a nuanced understanding of everyday life as it is lived and experienced by transsexual and transgendered people in a variety of social spheres, such as employment, housing, health care, social services, and civil status. (Namaste 2000, 38)

Namaste points out that oppression against trans people (especially drag performers) occurs already within the gay community. She also demonstrates how the erasure of transgender has a particular, and deadly, effect when it comes to health care, such as resources for those with HIV. In addition, transgender people of color experience an added layer of oppression, one which is not recognized in analyses of the medical and psychiatric discourses of transsexuality. And finally, the fact that

many trans women often work as prostitutes as a means of survival rarely—if ever—is reflected (or reflected upon) in these theories.

Because [Butler] chooses to neglect the specific *work* of female impersonation in gay bars, it is perhaps not surprising that Butler's observations of these milieu do not include attention to the work of prostitution. [...] The work of prostitution is not incidental to many transsexual women. [...] [Butler] contends that we need to write a feminist theory centrally concerned with the constitution of gender. Yet it is in and through work that transsexual women are able to physically embody our sex changes, and thus to interact in the world as women. (Namaste 2009, 19)¹⁹

The labor, health issues, safety, and mortality rates particular to trans persons (and especially trans women of color) remain unaddressed in those theories that valorize trans experience as evidence for the slipperiness of gender and embodiment.

Stephen Whittle (2006, xii) provides a simple summary of this point in his “Foreword” to the *Transgender Studies Reader*: “Real life affords trans people constant stigma and oppression based on the apparently unreal concept of gender.” Trans studies theorists therefore work to describe not only the particular embodied experience that grounds trans experience but also the social conditions that erase and/or oppress those who live as trans. These material conditions can certainly be described through reference to discursive power relations—as we see in Spade's (2006) reference to Foucault—but when the focus is directed exclusively toward discursive construction, then material oppression can escape notice.

The third challenge is that, by focusing on how discourses constitute gender—and especially transgender—many theorists ignore how trans persons are engaged in their own discourses.²⁰ This, too, contributes to an erasure of transgender voices, in this case, within the humanities. But we see in Sullivan's diaries that he employs not only discourses from dominant, medical/psychiatric sources, but also—and more frequently, it seems—terminology and descriptions from the gay community, drag subculture, the “sexual revolution” occurring in the USA at the time, and other counter-culture images from movies and music, especially Lou Reed. Stryker (2006a) highlights the discourse within transgender communities as well:

This is not to suggest that transgender people did not carry on lively exchanges among themselves; indeed there is a vast body of transgender community-based critical and cultural work that is scarcely visible to the broader society. It is rather to acknowledge that few

¹⁹The title of Namaste's article, “Undoing Theory” (2009) refers to Butler's book *Undoing Gender* (2004). Namaste's criticism addresses Butler's early (and most ground-breaking) works (1993 and 1999) as well as her later work (2004).

²⁰There are, of course, exceptions to this claim, but many analyses that take transgender persons' descriptions of themselves seriously are often limited to theoretical work within the transgender community, as indicated by Stryker's comment, which follows. The *Transgender Studies Reader* (Stryker and Whittle 2006) does remarkable work in bringing many of these discussions to a wider reading audience. Gayle Salamon's *Assuming a Body* (2010), of course, does address the descriptions provided by trans men and is a text written and read (and for the most part, reviewed) external to the transgender community, but there are also shortcomings to her text, as I pointed out in Chap. 2.

other than transgender people themselves, and their self-appointed minders, took part in these marginalized conversations. (Stryker 2006a, 11)

Namaste (2000, 65) also points out: “Transsexuals and transgendered people have their own ways of organizing; critical research needs to understand and respect this organization on its own terms.” Thus, any theory *about* trans experience needs to take the descriptions coming *from* trans people seriously, without presuming that any one description is representative of all trans experience.

In their engagement with theories that argue for the discursivity or social construction of the body—whether by integrating them into their own analyses or challenging them through serious critiques—trans theorists demonstrate how embodiment, and specifically trans embodiment, is both a discursive and material (or inner-sense) affair. Their work demonstrates the complexity of the material, lived body. It is a body that both materializes through discourse and is felt as the ground for entry into, or against, the discourses at hand. Trans theories—and the bodies described therein—therefore need to be taken seriously in discussions and analyses of embodiment.

Thus, each of the approaches to embodiment that we have examined so far is partially successful but also significantly problematic, especially in light of the insights offered by trans theorists. The descriptions offered by “professionals” in medicine, psychiatry, psychology, sociology, sexology, and taxonomy—Kinsey et al. and Benjamin offering two examples—attend to a material body as evidence for their theories. In doing so, they often point to a wider diversity in actual experience than is allowed by dominant discourses, and they sometimes cause shifts in those discourses precisely by careful examination of those bodies.²¹ But these discourses carry with them several major problems: first, their understanding of materiality is implicit and unquestioned—and might even vary from one theory to another. Second, in the treatment of trans persons, by taking the position of a professional voice, these discourses enact an authoritative position over against “the” transsexual, leading to an erasure, rather than more nuanced evidence, of trans experience. Finally, by settling into a position of transgender as a “diagnosis,” medical professionals and those working with them move into a position of “gatekeepers” who enforce a very specific definition of transgender (and gender) while also deciding who may or may not receive the treatment they desire. These professional attitudes are usually rejected by trans studies theorists (even though some might choose to use a narrow definition of “transsexuality” to their advantage), because such professional discourses consider only certain self-descriptions as valid rather than allowing trans people to speak for themselves.

The theories of social construction, queer theory, performativity, and discourses of power are useful tools in challenging how discourse is employed about and against trans experience. These discussions identify flexibility and movement within various descriptions of gender while recognizing the tension between a social enforcement of gender norms and one’s individual agency in how gender is lived.

²¹ See also Fausto-Sterling (2000, 76).

However, these positions deny the material ground to experience, either subsuming it under descriptions of discourse and performativity, or leaving it vague and highly problematic. The result is that descriptions offered by trans people about their specific embodied experience are either appropriated to prove the theory that gender is constructed, or their claims are denied and their specific lived experiences elided. In this move, trans experience is once again erased—any reference to an “inner sense” or “core” is dismissed as already socially constructed, or worse, taken to be simply conservative or naïve—and further, the social conditions of oppression that are particular to different types of transgender lives are ignored, left aside as external to the theory.

So, how do we develop a theory of embodiment that allows for the specificity of trans experience, appreciates a material sense of body as ground as well as an “inner sense” of embodiment, but also recognizes the involvement of social discourse in the constitution of embodiment and gender, and, finally, acknowledges regimes of power and oppression particular to specific types of gendered embodiment? How can we speak of a material body without sliding into material determinism?²² How do we address the constitution of gender without insisting that the body, including its inner sense, must be entirely socially constructed? In the next chapter, we will discuss the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, whose work on embodiment significantly influenced Merleau-Ponty’s analyses. Husserl’s method allows us to consider the body as experienced on multiple levels at once. In this way, we can analyze not only the felt sense of embodiment that resonates with trans writers’ reference to a “core” or “inner sense” of the body, but we can also acknowledge the importance of culture and language in how our embodiment is lived—without denying or subsuming either one in favor of the other.

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²²The fear of material determinism seems to have been a strong motivator that restrained Butler from admitting a materiality to the body. In an interview with Kate More (1999), for example, Butler was asked “if biological gender dimorphism is proven to be determining, where do we go from there,” to which Butler replied: “Proven?! I don’t think it can be proven. I am actually permanently suspicious of any such proofs on logical grounds. [...] It’s either semantically empty, at which point the proof could be valid without having any meaning whatsoever, or it’s using an utterly fictitious construct as if it were valid. I’d love to look at this paper, I’m sorry I don’t know it, but I bet I could destroy it, and I would seek to do so! ... I’m unequivocally hostile to such explanations” (More 1999, 288–9).

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Chapter 5

Lou Sullivan Diaries: 1976–1980

1/23/1976

Dearest Lisa—

Of course you don't know but I have thought of offering you financial assistance for your *Re-birth* for a long time now. Somehow I've felt predestined to. Other times I thought I really shouldn't—it's too easy—you should get out there and work off some of your cute curvy fat little butt for it. But knowing how hard I've been trying to trim MINE off and how hard you've tried to fatten yours up and how irritating it is to try to look like a boy with a real round wiggly derriere and how it feels like you're carrying a backpack on your hip and how *you'd* feel like you "left something behind" (get it?) if you DID work off yours—well to make a long story short yes I'll loan you some cash. I feel like a cheapskate but I'll loan you \$500. Let me know when you need it *for sure*. I hope it's not too hard to collect the other four, but it'll give you something to bitch about. As for the "pay it back in 2 yrs. with 10%"—I'll be satisfied if you just pay it back in 2 yrs. Ok?

3/9/1976

Lisa—

Once again I've become preoccupied with the thought of male hormones. I keep thinking how I wouldn't have to diet because all the weight wouldn't go straight to my FAT ASS and how my voice would be a little deeper (at work I've been called "sir" over the phone 3 times) and my boobs would get flatter and I wouldn't have to be pumping myself full of *female* hormones just to keep from being a mommy and how much more beautiful I'd feel. Shit. What should I do? I could probably go to the same menty centy (mental center, ha ha) I went to when freaking out looking for a job and sit in on their TS group and see what the docs there advise. I feel so alone with these thoughts and have no one, not a soul here to discuss this with.—My work

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is in the industrial section of town and on my way home on the bus, sitting with all these factory guys going home from work, I had to sit on those sideways seats so I was in full view. So this guy on the other side of the bus goes, “OH. THERES A GIRL WHO WANTS TO BE A MAN SO MUCH THAT SHE WEARS MEN’S SHOES.” *Real loud.* And all these guys start looking at me with Xray eyes and I think oh my god. Then he goes “GEE, I WONDER IF SHE WEARS MENS SHORTS TOO. HEY. DO YOU WEAR MENS SHORTS TOO?” Fuck. I looked at him with this oh please have mercy look. Soon we stop and most of the people get off the bus, so I went and sat down next to the jerk and said “Thanks a lot for reading me out in front of all those people” and he says “well they could see you” and I said “Yes but we must have some decorum. You just can’t go yelling about people’s shorts on the bus!” and after talking a while he apologizes and now is big buddy-buddy when I see him on the bus.

3/25/1976

My job is pretty OK—I already got a \$14 per week raise, plus we lost one employee and I ended up stuck with the Accts Payable duties added to my own, so now I handle and sign all the checks and pay the bills around there. The people are still creepy. I think I’ve discovered the true meaning of “camp”, or gay-oriented behavior. All my joy, humor, expressions must be so gay-oriented that absolutely none of it is understood there. I make these wonderful jokes, etc. that anyone else would catch immediately, but not them. Right over their straight, ignorant heads. Sure makes it uncomfortable for me. But no clothes hassle—even “wore” my leather jacket yesterday.

3/22/1976

Dear Lisa—

See. That’s just what I needed! A Lisa heavy rap. *You* know what happens to me: it *is* the whole addictive scene and I just get so involved. You know **I** know I shouldn’t pursue any TS trip—I don’t feel like a “male trapped in a female’s body” nor do I think I *could* be a man. It’s the fantasy—like I once told you—if I had a mastectomy I’d have to beat off 24 hours a day because I’d be so turned on by myself. The whole scene for me is just a wonderful sexual fantasy. But the whole question part of “am I a man or woman *deep down inside?*” I DON’T KNOW. I don’t feel like either from what I know men and women feel like. You left me with the feeling you don’t think one can be in-between, neither male nor female, just plain old YOU, I mean ME. When I look in the mirror I don’t think either male or female, I just think “oh *that’s* what I look like, whaddyaknow!” Why don’t I like being female?? Because all I was taught and trained and forced to feel as a woman to me is repulsive. But all those things are so deeply ingrained I can’t help them and try so hard to escape them (e.g., masturbation fantasy of being raped as a female)—SHIT like that—knowing now more than ever the hatred and despising men feel for women and I can’t bear to be the object of that scorn...being so repulsed myself at giggly idiot *chicks* who think they’re so liberated because their hubbies “*help them* with the housework”... trying to relate to Tom on a person-to-person level which to me means man-to-man

and could never mean woman-to-man...because before I used to look in the mirror and just sink inside “god, ugly, ugly.” Now I look and say “all right! I AM SO SHARP!” And I know if I start fooling with hormones, etc., once again I’ll look in the mirror and be dissatisfied—because somehow I am not a male or a female and I can’t pretend I’m either. But it sometimes is so hard sitting on the fence with a picket up my ass. I’ve GOT to stay in between becuz I know it will be the only place I’m comfy. But my fantasies are so vivid. And I can’t impress upon my mind that I wouldn’t be a gorgeous hunk if I only (*fill in the blank*). Just like where you wrote you know you’re not some Vogue fashion plate—but my fantasy tells me when I look thru *Gentlemen’s Quarterly* and see some doll “oh, there I am! HELLO! [smack]” But deep inside I know that’s not real DAMMIT. I just need you to burst my bubble once in a while and tell me how hormones ain’t gonna make me the handsome doll of my dreams. You seem to say either go all the way (for yourself) and get the operation or go back to being a guy. I say you can live forever just as you are today. Look at that one guy we met—22 years in drag. I think for myself I could much more easily live forever as I am today in the middle somewhere than even thinking of going back to a female. The thought of that whole female scene sounds so much more threatening and repulsive to me than the shit like the asshole on the bus. As I am now I feel I can handle those jerks. But as female I *can’t*. I don’t feel going back, in your case to a man, would be more “real” or “as it is.” I feel you are more real—I am more real with my present bod, but also with my vision of it, distorted as it is. (I’m still surprised when I take off my clothes—altho I know it’s me under there.) Wouldn’t it be just as much hassle if you did go back to the male life “knowing in your soul and heart you are female” as it’s a hassle living the female life knowing when you disrobe—UUAAGGH! To me the former is *worse*. But I know I’m not a TS and where you say you “can truly say” somewhere in your soul you ARE a woman, I cannot say truly somewhere in my soul I am *either*. (Scary but true.) So cease to worry about me. I just needed you to say “stop thinking with your head in a bucket of Brylcreem.” And I know if hair suddenly started growing out of my chin I’d freak out as much as I do when I look at my boobs. *Who needs both?* Did I recommend for you to read *Mademoiselle de Maupin* by Gautier? Do. Mlle de Maupin is ME. Thanks for all your love and concern. What would I do without you to bring me out of Cloud 13??

5/14/1976

So I don’t know what to do about the fact that Tom has just admitted to having slept with another woman. It makes my stomach queasy to think my competition is a female. And of course my first reaction is to think of pursuing a mastectomy. If I had that, I muse, this would never have happened; that I’d be able to handle it better if I had a boy’s chest. Insane.

5/17/1976

When I got good and buzzed I asked Tom what he’d think about my seriously pursuing a mastectomy. Said he couldn’t understand why I wanted one and I said because they’re ugly. He agreed breasts are strange, but said he looks at them as

being “kind of funky.” I told him I feel if I had one this whole deal would never have happened, and he mumbled it probably would happen much more. Boy, was that an eye-opener. Sure struck a responsive chord with me. If I can be a sharp girl like the woman Tom slept with, maybe I can learn to love myself. How can I expect him to be taken with me if I’m so repulsed by me? Maybe I can strive to be the perfect androgyne. It’s a lot harder and a lot more beautiful. If only I could convince myself my jutting ass, bulbous breasts and fleshy stomach aren’t deformed. Fat chance. I mean I’m not talking about getting a dress or anything, but I am trying to get myself in the right direction of re-learning to like my bod. I used to.

6/28/1976

Dearest Ma and K.—

About once a week I think of going back to that mentie centie counselor I saw and discussing a mastectomy. I reason I’m 25 and if I still feel this way at that age, why waste any more time thinking about it? But I also think I may just be thinking of it to divert my thoughts from how unhappy I am with everything else, especially since Tom and I have just gotten separate apartments. I’m even thinking about going off the b.c. [birth control] pill. And you needn’t worry I’ll slip up and get P.G. [pregnant]. To me that would be as bad as losing a limb. No lie. Yesterday was the Annual Gay Pride Parade and it was spectacular. The papers estimate 120,000 watching and participating. I didn’t march—maybe would have had I felt in a cheerier mood, but it didn’t take long for me to get all choked up by it, and when the Gay Fathers Group contingent went by and a young man was holding a little kid like my nephew on his shoulders and the kid holding a sign saying “I’m Proud of My Gay Dad”, I just couldn’t hold back the tears any longer. I felt so deeply that they are my people—tho I know I can never be accepted as one of them.

7/11/1976

Thurs nite went to what was advertised publicly as a Bisexual Women’s Rap Group. I felt as tho I should get more in touch with women to help dispel all my bad opinions of them. I was apprehensive, but open. And then, believe it or not, incredibly, this can’t really be happening, it turns out to be members of this women’s group debating over whether this one person, who they can’t decide is female or male and who’s said she’s a TV and “some futuristic in-between sex,” should be allowed to participate in their Women’s Center activities. And basically whether TVs and TSs should be allowed there. What fate! I just couldn’t believe my ears—my topic, the age-old lesbian/feminists versus TVs. And unfortunately there were also several man-hating interspurts throughout (some bisexual group!). So I sure felt like a sore thumb there in my suit and finally I spoke out: “Can I say something very non-activist? Speaking as a female transvestite, I’m sick and tired of seeing transvestites and transsexuals being shit on by feminists.” So the talk went on, me speaking my part and afterward I went over to the friends of this C. (who was the debated figure and not present) who were pleading her case. Said I’d very much like to meet this C. and the friend hurriedly assured me C.’s female but “she’d been

doing this *MAN* trip!!” but has now re-emerged as a lesbian feminist. Gave her my work phone to give *C.* in hopes she’ll want to meet me, too. After the meeting several women thanked me for coming and invited me again but I said first I’ll have to see what happens to *C.* cuz I don’t want anyone having a meeting on whether **I** should be allowed in too.

7/19/1976

Told Tom I was going to a doctor at this TV/TS group to get this question straight in my mind and he was obviously against it, even said I was wasting my time hanging around “with all those ...”, but stopping short of whatever he was going to call us.

7/27/1976

Wed nite I traveled to Berkeley to attend the Pacific Center for Human Growth’s TV/TS group, and what a disappointment. I’d imagined it much more professional but it turned out to be like a hippie crash pad scene. The group turned out to be three 40–50 year oldish male-to-female transvestites. One was a real drip, one of those who claims he went to grade school some days as a boy and some days as a girl and everyone thought it was just fine. I’m sure. They weren’t even well versed or articulate people. Bore. And yesterday I phoned the psychologist I’d seen, when going crazy trying to find a job, at the Center for Special Problems. Told her I thought I was ready for their TS group. She asked me to call the group coordinator tomorrow and she’d tell her to expect my call. So I phoned her today. She warned me the group was all male-to-female, if that bothered me. Told her they’re the only kind I’ve had contact with so far. We made an appointment to meet and talk next Monday. I really hope it helps to go thru this doctor bit. I’m so weary of considering it. I just want a mastectomy and to get sterilized and continue living this half and half life. I don’t feel this surgery would make me a better man or woman, but I know it would make me a better person. I don’t believe I can successfully live as a man or as a woman. But I have to do all I can to live comfortably and this surgery would do that. I have never felt as sure of that than I do now.

8/5/1976

Dear Evan—

Well I’ve taken a Big Step. Starting Aug. 16 I’ll begin seeing a counselor for transsexuals on a weekly basis. Somehow I think this comes to you as no surprise, and it really wasn’t to me either. What can I say but that I’m really becoming uncomfortable in and tired of my ambiguity. In the past it seemed so easy for me to slip in and out of either the men’s room or the women’s room. Now I feel out of place in both. And a few months back I even got reprimanded for trying to go into the women’s room in a gay bar. It was around that time that I decided to start leaning back toward the more female identity, which consisted of introducing myself as Sheila and going into women’s rooms and admitting outright, when questioned, I was a girl. But that only lasted about a month. I got as shocked a reaction from people telling them that as I imagined I was getting telling them the opposite. And I’m tired

of feeling like an imposter, tired of pumping myself full of female hormoned birth control pills, tired of wearing a binder around my chest so I can hardly breath and my back hurts. Tired of opening my mouth and hearing a girl's voice.—Two weeks ago Tom and I were on the street and Tom ran into a co-worker. Tom introduced me as “Lou” and we shook hands. The guy laughed, embarrassed, and said “You know, man, no offense or anything, but the 1st time I saw you come into the restaurant I thought you were a girl! I thought you were a girl in a man's suit!”—And I want to be a boy so bad. But what can even they do for me?—They could make my voice lower, could give me a flat chest, could make me sterile, could give me sideburns. But I'd still have to sweat it out worrying if there's a door on their goddamn can. Tricking would be definitely out, tho it probably wouldn't be any harder for me than it is now. And can I really make it on a day-to-day basis? Will my life really be any different than it is now, or will I fail miserably in a man's world and get beat up every other day because I come off like a screaming swishy faggot, even when I'm 45 years old? And what about this job I worked so hard to find. My boss is madly in love with me, yet he has to answer to someone else too. And there is a limit, I'm sure. And the whole frustrating endless sometimes totally hopeless process of trying to change your whole past identity. On the bus coming home from work the guy next to me does the old “Is your name Bob? Oh you look just like a guy I used to know named Bob.” Then he launched into a big conversation with me, question after question, asking if I was ever in the service, etc., etc. When he asked my age I knew I'd never get away with my real one so I told him 19, feeling like a liar. And for the first time I realized what a lack it is to be without a past, to not have experienced all the subtle and typical male growing up occurrences. But I guess all of these drawbacks have comparable drawbacks in the identity I'm in now.—This counselor is at the Center for Special Problems, the place I went to when I was freaking out going crazy trying to find a job. She heads a TS group at the Center and of course it's all M-to-F TSs. After thinking about it I decided not to join the group—there's just so much I can say in a M-to-F group, there's a point where my “feeling just the same, but in the opposite direction” no longer does me any good, no longer answers any of *my* questions. So I'll be meeting this woman on an individual basis. She said her Center and Stanford University make references back and forth to each other. You know, I've really started to think of this switch super seriously in the past few days—trying to imagine what I'd feel like—and a kind of tranquility flows thru me. When I was hurrying down the sidewalk and thought “How will I feel after?” my step slowed to a normal relaxed pace and I truly felt that this is what I should do.

8/21/1976

It's really difficult for me to write down what's been going on, my feelings, etc. The 2 weeks between when I first talked to the counselor for transsexuals and our first “session” were ridden with drastic downs and euphoric ups. My thoughts were so laden with this switching-over idea I could barely function at work. I tried unceasingly to step outside myself, see myself as others would, trying to imagine what I'd be like as a male, how I would pass, how it'd be different, how I'd be different, could I really make it, what about my job, Tom, etc., etc. Lawrence was an immeasurable

help (he's visiting now), talking with me, helping me talk about it. And then, like an angel sent just for me! Saturday morning's paper Aug. 7 on the front page, just for me: [*San Francisco Chronicle*, Aug. 7, 1976, p. 1 "Sex Change Uproar in Emeryville," see [Appendix](#)]. I knew immediately that I had to talk with her and she could set me on the right path. Just the thought there was *someone else* like me!—I told Tom I would write her to meet with her and we had our first real discussion. The two things he said that stuck in my mind were "What are we going to be afterward? Friends?? I'm basically *straight*, you know!" and "I'm going to use as much of my influence to stop you from doing it as other people are influencing you *to* do it." And that in essence if I do go thru with the change I will have seen the last of him. He said that. I felt pretty bad, later that night we had a second, similar talk. He said my ambiguity was one of the few things that made me "interesting." Afterward I cried while talking with Lawrence about it, saying I don't want to be interesting, I want to be happy. He pointed out how Tom and I go back and forth threatening to leave each other—me because of his alcoholism, he because of my transsexualism. That it seemed absurd to him that I was ready to part with Tom forever only a few weeks ago and now I'm trembling at the idea of him leaving me. And that he felt I was mostly upset because this is the first rejection I've gotten because of my wish to switch. Good point.—Sunday I penned my letter, Monday the 9th mailed it c/o the high school: Dear Steve, When I read your story in the S.F. Chronicle and Oakland Tribune I thought you a God-send. I'm a 25-year-old female. For the past 3 years I've described myself as a female-to-male transvestite and have lived 24 hours a day in men's clothing. I retain my female identity, but I can and do pass off and on in public. For 3 years I have tried in vain to locate a female with similar feelings. All this time I have fantasized switching over, but in the past several months I cannot rid myself of the intense desire to do so. Aug. 2 for the first time I've sought professional advice on the subject and will begin meeting a counselor on a weekly basis starting Aug. 16. However, my greatest desire at present is to be able to meet with and talk to someone who has gone through this change. I so badly need peers and, as I am sure you know, there aren't a hell of a lot of F-to-Ms around. Would it be possible for us to meet and talk? I'm not sure just how fed up you are with talking about it or how tired you are of being bothered by the public. So I will leave the next move to you. I anxiously await word from you. In any case, please know that just being made aware you exist has made me feel less a screwball. Regards, Sheila Sullivan. —And Wednesday at 6 am my morning paper brought me a picture I'd so wished for and a beautiful beautiful article: [*San Francisco Chronicle*, Aug. 11, 1976, p. 1 "Sex Change Teacher: He's Happy as a Man," see [Appendix](#)] I re-read it over and over, stared enchanted at the picture. He was so so beautiful. I felt as tho I were seeing myself. Took the paper to work, vowed not to discuss it because I was so high on it I couldn't trust myself not to burst. The women at work gathered around one of their desks over the article and I could see them discussing it, laughing, but all I heard was one say it was probably harder to switch to a man than to a woman. No one said a word to me. I was too high to go sit outside and have lunch with the warehouse foreman like I've done for the past few months. Tom phoned and asked if I'd seen the article, saying "He really looks good"—me just holding myself back from bursting with emotion. Counting each minute to hear from her,

each phone call I got I knew it must be him. Thurs the foreman asked if I were going to have lunch with him cuz there's something he wants to ask me about. At lunch he says he wanted to ask me about that woman who had a sex change, "Can they really do that?" I said "Oh yeah!" and launched into an outline of the procedures, etc., and finally said, "Don't tell anyone this, but I've been thinking of doing that same thing myself." He lent his support, saying when I first came there the women had talked about me, "I wonder which bathroom she's going to use" and he'd told them I could use the one in the warehouse if I wanted. He confided "don't tell anyone this but" he has a "homosexual" son. I felt so great after our talk, felt I really had a friend. Since then he's said things like "That-a-girl...er, I guess I should say, that-a-boy," and that I'm his "buddy" and "pretty soon they're not going to let you in there (the women's room) anymore!" Monday my session with my counselor. I felt something like an insect under a microscope and weighed each word I said, knowing what could be read into anything I said. We discussed my background, how I felt about the parents, my first boyfriend, how I found out how men and women have sex. She asked had I ever seen two men having sex with each other and I said I don't remember ever having. Afterward asked her what the point in rehashing all this was. She said to try and see why I'm doing what I am and if it's worthwhile for me to continue. That I had to admit it wasn't a "typical reaction." Ok, that sounds harmless enough. But talked later with Lawrence, expressing my apprehension at the worth of it and my fear that my defenses and securities will be destroyed. That no matter WHY I'm doing it, I want to continue doing it and that's that. So why find out why? Etc, etc. But I knew that that's only fearing the truth and if rehashing all these things in my past (that I've tried to interpret as causes *years* ago) will break me, I better find that out now. Lawrence left for NY Aug. 19 and after work on the 20th my letter! my beautiful letter! "Dear Sheila: Yes I would like to chat with you and arrangements will be made for us to talk as soon as all settles here. In the meantime, I'm glad you are seeking professional counseling so that at least you can share your deep concerns in confidence—but remember only you will be able to answer the questions you ask of yourself—so listen for your answers as you share your feelings with your counselor! Sincerely, Steve Dain."—I don't know how often I've re-read it now. And now I realize my biggest hang-up is my lack of self-confidence, lack of respect for my own judgment and my inability to make a decision that will affect my whole life. I am plagued by fear of the unknown future, tho I know in my heart I feel the same way now as I did 10 years ago. With this new awareness I've decided to look into the possibilities of getting myself sterilized. Even if I have doubts of my ability to live as a man, I have no doubts of my inability to live as a woman with child. Haven't told Tom and won't until the day before the operation and am firmly resolved not to let his reaction change my mind. Went to Planned Parenthood but they were closed, will call them Monday. It's incredible the feeling of one-ness and peace with myself I have once I make a decision like this. You don't have to be a transsexual to get sterilized and I want it badly. No more intense fear, horror at the thought of what I'd do if I became pregnant, disgust at the thought of bearing and having to center my life around this child, out of guilt and the feeling I should be responsible, guilt identifying with how Tom would feel about the kid. I know he's

very against abortion, therefore must want his children. But even though—they'll have to be someone else's. I can't.

8/29/1976

Tom and I had our first decent discussion on my problem this past Friday. He said a lot of stuff that makes sense and I really feel good about the whole talk. He said he didn't feel any operation was the answer for me because he sees my problem as being "mainly one of fashion," i.e., I am tired of the look I have now and just can't think what to do next. He says (and it's true) that if I were to switch over, it still wouldn't solve my social identity problem because, like him, I don't know how to be a typical male, that I'll never dress like everyone else or act like everyone else. No matter what I'll never fit in with either the male or the female scene. And he said I don't "think like a man" (which is something I'll never know for sure). That I'll stick out just as much as a guy as I do as a girl. And he's right. He compared my obsession with surgery with his alcoholism, saying I go toward that direction just because it's so easy for me to give in to my desires, just as it's so easy for him to wander into the bar. I told him (breaking my vow) that I was looking into getting sterilized and his reaction was of an "oh, no" shaking his head slowly, but no vehement reaction against it, altho he gave me some line on doing something that will affect my whole life. He said no matter how many operations I have or Bodybuilding courses I take I'll never look how I dream I want to, that I should rather look toward an ideal I can reach, like Romaine Brooks. That maybe I should try wearing some women's suits like I used to.—I must say that since this talk with him, it's the first time in months I've really felt the idea of switching over is not right for me at all—that I should try to look in another direction. He said he thinks it's a good idea for me to see Steve Dain but that I shouldn't go into it with a hero-worship attitude.—Somehow I have to learn to love myself as the weirdo boyish female I am.

9/6/1976

Well, I hope you believe this latest one—because I do not. [*San Francisco Chronical*, Sept. 3, 1976 p. 1, "Sex-Change Furor: Emeryville Teacher Arrested," see [Appendix](#)] I just felt like it had happened to me. Of all the goddamn fucked-up shit. Who in the hell do these people think they are. It's impossible for me to avoid becoming deeply attached to her—I like to call him her because it allows me to identify more easily, to really grasp what he is. I cannot help falling in love with him. I feel he is my soul. Anyway at the rate his hassles are going, I'll never get to meet him. I wish somehow I could be of some help to him. —Well, since that talk with Tom, my fervor to get the operation has diminished considerably. Monday at my counselor all my anti-female sentiments were expressed to her obvious disapproval. She said it seemed in my life there was a huge void concerning half the human population, that I should make an attempt to get to know some women who don't fit all the stereotype reasons I dislike women. Easier said than done. Since then I've tried to think of a way to do this. Have even considered going back to that ha-ha Bisexual Women's Rap Group. I guess somewhere there are sane women, but

even my sisters, and some of the other women I know, have ultimately become disappointments, and they are the sanest women I've ever known. Wherever these women are, they are needles in haystacks. Anyway my counselor is on vacation and won't see her again until Sept. 27. So my mind is 100 times more at ease than it was before and my obsession is gone. But it's all still in me and I think I simply must wait until I know, just somehow know, it's time to do it.

9/15/1976

Dear Lisa—

Frankly, yes, I was beginning to take your silence seriously. Began to think I was getting the same “oh” reaction from you as I was getting from my family regarding my steps toward switching. I was a little confused by parts of your letter—I must say it was surely the most disjointed and disconnected you've ever written. But I'll try to comment on what I got out of it. Basically I think you were trying to say there is no end to the obsession of transsexualism. The Miss Plastic Surgery syndrome. That it never truly accomplishes what you want, that you're still the same person afterward so why have it etc. etc. That the basis of one's happiness should not be the surgery. I am a happy person. My happiness is not riding on whether I switch or not. That's why I cannot agree with you. The switch does not change you as a person. Either you're happy or you're unhappy and changing your sex doesn't affect that. Either you're a loser or you're not a loser. Either you like yourself or you don't. Deep down. As for the argument that I'll never REALLY be a man or be my fantasy, I know that. And I truly think I've faced that. Yet I don't believe my “fantasy” (i.e., what I ask) is very far from what I am right now. I don't want to be the stereotype butch man nor do I want to participate in that role. After the switch I will continue to be just what and where I am. My occupation will not change. I like my job and I'm damn good at what I do and I'd make the best damn male secretary around. And I don't want to carouse around the gay baths or nude beaches or trick every night (or ever). What I am doing right now won't change and I don't have to follow the stereotype man to be a man. I don't want anything to do with that kind of man. And I feel that's a plus on my side, both as a person and as a TS: I hesitated there when I wrote “TS.” That's the first time I've used that word to identify myself. I have no more desperation. For a few months back there (July, Aug) I was so confused and jolted by myself that I had to seek out this counselor. I've only seen her 4x so far (vacation, Labor Day) but I like her somehow. She has only worked with M-to-Fs and maybe as time goes on she may not turn out to be what I want in a counselor. So far we're moving right along. She hasn't really DONE or TOLD me anything, only suggested I investigate areas I've avoided, such as associating with women, finding out how Tom feels about my wishes, etc. But like I say I'm in no big fat desperate hurry to switch. I know I'm going to do it—the right time will just come.

9/23/1976

My dear Lisa—

No, dear, I'm not angry! I just re-read my last letter and it was so simple and logical I wish it were all true. I guess both of us are really in a jam over this ridiculous

question and that's our only excuse. Lisa, I'm really in a mental black out. I can barely think anymore on this question. All I want to do is hide in my apt, watch TV, read, sleep and go to work. I don't want to meet new people, get involved in/with anyone or anything. I don't even want to talk. It seems my ability to cope with my ambiguity is totally gone. And I don't KNOW of any cure. I don't *know* that switching over will bring me out again. Lisa, I've finally realized that I cannot seem to make a permanent decision in my life. Why am I so afraid to take control of my life? Everyone else does it so naturally (getting married FOREVER, having babies FOREVER, investing in a house FOREVER, without batting an eyelash). Yet I feel like a middle-aged closet queen scared to death to "come out." Afraid everyone will "find out" about me and afraid I'll be rejected by all. Just like the fairy who thinks no one knows and if they did, oh! his career would be ended! reputation smashed! family disowning! friends snubbing! And it doesn't happen because, of course, they all knew he was a queer all along. Why is it that I can sit here and watch myself crumble and not be able to kick myself in the ass toward the direction my logic tells me is right? I'm so afraid of losing Tom, yet even as I write this my feelings for him have changed SO MUCH. There's no longer any joy in our love—only a secure predictability and sameness. It's the fear of that security loss rather than the loss of his love. Just realizing my avoidance of making any permanent decision for myself has helped me decide on getting sterilized—something I AM sure of. This is a dumb question but I don't know if that will stop me from menstruating. It seems logical it would. You ask "how's passing?" Well, for the little I've been getting out, fabulous Know what's stopping me from rushing out and getting the op RIGHT NOW? Two-fold. I won't be able to come or go. HA HA HA. More specifically their crappy cock op means I'd never have orgasms and I love them so. And if I don't have the cock op I'll still have trouble going to the can. I'd say 2 out of 3 men's johns don't have doors on their stalls and I'm tired of being Quick Draw McGraw with the pants. I can't pee in peace. No peace or piece. HA HA HA. The joke's on me. New development. Latest issue of the Advocate has a special report on TSs and interviews a woman here in SF who says "I'm a gay male trapped in a woman's body." Lisa, I've never heard anyone else say that same thing I've been crying out for over 3 yrs. Am trying to get the author to put her in contact with me. She may be a loser tho. She's 21, a hippie and marched in the gay pride parade *with her shirt off*, she says "not as a liberated female but as a gay man." I'D RATHER DIE. She must really be deluded. But she's probably more like me than anyone else I've ever encountered.

10/12/1976

[*San Francisco Chronicle*, Oct. 8, 1976 "Sex-Change Teacher Wins Court Test," and *San Francisco Chronicle*, Oct. 9, 1976 "School Suspends Sex-Change Teacher"; see [Appendix](#)].

I can hardly believe how alone and empty I feel. Dain sure was right when he said you are completely alone when you do something like this. There just seems to be no answer to my questions. Yesterday I mailed my completed 14-page questionnaire to Stanford. (Yes, I phoned them to get their materials to apply for their program. This questionnaire is the first step.) My counselor asks what I will do if they

turn me down. I don't know where to turn next, who to go to for even a glint of support. I'm a walking zombie and I don't even know where I'm walking. It's as tho my whole inner core of who or what I am is totally stripped away. I wonder how much longer I can continue to function, and that's the truth. I feel more and more alienated from *myself*. How can I gather up the pieces of my mind? I can't think of anything, *anything* but this switch over. It just permeates my entire mind. And I'm so so tired of it. I feel as tho I've already made up my mind to do it for sure. I see it definitely in my future. In my mind it's already been done. Yet, I wake up in the morning, go to work as usual, spend an evening with Tom as usual—nothing has changed but me! I just want to crumble in humiliation when someone refers to me as a female. I want to say “What the hell's the *matter* with you?” God, I hope and pray this all works out. I pray Stanford will be able to help me switch over and I will be better. I just have to figure out how to survive until then.

10/16/1976

[*San Francisco Chronicle*, Oct. 13, 1976, “Sex-Change Teacher Wins Another Case,” see [Appendix](#)].

And I keep thinking: if I had one life to live, let me live it as a man. And I do only have one life, too short to waste on this crap. I can't go on being laughed off when I so badly want to join.

10/19/1976

Told my counselor last nite about the riff Tom and I had. She told me I better start trying to smooth things out with Tom and quit making him feel so excluded from what I'm doing cuz the only way he'll understand and get used to it is by being involved. It really is a whole new strategy. I have to begin trying to form the kind of relationship I want *now*, even before I know I'm going to switch for sure. I have to do positive things between us—not cut out sex completely or keep going to those damn straight bars of Tom's where they know I'm a girl. I believe we can form a good gay love, but I really have to work at it...not alienate him. She said I should tell him how I *really* feel, not just bits and pieces, so he sees it's not just a fluke on my part. I have to see it from his side too. I know we can be better *after* I switch, but I have to begin acting on those feelings *now*, not suppress them until then. May be too late if he and I keep having these fights. This afternoon phoned Tom and asked when we could see each other. He hedged, then said he didn't think this was going to work out and that he wasn't getting anything out of our relationship anymore. That he found it hard to even be nice to me. I told him it will be OK, but he said no, that I'm trying to be something I'm not. Told him I'm so confused and didn't know what to do, but that if he left me I'd go crazy. I began crying and he tried to calm me down. I begged until he agreed to meet me tonite at his place to talk.

10/24/1976

I've really found it difficult to write this. That's why I've waited so long. I won't be pursuing the operation anymore. Tom and I had a very, very serious talk and I

knew then that if I did go thru with the op, I'd lose him for good. It was an excellent talk where he acknowledged my dilemma, saying he felt like I wasn't even there when I was, that he feels like he's with some robot. Told him that's exactly how I *feel* and think the op would fuse me into one being. He said that may be the case, but, and this struck me deep, he said he could never continue the relationship even on a friends basis, because to him I would never be a man, only "mutilated." And a "Frankenstein." That he was not so much talking of my body as of the change that will occur in my head, that he can't believe how easily I switch personalities. I told him how very unhappy I am as a female, that I could understand why he didn't want to be with me, cuz I don't even want to be with myself. That I feel so, so *stupid* as I am and that it's not a new feeling, I've always been awkward and self-conscious. He agreed that was true. Said he could feel my tenseness and defensiveness permeating the entire time we're together and the relationship was offering him nothing anymore. Told him I just didn't know what to do, that I was so unhappy and he very sincerely said "I feel so sorry for you." I cried a hell of a lot. He said he didn't feel he was asking me to make a choice between him or myself cuz he didn't feel that was really me, that I was losing sight of where fantasy ends and reality starts. It was all sounding like the only way was for us to split up. That the switch was the only logical thing for me and severing his ties with the female me, thus severing us, was the only thing he could do. We sat there limp. And I crumbled, told him I'd just lose my mind if I lost him, that he was my only anchor and without him I'd just float away. He cried, saying he doesn't want to go thru life alone, that he'd never find anyone he loves like he loves me. We came to no conclusion. The next day I could hardly think. The only thing I knew was that I had a choice between *feeling* like an idiot (by staying a female) or of *knowing* I am an idiot (by losing him). All that day I thought of myself trying to get back into the female scene and it was laughable to me. How ridiculous I'd be in a dress! I'd be 12 years old at 25. Totally unexecutable. Even so, I cannot put all the blame on him, because he's right. I don't know how to really be a man. And this whole idea of switching is only an obsession. I realized this when I felt myself becoming dissatisfied with my job because, as a man, I should search for a more masculine line of work. Ridiculous when my whole crusade was to be a feminine gay male. And also my inability to merge into a male-male relationship with Tom, even tho I know now it would have been impossible. I knew I was acting strangely toward him, that I wasn't relaxed or really *me*...that with the only person I've really felt at ease around. Maybe I *would* have fallen into the Miss Plastic Surgery syndrome—always blaming one thing or another for the fact that I am not a "real man." I hate to face it, but it's true: I would never be entirely comfortable as a male. Because in my heart I know I am a nothing.

11/26/1976

I honestly think I'm beginning to lose my mind and something has to give soon. Yesterday and today wandered around the streets looking for I don't know what—anything to save me from this empty sinking. It's incredible how lonely I am. I can't reach anywhere. And I think I'm losing Tom too just because I'm so demanding of him, expect him to be everything to me and I don't return anything. I feel he thinks

I'm crazy, too. Today downtown I had to hurry home because I was afraid I'd lose control right on the street, just collapse emotionally. Got home and sat and cried bitterly like I did yesterday. I think "oh I should join a club or do volunteer work to get myself out of myself," but everywhere I look I see nothingness, no bridge to cross over. The gays—but how are they to accept me? how do I fit in? The feminists—they always object to my dress, they won't embrace me. The lesbians—but I like men and don't want to jeopardize Tom's and my relationship by getting a female lover. The straights—no way. The transvestites—they're all male-to-female and put the make on me, no friendship possible. I can't relate to *anyone*.

11/28/1976

Well, I know this is absolute insanity and no wonder I'm going nuts, but I've decided to go back on the Pill again and wait this whole transition out. I cannot trust myself to decide whether I have to go to the can or not, so I should not make this forevermore sterilization decision until I clean up my act. I say I cannot see myself ever wanting a kid, but one year ago I said I could never see myself in a dress again either and that's my latest possibility. I wish so much I had a girlfriend to talk all this out with, someone who'd go shopping with me to buy some girl's things and go out in public with me at first so I didn't feel like some kind of freak. I'm trying to muster up enough guts to go somewhere I *CAN* meet girls, but I'm so scared of rejection and feeling uncomfortable and I know I'm going to come on too strong because my need is so great. Every day I feel I'm barely getting away with faking it thru the day. It seems now that it's not every week my story changes, but every hour. I can't keep up with myself.

12/2/1976

I've "broken" the 3-year spell I've had over myself. Tues night I went downtown alone and went thru the women's depts. My counselor told me if I do go, to take my time looking and trying things on and not to panic. I kept that in mind. Had no bad experiences with people at all. Tried on two dresses at the first store—lousy. Nothing at the second one and at the third I bought a dress for \$25. Very much like the kind of dress I used to wear. Then to the fourth store where I looked more and bought nylons. At home I put them on and I couldn't get over how the whole experience was no big deal. It wasn't strange for me at all. I felt like the person I was 4 years ago—not that long. I parted my hair and smoothed it back instead of pompadouring it. But I had to wear my boy's "R.O.T.C" [Reserve Officer Training Corps] shoes (as one salesman at Wilson called them). Wed I wore it to work. They were all surprised. One girl asked if it was my birthday (I said, "That makes no sense at all!") My boss came over teasingly saying, "All right, I won't harass you." "Just don't laugh." "Why should I laugh?" "I don't know." "I might harass you a little, but I won't laugh." "Well, that's OK. I'd rather be harassed than laughed at." A few others said how pretty the dress was, 2 ladies said timidly that I looked nice in a dress, and the 2 I like there didn't say a word. I didn't feel funny! I felt like me. Phoned Tom at work and said "Guess what?" I could hear his reluctance to ask, he must be so

tired of my ‘decisions’. “I went and bought a dress and I’m wearing it right now.” He was thoroughly freaked, “Really? Oh, my God! (Laughed incredulously) Oh, my God! Does it feel weird?” I was a little offended he was so shocked. Later my boss told me I looked very nice and “Why did you wear a dress today?” he asked real seriously. I had no answer. The warehouse foreman I eat lunch with said people might be thinking I wore it for him. At first I was repulsed at the possibility, nauseated that anyone might dare think I’d do that, feeling like being safely a boy again—but then I redirected the anger where it belonged. Not at myself for being female, but at the asshole foreman—some fucking ego that ugly little weasel has! What an imbecile! This is really a new feeling for me—to put the anger against him instead of against myself. That was one real solid thing my counselor made me aware I did. (And I found my “being a boy” doesn’t protect me from such sicko thoughts from others. Mon the foreman told me someone had asked him if he “was getting into me,” but he assured them we were only “buddies”.) So Wed nite went to see Tom after work. We met in a bar and he was so so flipped out over me. He was extremely friendly, but not at all amorous. He commented that I had to get other shoes, tho. I don’t feel strange at all. I felt like “I remember it all now.” I know I can find a mental middle-ground and can be a boy one day and a girl the next, but be the *same person inside* either way I am. I can have fabulous androgynous insight into both worlds and can rediscover the part of me I tried so hard to eliminate but could not. All I have to do is work out all the negatives I see in the woman’s world and be able to get hold of them rather than trying to run and pretend that I’m not vulnerable. And I can rediscover the joy of being male, because it’s no longer a trap, but another part of me. I know I’m going to really have to be strong to juggle my 2 halves, but I can get thru anything after the torments of this past summer.

12/19/1976

At the last women’s group therapy session they talked mostly about feeling you have to *do* something with your life or *make* something of yourself. I didn’t say 2 shits and was getting pretty bored. Right at the end the leader asked why I had been so quiet and I said I didn’t get what this group therapy was all about, it seemed to me it was just a bunch of people shooting the bull. The one girl I like best there asked if the reason I thought they were just shooting the bull was because they were just women. My first instinct was to immediately deny that, but I said yes, realizing if this had been a bunch of gay men talking about what they should do with their lives, I’d’ve thought the whole thing terribly interesting. And the first session I told them the reason I was there was because I had decided this past summer to get a sex change but have realized it was mainly to run from the female in me and that I needed to rediscover myself and see strong women I can identify with. I also said I didn’t want to say much because I’m the misogynist of the year but don’t want to offend anyone. One woman said she was offended and 2 piped up that they weren’t. The therapist and the girl I like best both *thanked* me for coming to the group, which really makes me feel awkward. That’s the same damn thing they did when I went to that stupid Bisexual Womens Rap Group in July. Oh “thank you for coming.” What

the fuck for? I have checked out more women's clothes but haven't found any I like enough to buy. My counselor and I talked about why, even when wearing girl's shit, I always wear stuff that's so different from the current styles. When I told Tom how I was bored listening to women talk when I wouldn't have been had men been saying the exact same things, he agreed with me, saying he feels the same way. Which really made me feel put down and I wonder how much of my self-hatred of my female side has been fed by his same outlook. He said he found it self-indulgent. I began thinking how he and I aren't really getting along all that differently now that I'm being a girl than from our conflicts when I felt I was a boy. Tom looks down on women (and that includes me) just as much as I do. Big help he is. We had somewhat of an argument on machismo and I realized that whereby I romanticize it, fantasize it, though never would want it to be a reality—he would. He believes it all and takes it seriously, where I don't. Scary. He's worried I'll "turn into a lesbian" if I begin to hang out with women, yet he isn't making himself too endearing.

12/28/1976

Dearest Lisa—

The big news. You are probably the last (almost) to know, and it's only becuz, tho I know you'll most easily understand it, I feel I owe you a more decent explanation than I've given others. Nov 30 I went out and bought a dress. And nylons. Few days later I got some women's shoes. I've decided to inch back toward the middle again, where I was about 3½ years ago. The closer and closer I got to realizing my dream to be male, the more I felt like I was going under. The more I realized I wasn't a man. The less able I was to communicate naturally with others. I felt like I was trapped. I don't know exactly what made me get my ass into the store and actually buy the stuff but I just kept remembering not to panic but take my time. And Lisa I didn't feel strange. Three years of avoiding women's clothes like the plague and then when I finally put them on it was no big deal. I felt like me. A lost me. But now I'm also rediscovering all the reasons I ran from my female side. I still feel awkward communicating. I've joined the women's group therapy session at the Center. It's really hard for me to deal with my male chauvinism and deep-rooted misogyny. Even in the subtlest ways it comes out. I'm not a *blatant* male chauvinist. And somehow I have to deal with all my women-hating which makes me hate the woman in me. Steve Dain was right. He said the man's world is so cold emotionally and he can understand why men need a woman to come home to. I guess that's what eventually happened to me. I could not bear that coldness. I had to come home. I still feel confused, lost, depressed. I still haven't gotten out of my shell. But at least now I feel I can make it through the day. Honest to God, Lisa, there were times I didn't think I possibly could. The day I was off work for Thanksgiving was the closest I've felt to going totally insane. I just wanted to kill myself. The only way I could calm down was to go to sleep. I desperately need female friends out here. I've been too scared to step into the "women's coffeehouse" they have here. But I'm building up my confidence to. So now I'm a girl one day and a boy the next. At least I've broken the spell I've had over myself. Only have one dress and one women's suit (with skirt). I bought some women's magazines and OUR BODIES OUR SELVES at my

counselor's suggestion. Well somehow I feel my "better explanation" wasn't accomplished. I'm sorry if this letter is disorganized and choppy. I hope it all makes sense, tho. I know you were talking about "going back" too and realize its much easier for me than for you to be a boy one day, girl the next. Because of society.

1/23/1977

Am feeling more and more at ease as the time goes by. Have 3 dresses now. I've been mostly reading female liberation books and magazines. My 2 halves are becoming more one but I still feel awkward. Friday night, sitting in a bar in a very good mood, Tom and I were talking about this and that. He left to go to the bathroom. Without any warning tears suddenly flowed down my cheeks. (I had failed. I had wanted so badly to be a man and I failed.) The tears streamed down. I had to stop them. I forced myself to stop thinking, to blank out my mind. The tears stopped. He came back, sat next to me and we began talking again. I was back in my good mood.—This afternoon as I wrote of this episode I cried again. It's still there. The fantasy is still haunting me.

1/24/1977

Told my shrink how I'd cried Fri nite so unexpectedly. How I really felt I had let myself down by not going thru with my desire to be male. She asked how much of my giving it up had been due to the fact that I would lose Tom had I continued. How much of it was because of him and how much was because I felt it wasn't me. And how much of the feeling it wasn't me was because I didn't have the support of the physical attributes of a man. That is, she asked why I abandoned my pursuit of the switch-over and I told her becuz I felt smothered by my own fantasy. That as a man I felt whole inside but uncomfortable on the outside, trying to communicate with others, etc. Now as a female I feel empty inside but feel freer to relate to others. That I always felt, had Tom not been around, if he got killed by a train, I would definitely go toward being male—that I'd even hoped somehow he'd get out of my life so I'd be free to be a man. But that now I feel I am the one lacking, that I cannot be a man even if I were free to be one, because it's just not me. She suggested maybe I was using Tom as a scapegoat for my abandonment of what I wanted. She said I could still go back to pursuing the switch-over if I wanted to, that just because I'm sitting there in a dress, tomorrow I could be in a suit again and decide male is best for me. That I was only investigating both sides of the fence and am not bound to either. She said I may be sad "leaving" the male side of me because "it's sad to say goodbye to things"—but on the other hand I may be sad because I gave up a part of myself either to please someone else or because of the difficulty passing.

5/29/1977

Friday nite I go to a poetry reading where John Rechy (*City of Night*) is reading (I read *City of Night* back in 1970—loved it), but I have to leave to meet Tom before Rechy comes on. But Saturday while Tom is at Japanese class I discover Rechy will be autographing his book at a nearby bookstore. I debate in my head what to do: I

want to wear a suit to see Rechy. But I must meet Tom right afterward and he'd be pissed knowing I wore a suit and met Rechy. Debated over an hour what to do. Tom or me? Who should I listen to in my heart? I wore a tie, my men's shoes—male, but not the full regalia. And I'd take off and hide the tie before meeting Tom. But incredibly I bumped into Tom on the street right before going into the bookstore. And incredibly he wasn't pissed at all about it, couldn't understand why I thought he would be.—Rechy comes into the store, is talking to the employees setting him up there. I linger nearby embarrassed, enthralled at seeing him, what *City of Night* had meant to me. He spoke of the reading on Fri nite and I joined the conversation. We had long knowing eye contact—his eyes dancing, alive, aware, friendly, inviting me into the conversation. I snatched one of the books he'd put his signature to and I told him I'd wished I had written *City of Night* and had wanted to write him anonymously many times to tell him that. He asked, why anonymously? And I answered evasively “because I didn't know where you were.” He said he would autograph a book for me personally and he asked if I was going to write my own *City of Night*. Told him I'd already written some, even used a paragraph of *City of Night* to introduce my article on transvestite liberation. Told me he still corresponds with Miss Destiny, a “character” in the book. I wanted to talk with him more but had to go meet Tom to catch the ferry to Sausalito. About 6 blocks away I read his inscription: “For Sheila—a wonderful presence instantly. Sincerely John Rechy. I hope you write your own fine book.” I was so happy.

[*San Francisco Chronicle* 6/18/1977, “Sex-Change Teacher Still Faces Hearing,” see [Appendix](#)]

6/24/1977

I've discovered what the emptiness I've felt lately (re: cross-dressing) is all about. I've been feeling so void, like on a long lost road, abandoning full-time dressing. I've wondered if I should maybe go back to dressing full time—what have these past 3 years meant to me, what was it all about, what does it mean to me in relation to my female dressing. What am I doing by presenting myself as a *female* dressed in *men's clothes*, not as a male? What am I doing to replace whatever purpose cross-dressing served in my life? And now I finally see that when I began full dressing 3 years ago, I did not seriously consider the inevitability of one day having to stop, to go back to women's shit. I had not planned, seen what I was doing in the long run. It was not irreversible, so I never considered the chance of one day having or wanting to reverse it. I did it so easily. I think just now has been the first time I've SAID to myself “Yes, I *used to* dress full time and did for 3 years.” It's as though I'm a newborn with no before. All new land. I was wondering “haven't I become accustomed to San Francisco yet? I don't feel really *at home* here.” But maybe I've been transferring my alienation to my surroundings rather than to the new fronts I'm now confronting. Just because one is into S&M doesn't mean they have to live the rest of their lives in leather. It is meant for one thing only. I said to my counselor “Maybe I should be a private cross-dresser only, as it is the public display and confrontation that has made it uncomfortable for me.” To save it for special ‘field trips,’ occasions when I want to pass. Instead of feeling I must pass.

7/10/1977

Last week had a very explicit and erotic dream of me having sex with a female. We were both naked and I sucked her tit and rubbed her inner thigh with my hand. It was one of those super realistic dreams. Since then I've just about all but made up my mind to have sex with a female. It's about time. But how the fuck do you pick up a female when you *are* a female? I can be a boy and do all the things boys do to pick up a girl, but that doesn't go with the gay women . . . I'm sitting in a bar getting blasted and realizing I'm not invisible and that everyone sees me and draws an opinion about me, and thinking of the difference that one transvestite group draws between themselves and the drag queens: that the DQ's are sexual-signaling by their dress and the TVs are only expressing their "female sides." I wonder which I do by cross-dressing. (I am now able to comfortably wear a man's suit and a bra at the same time.)

8/7/1977

Have been worried about my lack of self-identity and purpose now that I've decided to remain female. Maybe I'm being too hard on myself and expecting to adjust to the new identity too quickly. It seems I'm more bold and positive the way I am now, yet I don't have that "hold" on myself I did before. I'm not as self-conscious about my every movement or as aware of myself as I was trying to be male.

11/13/1977

Just spent the afternoon in a long masturbation session, just like I'd done nearly all last summer. Imagining I'm a boy and masturbating endlessly. Read some from my earlier diary entries of Tom, me. My passing. This part of me is still very much alive. What can I do with it? Am to meet Tom tonite to go out to dinner and stay at his place. I want to dress male, but am afraid he'll be mad and it'll ruin our evening. If I could only devise a way to incorporate it into my life without it's being any big deal. (Saw the movie *Valentino* with Rudolph Nureyer and that's what sparked all this.) Passing still does mean a lot to me. I may just wear a suit tonite and face whatever heat I get from Tom. I'm too old to waste my time tip-toeing from possible rejection. At least I'll know where I stand. How long has it been since we went out with me in a suit? Can't even remember the last time.

NOTE: I did wear a suit and Tom didn't say a word and we had a great evening!

11/15/1977

Dearest Evan—

I know I haven't written for quite awhile. So much going on around and inside of me that I find it hard to sort out, but the more time I give it, the clearer it becomes. What I mean is, I am becoming increasingly at ease with my female identity and increasingly aware of how much "being a man" means to me still. I think I've finally

come long enough from the terrors and uncertainties of last year's mania about the operation that I can now look at my cross-dressing and corresponding identity in the joyous light it began. Yet I still don't know where it/I belong. Quite a few months ago I offered my secretarial services to the not-yet-opened Gay Community Ctr here. Now I just received a volunteer's application from them and I don't know what to do. I don't feel secure enough to surround myself with gay men once again and refrain from identifying with them too closely. I still feel my heart tugging at me to be like them. But now is added the knowledge that I cannot be, will never be, and could not be what I desire so. Even, I read GPU NEWS and it's almost like a torture. Maybe it's mainly sadness over the ease of youth, but it all seemed so simple then. Now it has taken on so much reality and importance. How was it so easy for me just to pretend then that I was one of the crowd? How was it that it never really occurred to me that one day I would have to go back to being a female? I completely lost sight of everything but my dream. And it still beats in my heart. I know I am a better person for rediscovering my female side. I feel more at ease with my body and the people around me. I don't hesitate to speak in order to conceal my voice and I don't hunch over so grotesquely to conceal my breasts. I feel more confident to get out and try things. I don't suffer from so much self-consciousness. The step back to the Sheila I was, was a right one. But still I walked out of the movie theater after seeing *Valentino* and I was Nureyer. I looked like him, I had his face. I was confused in the same way he was... I holed myself up in my apt the rest of the day haunted by it. I hope this letter does not sound unhappy. I feel so good compared to a year ago.... But, Even, my fantasy still creeps through me with little fingers that won't let go. And I haven't figured out how to placate it.

5/14/1978

Wednesday I went to a meeting advertised as a TV/TS group "for women" in Berkeley. I realized the problem of who's a "woman" here, but half-hoped I'd find females there going to males. No such luck. Turned out to be 5 male middle-aged transvestites, all dressed and talking in their butch voices. I was pretty disappointed but then began talking to the best-looking one. He was very insightful and we talked of the problem of bringing the male side and female side together into one person. I told him I was more interested in learning how to *separate* the male and female sides; that that was my big problem—being able to call upon my female mind when appropriate and set aside the male mind when necessary. That the two sides intermingle to such an extent that I feel I have no control over what's going to happen next. During the meeting they voted to extend membership to a female-to-male TS (not present) who'd probably be there next meeting (in 2 weeks). This somewhat prompts me to want to go to their next meeting to meet him—but again, it's always a female-to-male *transsexual* and I am, and must remember I am, a transvestite. I had to reassure Tom that I was not interested in getting back to that scene, that I'd "learned my lesson," but know I'll always be interested in the topic.

5/26/1978

Dear Evan,

I found someone like me!!! A heterosexual female transvestite. Do you know how LONG I've looked? In the feminist women's paper here was listed in their calendar a "TV/TG meeting for women." Which didn't fool me—which women, who's a woman? But I went anyway and as I expected there were 7 middle-aged straight men all cross-dressed. But during the meeting they voted to accept membership of a female-to-male who would be present at the next meeting. Still I was suspicious—sure, female-to-male what. Surely she'd either be a lesbian or a transsexual. But my curiosity was enough that last night I went to the 2nd meeting. I thought she was a boy! We sat quietly through the meeting. She was looking at me when she thought I couldn't tell and would look away quickly when I tried to catch her eye. Maybe she didn't like me... but it seemed more that she was a little scared. After the meeting I went up to her. It was so easy for us to talk! I am far more experienced and bold than she, although we've been at it about the same amount of time (5 years). She's got a butch-er job (not meat-cutter)—swimming pool plumber!—but she works for a relative so didn't have to look for work like I did. She almost tore my \$140 suit and \$10 tie off me—she says she hasn't been bold enough to shop in the men's dept., but goes shopping as a woman "for her son" so never gets to try things on and is afraid they'd read her when making alterations. I assured her that very rarely would anyone risk making a confrontation, even tho they might suspect her. She actually uses surgical tape on her bare skin to bind her breasts—*aaaugh*. She says she just thinks how much hassle women go thru to look like women. AND SHE'S NOT GAY!! She says she doubts though that any man would put up with her and I assured her there were some... Tom and I are together for 10 years and he puts up with it, tho he stops when he thinks I'm considering surgery. God, Evan. I'm not alone. Everyone's just hiding. This closet even has toilet paper stuck in the keyhole! I started to give her my address and she said oh, she was trying to ask but didn't want to be too bold. But you know, after all this time, it's kind of scary to have to "share" my cross-dressing. —My only real distinguishing interest is in cross-dressing and the mental mechanics of same. I would like to get more involved in this TV group but have been getting a lot of flak from Tom. To quote, he actually said he feels the whole thing is "perverted" and that I can't control it, or be natural—as a guy or a girl. These may have been words said in a heated moment, but they stuck. Will keep you up-to-date. I feel I can indulge in my cross-dressing and passing, yet keep from thinking it's "really me" (i.e., TG thoughts). But it's a real mind trick. I think these middle-aged TGs can give me some pointers on how to keep the 2 halves separate.

7/4/1978

Sitting in my apt, crying because I feel so goddamn empty inside. My whole goddamn life is a waste of time—just trying to think up things to do to waste time until I die. Nothing means a goddamn thing.

After I wrote the above, I cried bitterly, rested, then went out and washed and waxed the car. Once in a while, I get in an awful depression and a good cry usually washes it out of me. A lot of times, I feel like living is a real joke. And I think if it weren't for Tom I'd be absolutely nothing. I wish I had a sense of worthwhileness that so many people have on their own. I seriously think but cannot imagine any way that I can make life seem more than just waiting to die someday. I lose myself in Tom's arms and fear the day he dies.

For a fleeting moment, I thought maybe this TV group would give me a sense of worth and accomplishment. June 14 I told Tom I was going to the group. He phoned me back and told me he wanted me to be with him and not go to that group because he thinks it's bad for me. I told him he had no right to ask me to choose between him and the group. So I went to the group and my female-to-male friend never showed. I was so disappointed. Later I talked to the group president and mentioned my wish to possibly introduce some serious group discussions about mutual problems of transvestism, rather than totally allow the group to be a social club. He said that I must realize that I am a lot more intelligent than most of the other group members and that most of the group just wants to dress and not talk about it. In other words, he said lay off. I left the group very discouraged and wondering why it always turns out that way. I am pretty much decided to quit going to the group.

We've (Tom and I) been getting along very well at some times and have scattered abrasive words. (I was going for a haircut at a unisex stylist. He got mad and told me not to cut it and that it looks ugly and I should let it grow long. I said he's not my father and can't tell me what to do. Later he said he liked the new cut.)

I continue to feel more like part of the human race yet less like a person.

[*San Francisco Chronicle* Aug. 5, 1978 "Transsexual Quits Fight for Job," see [Appendix](#)]

9/7/1978

I'm getting the hots to get back into some serious passing. Fantasizing getting together with Ian, the other F-to-M TV I met, and going to the Castro Street area, as they all know I'm a girl on Polk St. Fantasizing how I *could* pick up a gay guy and go to bed with him, and *pass*, just so I didn't take off my clothes. (But how can I hide an elastic chest and a soft sock cock?) Tom has been so closey-closey lately that I'm going to have a helluva time just getting away to the Berkeley TV meetings. They must all think I died by now. (The last month I've been in Monterey at a work meeting and then Tom and I went on vacation and drove to Seattle, Portland and stayed in Vancouver B.C. three nights—so I've been absent from the group.)

9/21/1978

Just got back from going to a few of my regular gay men's bars with Ian, the female-to-male TV I've met at this Golden Gate Girls/Guys group. He rarely goes out dressed and is worried about passing, which is ridiculous since he looks ten times better than I do. So I thought I'd take him to some good places. I told him that I've looked so long for other female-to-males, and now that I've found her, I don't know what to do about it. Like "now what."

10/16/1978

Last Thursday Tom and I celebrated our 10th anniversary. I bought a big cookie that said “Happy Anniversary” and we split it with cups of tea. I know we’re both proud of being together so long.

Tom and I are still very much in love and we haven’t had a run-in in so long. Before we’d see each other every other night. Well, now we see each other every day (just about) except for maybe once a week we don’t. I’ve been going over to sleep at his place like twice a week now.

Haven’t done anything new with my cross-dressing. Went to a doctor yesterday though wearing a girl’s sweater and the doc said “Yes, Mr. Sullivan?”

11/1/1978

Asked Tom what he did Friday nite and he said he went out with his waitress friend, that he’s been doing that a lot lately. He said he just wanted to be good friends with her but he finds that he’s “beginning to care” about her. He said it in such a way that I felt he was revealing something, but I let the topic die. I just wasn’t ready for that now. Neither of us has brought it up since. Saturday nite we had wonderful exciting sex and Sunday afternoon too.

11/21/1978

So Tom has a girlfriend. Yesterday he tells me he’s going to see a band (which he and I saw a few months ago) this Thursday evening. I got the picture immediately and while I was saying “Well that sounds like a nice, little *date*”, he said “...with Heather.” And the guy is acting super depressed, guilty and suspicious. Til finally I said “Is this something I should be concerned about?” And he says “I don’t know.” I was taken back, “YOU DON’T KNOW!?!?” And after stammering and hesitating he says no it isn’t anything for me to be concerned about and “I’ve gone out with her *before*.” I said I know, that’s why I’m wondering why he’s acting so funny about it all of a sudden.—So that was the extent of the conversation. He was very affectionate physically.

It kind of aggravates me because he and I have talked about her before (she’s the waitress at the restaurant he cooks in) and he’s told me what a weirdo she is. Real good choice of women.

All I want to know is, did he pay for her ticket to this concert? I’d shit if he did. But I know damn well *she* didn’t. I wonder if it’s in poor taste to ask him. HA HA.

I never know how to act in situations like this. I feel like giving Tom a smart-alecky look and saying “OH, CUT IT OUT.” He’s always gotta be so goddamn dramatic about his infatuations. Shit, I was drooling over a Cutey on the Bus for 2 years and Tom never knew about it at all. But no, he’s gotta act like it’s changing his *whole life*. Big Deal.

11/27/1978

The other day I got really depressed thinking of him and his hot little romance. This is his second one since we moved out here, and I don't see any excuse this time. Sure, okay, that first time I was so screwed up with my fucked body image and cross-dressing that okay he had an excuse. But this time it's not like that. We've been getting along so well and having great sex and loving times, etc., and there's just no reason he should treat me like this. When I thought of how worried I was he would find out I had sex with a guy in August, and how I felt if he did find out I'd really be in trouble and we'd be on the rocks for sure. But does he spare my feelings? No way. I was covered with bruises from that tumble with August dude for 2 weeks and terrified Tom would know where I got them. But he thinks he can openly carry on with someone else, take her to our usual haunts (which really upsets me—I don't ever want to be there again with him after he's paraded around there with her too), talk freely about it and I'm supposed to console him and relieve him of his guilt. Or else I'm always the one who bears my wounded heart and tells him how hurt I am and please be nice to me. Fuck that. Let him console *me*. Let him come to me and beg me to take him back. He has *no right* to skip out on me *at all*.

Today I knew he'd call and I planned not to talk about his little trip. He called and I said hi. He asked what was new and I said not much. He immediately noticed my voice was strained, and asked what the matter was. I said I didn't feel too well. He confidently, easily asked if we were "going to have a date tonight" (which is how we always put it) and I said I don't think so. He was definitely surprised and asked why not. I said I just wanted to do the laundry and take a bath. He said okay, and "do you have something to tell me?" I said "no" and it came out real biting—"do *you*?" He said kind of reluctantly "maybe" and there was a long silence. And I finally said "well I don't want to talk about it..." He said "okay." There was a long silence, and again he said "okay". I said "okay, goodbye" and hung up.

And I felt a giant weight lifted off me. He can come to me because I'm finally through crawling to him. And I really feel that. I *would* much rather be alone than be with him under these circumstances.

12/2/1978

I've just been skimming through a book on open marriage and I felt ashamed of myself, felt like crying and running to Tom right away. I think I've been acting poorly and punishing him for a freedom he should have—the freedom to love and enjoy others, and not bind him to myself and cut him off from others. Right now I've decided to phone him tomorrow and ask if he'd have a drink tomorrow night with me and we can talk. I'd also like to bring him this book so he can also see that what he's doing isn't so horrible, doesn't mean he's mentally unbalanced, immature, or undeserving of a steady love from me. I've been giving him the message that I will not tolerate his infatuations. But I *will*. And his actions on Saturday proved to me that he isn't disregarding his feelings for me and his infatuation hasn't changed or taken the place of his love for me. I'll ask him to read the book. I hope he will.

1/1/1979

Well I'm glad that shit-ass year is over. One of the all time stinkers. I've got high hopes for 1979—my resolutions are (1) to do my weightlifting more faithfully (the last time I did it regularly was last September) and (2) to do some writing on female transvestites.

So it's been just fine between Tom and I. Neither of us has spoken of his little affair after we talked last month, and we've been seeing each other often and I was even wondering if the whole thing had fizzled out. Then Sunday morning Tom asks me what I had planned for the day. I said oh I hadn't really thought of it. And god-damn him, he says "I'm going to go to Heather's place to meet her brother this afternoon." I was so stunned I said "where?" He said "to Heather's". That he'll probably be glued to the football games on TV all afternoon though. I mean, I just couldn't believe it! Well boy I felt like a sledge hammer hit again. Why does he INSIST on telling me this shit? There was absolutely NO reason to tell me as we'd already ascertained *we* weren't spending the day together.

Well I spent New Years Eve home rinsing out sweaters and sewing on buttons and writing letters. Went to bed at 11:00.

1/7/1979

The other night I went through my old diaries and read where we were having our first battles over another female. And what a rude awakening to read those and read almost word for word the same things we'd said the night before, and I couldn't believe these same justifications from him and that same 'oh what can I do but wait it out' attitude from me has been going on since 1972—over 6 years. Really brought me into perspective that this will not blow over and will be like this forever.

1/31/1979

He phoned me at work this afternoon.

HIM: Hi
 ME: Hi
 HIM: Do you want to see each other tonite.
 ME: I don't know... I don't know what to say.
 HIM: I don't know what to say either.
 ME: I want to, but I don't think we should.
 HIM: Come over.
 ME: To your place?
 HIM: Yeah.
 ME: Okay.

And so whatever it is will be coming to a head tonite. I started crying when we hung up. I just don't want this all to happen. I had planned on saying "How're you and Heather doing?" if he called, but it wouldn't come out of my mouth. I don't want to deal with all this pain.

Just walked out on him. When I first came in, it was very quiet and uncomfortable. Then he tells me he quit the restaurant and this was his last week. I figure he quit to get away from her. We cry, kiss, stroke, and hug. Then I ask if he's still going to see her. Yes, he can't stop. He has feelings for her he can't deny, but he doesn't want to lose me either. We cry, and I say I can't be "one of his girlfriends" and have him go places with her and then go there with me and then go there with her. That I couldn't believe it meant so much to him that it was worth hurting me so bad. That I didn't believe anything he said anymore and that he just looks right at me and lies. I cried really hard and said "I guess I should go now," but he said he wouldn't let me leave like that. He tried to get me to lay down next to him, but I wouldn't. Then finally I asked if she was quitting the restaurant too and he nodded. Well, then I was pissed. I jumped up and threw my Kleenex down into the waste basket and said "well that's just fucking great! *FUCK YOU!!* Now you can spend all goddamn day together! That's fuckin' great! You can both spend nice afternoons in the park together! I had to come here to find *this* out!" And I put my coat and scarf on and reached for my purse. The finishing touch—he pushed my purse toward me. All the while he's saying "it's not like that..." So I walked out and he didn't come running after me.

2/14/1979

No Valentine this year, sucker.

Am getting more involved in the transvestite group, Golden Gate Girls/Guys. At the Jan. 25 meeting, a psychologist attended who specializes in gender dysphoria. A woman wrote to the organization asking about women in men's clothing, so I dashed a letter off to her, reading, in part: "At present Ian and I are the only female members who cross-dress as men. We both dress and pass as men and we are both heterosexual, i.e., we'd like other men to be homosexually attracted to us. We like to think of ourselves as gay men. We have both been crossdressing for a number of years and have spent a lot of time trying to find other women who feel the way we do. We finally met each other last summer. We were very excited to hear that you had contacted GGG. Whatever your interest in female-to-male crossdressing, we'd like to meet with you." No response so far from her.

3/11/1979

Tom and I finally had a good talk. Fri nite while in a bar he suddenly said "Sheila, I think we should talk..." I agreed.

What it boiled down to was his saying he's mental and she's mental so they get along well, that if something happened to straighten out his life he'd want to marry me and quit getting it on with other women, and that he's willing to work on ways to straighten out his life. It was an extremely productive talk. He had said that he's been scared to talk with me because it always turns into an emotional tirade.

He asked how often I went to this TV group and that he didn't like being a person who was with a transvestite. I said well he IS a person with a transvestite whether he liked it or not. He said he felt excluded from my life because of that. I told him he didn't have to be, he can come with me to groups and that he was invited to a group I'm going to Sunday. He said he would consider attending one with me **but he can't this Sunday**. Well **excuuuuse me!!!** He said he didn't think my transvestism had anything to do with his flings and I told him I KNOW it didn't because I wasn't even *doing* it when he started this last fling and that's why I resumed doing it: because I gave up a lot of things I wanted to do just so he wouldn't be offended, but when I see that he does what he pleases whether it hurts me or not, I figured why am I denying *myself*.

So I told him I wanted a secure and together relationship with someone, and asked him if it was worth my while to wait around for him to get it together. He said yes, that he thinks we will have that and it was worth my waiting for him.

But I'm not so sure.

3/14/1979

He invited me to dinner but told him I was going to a TV mtg and asked if he'd like to come. After hemming and hawing and saying he would feel uncomfortable, he agreed to come "to see what you're doing". Of course at the last minute he canceled out.

3/17/1979

Tonight I told Tom that I have had it. He told me he wanted to be with Heather forever and even if it didn't work out with her, he would look for someone else.

He really said that, looking in my eyes.

I told him I hoped she would say what he wants to hear and that he does a better job of their relationship than he's done with ours.

He doesn't believe I mean it and I'm realizing that it's gotten so bad, that he doesn't even take ME seriously anymore—my word no longer means anything.

He said that he will not stop seeing her if I ask him to, but he *will* stop seeing me if she asks him to.

Can you believe he really was saying these things to me, soberly, looking at me with a calm face?

When we left each other he said "I'll call you." I said "I don't want to *hear* from you! I've had it!" He said "I'll call you.... I'll call you...."

God, help me and guide me to hold true to my word, because I am weak. He will call me, he will cry, he will beg me to take him back. God, give me the strength to send him on his way—give me the self-respect to find someone who will only love me, who will respect the love I have for him—someone who will make me happy and who will be there when I need his strength the most.

3/31/1979

These past few weeks have seemed like months to me. I have been in amazingly good spirits and haven't really cried, but I do feel disoriented and preoccupied.

Last Saturday I bought 2 zebra finches and Sunday the female laid a little bird egg. They weren't sitting on it, tho, and the bird shop told me it probably wasn't fertile, but that I should get them some nesting materials and they'll build a nest and have birdies. Sounds fun—think I will.

I've been dressing up and going out, but really haven't been in the socializing mood. I am amazed, tho, at how strong and together I feel about my decision not to see him. It is true that I have no loving feeling for him anymore, just a kind of pity. I'm beginning to believe that the guy actually is a loser and will be a fuck-up all his life. That, tho he has this incredible potential to be the greatest, he will never get it together. And I don't want to be forever attached to someone who is self-defeating.

I look at other men and try to picture spending years with them, but I can't imagine it. Maybe that's the wrong attitude. I'm trying to find the right attitude, but I guess 2 weeks isn't the months I feel, and I have to let myself get over the shock of a shit-ass ending of the past 10 ½ years.

4/12/1979

In 2 more days it will be a month since we've had any communication. A few weeks ago the insurance payment came due and it's his turn to pay it. I simply stuck the invoice in an envelope and mailed it to him. A few days later an envelope came from him addressed to me—inside was only the money order stub to prove he paid it. I don't even care.

7/10/1979

Am considering and probably will run this ad in the 'Personals' column of the Advocate, the largest selling gay newspaper:

Bisexual Men

Slim female 28 who has passed as a boy part time since 1973, identifies with gay men, seeks companionship/romance.

I've got to rent a box somewhere so I don't get any goons at my door. I've always wondered what kind of response I'd get from such an ad and sometimes I'm glad Tom's gone so I get the chance to find out.

9/10/1979

I've said it before and it's becoming true again this time. Whenever I'm alone (i.e., without a boyfriend) my crossdressing becomes more serious and constant. In my search for the perfect male companion, I find myself. In my need for a man in my bed, I detach myself from my body and my body becomes his; I stroke his hair, I see his wrist. I feel the warm winds blowing my open shirt from my smooth, hard flat chest. I catch the hungry eyes of another beautiful youngman. I reconsider male

hormones—try to remember why I decided against them before. I could shave.... I could take them! I wonder if I could live as a male without taking hormones, or if I should take hormones, but stop at surgery, or if I should just get sterilized and have them remove my ovaries. And when I think of my future, and what I really want for myself in the years ahead, the only real thing that matters to me is that I be able to dress and pass as a male. When people ask me at work “What do you want for yourself in the future?”, how can I tell them that I just want to be a man?

Thinking hard and close about who I am. Just who I am and what I am, alone, and what I want for myself. So long I gauged my future next to Tom’s. Now I see what a mistake that was, and that’s what makes me doubt that we can ever be what we were before. I can see myself following my own dreams, regardless of ANY ONE else’s opinions.

At first I wore boy’s clothes cautiously. Then I went full force without any women’s clothes, to a fear someone would know I was female. Then back again to women’s things, and I even felt sad about my wish to abandon men’s clothes. Now I find myself yearning for the total male look again, even though I have no fears of being female.

If I am ever going to do anything with my life that I can be proud of, it must be my success at living full time as a young man.

Sometimes I feel as though I am turning inward so much that I am going to turn inside out. And become totally submerged in my own delusions.

9/11/1979

Had a GGG/G meeting last night and I wore my binder and a T-shirt. With my hair just cut, I looked pretty damn good. Talked to the psychologist in gender identity, and she said several times how I looked like a boy, asked how old I am, where I work, if I had any breasts or was that a binder, how I look like a boy from the back and I don’t “wiggle” my hips when I walk. I talked to *G.* and *K.* (who’d just had M-to-F surgery) and told them I’m wanting hormones again. *G.* told me the name of a doctor and said every effect from male hormones is reversible except the voice—and who cares if you’re a woman with a low voice? Told her I didn’t really want to go to a hack, but to a reputable clinic, and *G.* said “forget it, they wouldn’t touch you with a 10-foot pole.” Why? Because I don’t have the typical transsexual story they want to hear.—The reasons I decided in 1976 not to pursue transsexualism were (1) because I was too unsure of myself to take on that major change, (2) I hadn’t reconciled my female-male conflict, and (3) because Tom said he would leave me and I didn’t believe I could go on in life without him. All three of those reasons no longer hold true. I think I’m finally seeing myself in perspective. Maybe the stigma comes from being *either* a TV *or* a TS—but there is a middle ground that I’ve never considered...what *G.* calls a “cross-liver.” Someone who takes hormones and lives in their desired gender role, but who has not necessarily made a decision on having surgery. I truly believe I could be a “cross-liver.” If I had hormones to lower my voice and butch up my face with a few whiskers, I don’t believe I would suffer that anxiety of passing. Another concern I had when previously considering TSism was that I felt I couldn’t “live a lie,” i.e., trying to hide my past as a female. But many

people *don't* hide the fact they are TSs—I know one person who even kept his old job, returning as a male—and I could live with telling people when it's necessary and lying when it doesn't really matter. –While laying awake last nite trying to fall asleep, I seriously thought this all out. I believe that, if I *am* going to live my life alone, and if it is true that you *are* the only one you can rely on to always be there, I had better make peace with myself. If I am the only one I have, I have a right to make myself happy. And I've been struggling with where I am now for 6 years—and it's time to stop sweeping the issue under the carpet.—I phoned the Center for Special Problems this morn and found that my old counselor is on leave til February, when she'll return. In the meantime, a Dr. *L.* is running the TS group there, and he's the doc *G.* said would give me hormones without much hassle.

9/27/1979

Sept. 17 I walked back into Center for Special Problems, the 3rd time I've registered there over my crossdressing in 4 years. Began dressing full-time again on this date also. Talked to this Dr. *L.* character about my desire for hormones and to live full-time. He seemed very suspicious of me and somehow irritated. He had my old file and read aloud the last entry—how I had come in as an “attractive female” and that I'd thought I could live with both sides of me and had given up my desire to be a man—and he said “It seems you've had a change of heart.” I explained why, and that I was no longer afraid of my female half but felt I could incorporate those feelings into my male feelings. He asked how it would change my life and I said “not a whole lot, that's another reason I want to do it.” He asked me to describe myself as I see myself as a man. I said I was small, had a determined face, was a careful dresser and basically was a “fruity little faggot.” He asked if I had any sexual feelings for women, said no, but mentioned my 3-ways with a couple of female friends a few years ago. He asked how my family would react and I told him how I had all “yea” votes—he said real doubtfully “isn't that rather unusual?” I said no, they've all seen me doing this for 6 yrs now and are wondering *what* I'm doing and my one sister said it was this dress-one-day, suit-the-next that made her wonder what it is. Asked how I felt wearing women's clothes and I told him it was like hiding because then no one would look at me funny and it was like I was getting away with something. That's why I decided to go back to women's clothes (so no one would look at me funny). Told him I wore my men's clothes to work, he looked suspicious saying “You go to work like *that*?” referring to what I was wearing, a suit jacket and tie. I said yeah! He kept flipping thru the file, looking irritated, said he thought we should talk some more about this, so I have an appt for Oct. 11. Walked out of there really down, a line from a song going thru my head: “I'm always crashing in the same car.” I just don't want to go thru all this again. What do they want me to say? I felt so sad. Told *B.* it was like dad's argument against her moving to SF—gee, you got a good job, friends who like you, you're an “attractive female”, why do you wanna mess that all up by doing this? Thurs nite I laid in bed and tears welled up. The phone rang—I was in no mood to talk and almost didn't answer it, but turned out to be the gender identity psychologist. Said she'd just talked to Steve Dain about me (I'd just

drafted a letter to him moments before!) and he said he'd very much like to talk with me. My spirits soared! Gave me his home phone and I thanked her all over. Said he charges \$20-50/hour depending on income. Steep but probably worth it. Told her about my bummer session with Dr. *L.* On Friday left a message on Dain's answering machine. Monday he phoned back. So incredible to hear his voice—like a young man's, not an older man. Think he's 36 or so. Asked for Lou Sullivan and said "you want to get some counseling?" I said "yeah." Thanked him for returning my call. It was a very male business-like conversation. He thought out loud of his schedule, asked where I live and made an appt for Thurs nite. TODAY. I felt very masculine talking with him, and very relaxed, like for the first time I was talking with someone who understood what I meant. I've never met a F-to-M TS! For all my wanting to do it! I have real high hopes that I'll learn a lot about myself and about what my dreams consist of from him. If I really *am* crazy, I think he'll be the only one who could tell me that. I am nervous, but feel I can be honest with him—no reason to put on a cool front. In fact, I'm afraid that meeting him will be like looking in a mirror and just thinking this makes me want to cry. Told Ian I was going to do this and he told me of a doc he saw a few years ago who gave him hormones and so, if I have to, I'll try him. I confided my intentions to a 23-yr-old male co-worker who I've hung out with occasionally. He's the only one there I've told so far. Confirmed my belief that I will not be able to keep working there. I'll go to Dr. *L.* on Oct. 11 but if he leaves me with the same feeling as last time I'll tell him I'm not coming back and why. I need to take an aggressive attitude. Hope this Dain meeting will increase my self-confidence so I CAN more aggressively pursue my dream. I bought 2 pairs of slacks and some new men's socks and underwear. My men's wardrobe is old and unflattering—some I'm still wearing since several years ago! –I keep thinking what a relief it will be to be in the gay men's world, finally, as a man. But I realize I'd have to stop short of a physical affair with another man becuz I'll still have a woman's body—but at least my outward appearance and my mind will be together—for the first time!

9/28/1979

This is so hard to write because I'm so excited my thoughts are running wild. I didn't eat or sleep much at all last night and am not even hungry or tired this morning. Last night I met with Steve Dain. I was uneasy for only the first minute but he was so relaxed and friendly I was at ease from then on. He is very short (5' or so), very muscular and masculine and has gray hair and a thick beard. Sorta built like dad, if he wasn't so chubby. He gave me gum, and we talked for 1½ hrs. He asked all sorts of questions. He was super liberal and warm and open. Said being a TS does not dictate anything other than your feelings about yourself and it pisses him off that these docs think you've got to fit a prescribed mold. Said I have a perfect right to be a gay man if that's what I want. Told him about Dr. *L.* and Dain said he disliked the guy too and was surprised Dr. *L.* even *listened* to me cuz he's such an ass! He couldn't believe he'd told me to come back in a month! He asked about my sexual feelings, my family, my adolescence, my crossdressing life. Told him what I use for

a binder and he thought it was a great idea, so I got to help him out, too. Asked me if I had any questions for him and I asked how much hassle is it to go from F-to-M. Told me about hormones (you CAN'T get pregnant when taking male hormones, they stop ovulation!) and that the Institute where he's studying can do the whole stick of getting me a new driver's license, etc. Said hormones will make me a little taller and bigger so I'll go up about ½ clothing size. Great! Then I can wear *men's* sizes instead of boys. That it usually takes about 8 mos for the effects to really show, so I should stay at my job and save, because there'll be about 3 mos where I'll be too butch for my female job, but too fem for a male job. He said he was behind me all the way in this hormone thing, and that I should call the gender identity psychologist and ask her to refer me to an endocrinologist who can give me hormones. (He said they have to be injected and they'd show me how to do it myself. Told him I had several friends who all knew how to give injections, so they could help and he said great!) And he said—which really summed it up for me—that it was incredible how much I've been thru and how well I've gotten along all this time. I really needed for someone who knows to acknowledge the importance of all I've gone through. He said it was obvious to him that I know what I'm doing and have thought this through very well. And because the effects are all reversible, I definitely should do it. He said when he was going thru it, he asked people if he'd be in demand in the lesbian world. I even laughed at that one. But he was told by some gay men that he'd for sure be in demand in the gay men's world, even tho he had no cock. He said it wasn't the vagina or lack of cock that turned gay men off about women, but their soft skin and extra fatty body they didn't like and that would go away with male hormones. That as far as they're concerned, my having a vagina would just be one extra hole for them, which is what Dain said he has—it's not a vagina, it's "a hole." I like that idea. I explained why I left Tom and Dain said he admired me for my self-respect in getting out of that demoralizing situation (where Tom would say he didn't know who he loved better bullshit). Dain recommended The Bisexual Center as a good place to meet bi men open to different scenes. He also asked about my nephews and said his 3- and 7-yr-old nephews watched him change and it was very good for them to see. Asked if I had pets and told him about my bird family and he said it's good I have an outlet for my "nurturing" feelings. He said he was counseling an 18-yr-old female who says she feels like a gay man and who hits Castro St—so we *do* exist! He said after the hormones I would look "LIKE A MAN," not like an effeminate man. That if I wanted to be effeminate I could incorporate those gestures and looks, but that right now I *do not* have effeminate gestures and I only look very young. That made me feel super good and confident too cuz, I told him, I was worried I come off like a "fruity faggot." He told me of one incredibly limp-wristed person that was really laying it on thick at Stanford and he thought the person must be male-to-female but it turned out to be a female-to-male! Dain said I should reapply to the Stanford program. He told me to come see him regularly (at whatever intervals I wanted) while taking the hormones and that I needn't pay him, just put him on GGG/G's mailing list. FAMOUS. It was obvious he really liked and understood and respected me. It was just all too good to be true.

Just talked to the gender identity psychologist who gave me 3 numbers of endocrinologists and I have an appointment for next Tuesday with one of them. She said she trusts Dain's judgment on my situation (F-to-M) better than her own judgment. It's all systems go, man!

9/30/1979

Steve—

I am enclosing all back issues of the Gateway, plus a few other items of possible interest, including three articles I wrote for the gay publication in Milw in 1974–1975.

I want to thank you again for your support and encouragement. I really needed for someone *who knows* to acknowledge the importance of the feelings I have had for so long. I left you in such a high that for 2 days I hardly ate or slept, yet wasn't hungry or tired.

Talked to the psychologist, who referred me to a Dr. *F.* for hormones. She also suggested two others. So I'm seeing Dr. *F.* on Tuesday. I've also written to Stanford.

I can see the pieces of my life falling into place and am extremely optimistic about my future. You've helped me more than you may know.

Hope to see you again soon,

Lou

10/3/1979

Dearest Tom—

Thank you for your letter and for your concern. I am going to try to sell the car—maybe to one of my siblings—but want to keep it until I hear from Stanford.

Tom, yes, I am very seriously going after an “alteration.” I finally met with Steve Dain who is doing counseling through the National Sex Institute here. He was very supportive, said it is incredible I've gotten along as well as I have for as long as I have and that, since all effects of testosterone are reversible (except my voice will stay low), I should definitely try it out. Told him I don't feel like “a man trapped in a woman's body” and he laughed and said nobody does, that's just a catchy phrase coined by the medical profession and that being a transsexual does not dictate anything other than your feelings about yourself, and I have a perfect right to be a gay man if that's what I want. (It was so important to have someone *who knows* how it feels acknowledge and affirm the reality of what I've been dealing with these 6 years, Tom.) He referred me to a psychologist who referred me to an endocrinologist, who figures I should like females, but looks like he will help me. I also reapplied to Stanford at Dain's suggestion.

You are right, Tom, (and it has been the case since my one boyfriend left when I was 13) that when I don't have a boyfriend, my urge to dress and pass becomes strongest. I think it's because when I'm alone, I have no man to pretend I am, no man to live through vicariously, which is what I did with you. You were “me.” Now that I'm alone, I see that, if it *is* true that we are all responsible for our own happiness, that we cannot expect others to fulfill us, and in the end we only have our-

selves, then I better make peace with the feelings inside me. If I don't it will be the only thing on my death bed I will regret not doing.

I will not do anything permanent until I know for sure I can live happier as a man. Unlike your drinking, with which you compare my leanings, I feel I am more positive, optimistic and productive in my male identity. With hormones I can get a job as a male and move to a new apartment. I see no real problems switching over. If it doesn't work out, within months after discontinuing testosterone, I'll be right back to where I am now. I have to find out—I'm tired of wondering and pretending.

I'm not sure how you feel, Tom, but after I start doing this, I would very much like to renew our friendship. While I of course have missed you as a lover, more intensely I miss the solid friendship and good times we shared. There are feelings there neither of us can deny (even now) and when I'm really doing this, it will be easier for me to see you as you and me as me.

Love, Sheila

10/5/1979

So Tues went to see Dr. *F.*, an endocrinologist. He asked me all the same questions about my life and feelings. He was an old guy, but had a sense of humor and seemed sympathetic and understanding. At the end of the whole spiel, he said everything seemed fine to him except he hesitates because I'm not interested in women. Said he didn't deny there are people like me and I said I know several M-to-Fs who're now lesbians. He gave me a physical, which I passed with flying colors, as usual, and then said he wanted me to do 3 things—go get a lab test, come back to him for a pap smear, and go see Dr. *P.*, Director of the National Sex Forum where I saw Dain. Dain had also suggested I talk with Dr. *P.* I got the impression that if Dr. *P.* ok's me, Dr. *F.* will give me the testosterone. He warned that some effects of the hormone are *not* reversible—voice change, the beard may keep growing even after stopping hormones, and it may “render me infertile.” Couldn't care less. He also verified that ovulation stops and I couldn't get pregnant while taking hormones. Asked if I read Money's book and I said yes. (I just assumed he meant ‘Man, Woman, Boy, Girl’ which I've tried to plow through twice but it was just too scientific and medically-oriented, I couldn't get much out of it.) He did ask some pretty dumb questions, like “What typically ‘masculine’ things do you like to do and what typically ‘feminine’ things?” I DON'T KNOW! How the hell am I supposed to answer that?? Oh, I put cream and sugar in my coffee, that's feminine; I like to watch boxing matches on TV, that's masculine; I put bath oil in the tub, that's feminine; and I use Brut deodorant, that's masculine. GOD. I just told him I pretty much stick to middle-of-the road things anyone can do, and that if I weren't a secretary, I'd like to get into printing and publishing and told him how I enjoy doing the newsletter. I left there rather discouraged. I first went to a bar (masculine!) and then home to cry (feminine!), but when I reflect I think he'll cooperate with me. Dain said Dr. *P.* was great and if he gives me ¼ of the encouragement Dain did, I'll be in like Flint. Talked with Ian, we had dinner Wednesday, and he cheered me up a lot. So went Thurs to have the lab tests (“May I help you, sir?”). Took 2½ vials of blood, a

urine specimen and a cell scraping from the insides of my cheeks. (Ian said wouldn't that be great if they found some chromosome or hormone imbalance!) My one boss at work asked "How did it go at the doctor's?" just to check up. Told him I had some "female troubles" (yeah, my *body*) and that it would all turn out in the end. But now just made an appt to see Dr. *P.* next Wednesday and will have to take off work for that. I may end up telling that clown earlier than I'd like to. Luckily I doubt he'd blab it around the office. Received those expensive shoes I sent away for—they're bad dogs so I'm sending 'em back. I can see this is going to be a long drawn-out battle, but it'll be worth it if it comes through. Received Stanford's application and it's the *same* 15-page extravaganza I filled out 3 years ago. HELP! So I'm making an addition to my story: instead of saying I'm not interested in girls, I'm gonna say that, since I've really decided to do this change, girls are looking a lot better to me—which is true! Suddenly it's no longer a rejection of women, but an acceptance and almost an interest, because I no longer have to be one of them! *Sudden thought*: If the psychiatric profession has decided that being homosexual is no longer a sign of mental disorder, then how come *wanting* to be homosexual is so mental?

10/10/1979

So in to see Dr. *P.* at the National Sex Forum. Steve Dain greeted me and I told him how I saw Dr. *F.* and how he'd asked me all this stuff and said it was all fine, but he figures I should like women. Dain gets more perturbed with this stuff than I do and he said, "That's why I want to get my Ph.D.—so people don't have to go through this *bullshit*!" He sat in on our session, as did a female student. Dr. *P.* asked me a raft of factual-type questions (how old were you when you began menstruating? did you ever see your parents having intercourse? did you have many friends in high school? how was your relationship with your father?). It seemed he had a written questionnaire and checked off answers as I gave them. It was very painless, took about ½ hour. Then he said he had only one question in all this: why am I trying to force myself to be a heterosexual man and like women? what's wrong with being a gay man???? I set him straight fast—said I'm NOT AT ALL trying to be a hetero man, I WANT to be a gay man! That all I said was that, as I get closer to being a man, women don't look that bad to me anymore. That when I am doing this, I can see where women might not be so bad once in a while. He said, oh, ok then, cuz it's fine to be a gay man!!!! I waited in the lobby about 5 minutes so the 3 of them could confer and then they told me they all agreed I should try hormones. But I should go at it gradually (I think he said 300 milligrams (?) instead of 400) and I should put any surgery "on the back burner." Told him I intend to. Said he'd phone or write Dr. *F.* that he supports me for hormone therapy and that I should continue to see Dain regularly while on hormones, say once a week. I said I'd like to. So I got 'em! This Dr. *P.* was no bullshitter. Dr. *F.*, who wasn't even qualified, put me thru three times the questioning! I'm actually going to live as a man. I can't believe it. Something I've wanted to do since I can remember—be a boy! God, it's too good to be true. There's no going back now, I just know it. It just seemed everything fell into place—when it's right, it just happens. Left a message for Dr. *L.*, canceling our appointment, saying I'm with "another program."

10/12/1979

Ma said that if this is what I want and it's what will make me happy, that's all she cares and that who is she to say, if the doctors and I agree it's right for me? But, she said, the *only* thing that worried her was—how was I going to go into the men's bathrooms? I said, ma, I've been going into men's rooms for 6 years—there's no problem. You just go into a stall and close the door, and if there's no door, you just have to be quick at pulling the pants down and up. She said oh, of course she hasn't been in a men's room, but, yes, she supposes that's true! (If that's her main concern, it can't be *that* bad.) When I told dad, he was very receptive and said he hoped I'd be happy and he's glad I'm doing something that will make me feel better and that if I need anything, money or anything, I should just let him know. Dear dad. When he offers you money, you know it's from his heart! Of course I would never take him up on that offer, and he knows that, and that's why we get along so well. I don't test his love.... He said that somehow he felt very close to me.

11/8/1979

Took my nephew to a basketball game last night and it turned out really well. He was full of energy and curiosity and no trouble at all. We were talking about faces and I said I was going to be an ugly grandpa. He corrected me, "grandma," but I told him by then I'll be a grandpa. He asked when I was going to "do that" and I told him I had to take all these tests, but it should begin in a few weeks. Told him my name'd be Lou and he said he didn't like that name and I should pick "Ned." I said thanks a lot! Told him his great-grandpa's name was Louie. He didn't know that. Asked what he thought of my being a guy and he said he liked it cuz then he would have someone to play ball with instead of waiting around for his dad to be there. (I'm always perplexed by people's reasons!) Later he said he liked me best of all the Sullivans cuz I never told him what to, or not to, do. In other words, I'm the only one not playing mother or father. —Tomorrow I call Dr. F. to see if he got all my test results (after having to redo several of them because of inconclusive results) and then make THE appointment! —Looks like my job is safe, too, til at least the end of the year, even tho both of my bosses were fired and are not going to be replaced.

11/15/1979

Dear Tom—

It's really going to be hard to write this letter because, despite what has happened, Tom, I hold no malice toward you. I am not interested in playing hurting games.

First of all, it has been *over a year* since you and your girlfriend have been together. That's a long time. Many things have happened to me since you and I stopped seeing each other. It has been enlightening to find out what I am when I am not swayed by the fear of losing you, not nearly as horrifying as I had imagined. I have rediscovered the person I was before I even met you—and found that I really haven't changed much at all.

Secondly, I am making decisions for *myself*. Frankly, I think you have quite a lot of guts to send me that last letter. You are no longer a part of my life, nor a factor in my future. It would appear that my feelings were of no consequence in the decisions you've made for your future, and I see no reason to consider your feelings in mine. On top of that, judging from your actions of the past year, I certainly don't think you are qualified to give advice.

I am not having a terrible reaction to your "rejection." If you will remember, I wanted to do this same thing in 1976 when we were together. But you forced me to decide between my change-over and you. At that time I felt I couldn't live without you. Now I find I can—and extremely well, at that. I have no illusions of "us" anymore. I have told all my doctors about my past relationship with you and was praised for the self-respect I showed in breaking it off.

I have gotten rid of all my female clothes and have already begun the process for taking male hormones. I am also seeing other men. I feel fantastic and very good about myself. I am no longer the insecure, withdrawn person you knew, and I'm glad. I have no intention, even as a man, of giving up my "femininity" ...which is something I have seen *you* do.

Please be assured, Tom, that I have NO desire to re-establish a relationship with you—unless it is man-to-man. In my mind, that is our only possible hope.

So carry on with your life, and forget it.

Lou

11/16/1979

Moving right along here.... Went to Dr. *F.* the 14th, was supposed to get my hormones then. But he shows me the results of the buccal smear for sex chromatin (the 2nd time I've had the test). It said normal females have 15–30% Barr bodies (whatever that is)¹ and my cells show **0%**, even tho they had an ample cell sampling! Dr. *F.* said he found that pretty hard to believe and I agreed. So had to get the test done again and if the same results come back, I'll have to have a super expensive chromosome test. He asked if I was having any 2nd thoughts and I said none at all, that I've talked with my parents, siblings, friends and some co-workers and have had all positive feedback. Again he gave me the song and dance how he hesitated to give women male hormones because of the irreversible effects on the voice and hair growth. Assured him I'm positive I want to do this, that the only thing I'm having problems with is *waiting* for it to *happen*. That when I wasn't going to do it, I could adjust, I knew what I had—but knowing that I'm going to do this and having to be in limbo til it happens was really hard on me. He said he'd get the results back from the 3rd test and I should come in Fri the 16th and he'll give me my first shot and we'll begin. —Ian said Barr bodies are what they get the female Olympic competitors on. Left a message on Dain's answering machine that I was getting real tired of waiting for my hormones. So Thurs was telling my favorite female co-worker, who already knows about my transition, about my Barr bodies and the fem credit girl

¹A Barr body is the second, inactive X chromosome in female mammals (including humans).

came over and asked if I was “thinking about that other thing again.” Said, “I’m going to *do* that other thing this time.” She said she could see I was much more prepared now than when I was thinking of it in 1976, that I should just keep my head together and keep in contact with my family here. I told another co-worker and she wished me luck and proceeded to tell me about her husband and boyfriends!!! So last night I tossed and turned wondering if I should tell my current boss. I’ve been taking off work “to go to the doctor” so often I’m feeling guilty about being so evasive and making *him* wonder what’s going on. So sat down and told him I’m going thru the preliminaries of getting a sex change. He asked what it entailed so told him I’d take hormones til I’d be too male to stay at my job and then go look for one as a male. He asked if there was any possibility of my staying at my job. Told him I could, but didn’t want to, as that would defeat my whole purpose of living as a man with everyone thinking of me as one, and so wouldn’t want to stay where everyone knew and, “besides,” I said, “I really don’t want to run into you in the men’s room.” He laughed a real belly laugh! Described how I have to live as a guy 1–2 years before they’d even talk to me about surgery, etc., etc., and he got a little grin on his face and said, “You know, this is going to be kinda fun!” I thought that was fantastic. Told him I don’t know how to talk about it in the office, but wanted to be up front about it. He said it probably wasn’t necessary for me to discuss it with those I don’t normally talk to. I said from all I could tell, I shouldn’t have a hard time being a man and he agreed with me! Said he’d do anything he could, I’d have no problems from him and he would give me a recommendation under my male name. He agreed I should have no problem getting another job. He said he really admired me for making the decision. Said he felt bad having to replace me but could see why I’d want to go. He was very supportive, said I should keep him abreast so he’d know what to say. He asked if there’d be any legal complications in his saying I was a guy. I said I doubted it, that would seem to constitute sex discrimination, that he wouldn’t have to lie about my job, only use my male name and say “he” instead of “she” and by then I’d have a Calif State driver’s license identifying me as a male, so that really wouldn’t be a lie either. Well, it seemed to work out fine—he said he’d help me all he could. He said life is usually so predictable and boring, but this is really exciting! I feel so great, man, everything’s coming through so well. –Getting that reaction a lot, where people think it’s kinda neat and exciting.

11/30/1979

So Nov 16 went for my first shot—50 mg of Depo-Testosterone. Was so relieved and happy I could have burst. God, finally. Finally. Got it in the ass, “going right to the root of the problem—right where it’s needed most”. Ha ha! Dr. *F.* told me he got the sex chromatin test and I came up a “weak positive” which may not mean anything, but Ma latched onto it right away, consoled to think I have some genetic reason for feeling and doing what I am and it wasn’t cuz she was a failure as a mother. But then Steve Dain returned my call and he said when they heard I still hadn’t received my hormones, Dr. *P.* called Dr. *F.* the 16th to ask what the hold-up was! No wonder Dr. *F.* was so cooperative! Dain said I should get the expensive chromosome test done, that maybe I actually DO have XY chromosomes! When I told him

I got 50 mg and would get 100 in another 10 days, he flipped. Said that was bullshit, that Stanford recommends *200 mg per week* until your menses stops! I was instantly depressed. Felt like crying. Dain said I should demand 200 and if there's a problem with that, Dr. *F.* should call Dr. *P.* I felt so bad—why is Dr. *F.* jacking me around? But I hate to go to a doctor and tell him his business. Dain said they give frigid WOMEN 200 mg of testosterone! Anyway, told Dain how my boss was for me and my parents, siblings and friends, and he said there seemed to be no reason for me to meet with him for counseling until I have some problems. So of course felt and saw no effects from the 50 mg. On Nov 27 went back in for my 2nd shot. My face was zitsville and Dr. *F.* zero-ed in on that immediately, but told him it was not unusual for me, especially because I had my period. Told him my counselor said I should ask for 200 mg/week. He very firmly stuck up for himself, that *he's* the doctor and has many patients who have full beards; this is the way he does it; the medical profession always tries to give the lowest drug dosage to achieve the desired effects; I've waited 28 years already, what's an extra couple weeks, blah, blah, blah. So what can I say? He gave me 100 mg. Asked how my appetite is, told him I ate like a pig on Thanksgiving but other than that, I feel no difference. He asked what Dain and I were discussing during our “counseling sessions” and I bullshitted—because we haven't *had* any “sessions”—that I told how my bosses are so accepting and Dain says he doesn't even know what he needs to counsel me for. Dr. *F.* said in 10 more days he'll give me the 200 mg and then I'll get 200 every 2 wks til my period stops.

12/19/1979

Went for my 3rd shot 12/7. Told Dr. *F.* I was also feeling rather “sassy” and he really laughed hard. Said he had one patient who said he was really feeling aggressive and you've got to watch out. Dr. *F.* got a real kick out of that. When I was pulling up my pants, Dr. *F.* said, “Thank you, **sir**. See you in 2 weeks.” And so I guess he's finally accepted me and we're really on the way. Was a little surprised he wanted to give me the next shot too—he'd said he wanted to give me the first 3.

1/2/1980

So went for another shot 12/21. Dr. *F.* was very cordial. Told him my period's due the following week and he told me to note how long it lasted, the volume of the flow, etc. And it's great cuz I never even *got* my period! Ma arrived on 12/23 and I met her at the airport. She was full of questions about my change and incredibly open-minded and relaxed about it. She asked about my sexual relationship with Tom and I told her how I always imagined I was a male too when with Tom and how his feminine mannerisms and faggy impression was what attracted me to him. Told her I felt I could make it in the gay men's world and she said she also felt that gay men are the most accepting as far as unusual sexualities. Told me about the 2 gay women who bought the house next door to her—they play the butch-fem scene and like Ma enough to give her their keys when they're on vacation. She told me her attitudes have changed plenty since my brother died and she thinks why should she place moral judgments on her kids—just be glad they're happy and alive. She wasn't

bullshitting either. She never once said a discouraging, negative or doubtful thing about my plans. Then she gave me grandpa's old gold watch—said she'd been saving it for my brother and I was the next logical candidate. I am super elated with the watch! From one Louie to another. Somehow I do feel a special allegiance to him, too, and they always said I was his favorite.

1/7/1980

Everywhere I looked I saw beautiful males! They were right, my sex drive *is* going crazy, everyone looks good to me and I've never felt such total delight in masturbation. For the first time I imagine *I* am a participant in my sex fantasies. Before I wasn't even there—I just imagined situations involving men with each other. Now I can pretend I am kissing, I am touching.... My clitoris is really growing too—it's sticking out of the "hood" that usually covers it. I've been wearing a jock strap stuffed with socks I've formed into a penis with testicles. I like it better to have that shape. My body fat and skin haven't changed that I notice, although I am getting more pimples—but I have little to compare that with, as the birth control pills I'd been taking helped keep my face clear before. I am lifting my weights regularly now. I feel a *lot* of energy since this last shot—I'm rarin' to go! And this morning—God, I'm shaking with ecstasy—I wasn't even looking because I'd heard it would take a longer time—I have longish dark hairs on my upper lip. I don't know when they first appeared—it was like one day they weren't there and this morning they were. They're all along the mustache line, down to the corners of my mouth. I keep looking in the mirror, afraid I'm only seeing things, but they are still there! They are still there! I feel a tingling there, almost like I can feel them growing. So this isn't all an illusion. I am going to be a man. I can't describe how good I feel about myself.... To think about kissing a man when I have a mustache just makes me crazy! Several people at work today have commented how they really hear my voice lowering now and one girl said *as the day went on* she could hear it get lower and lower....

1/31/1980

Feeling so good. I'm just passing like nobody's business and at this time I'm trying to integrate my identity and my body in my head. I have to stop thinking of "passing as a man" and start thinking of *being* a man. I've spent so many many years daydreaming and imagining other men in situations and being a voyeur that it will take some work to learn to include myself—to be aware of my arms and chest and legs, to realize other people are looking at me as one of them instead of out of curiosity. My self-consciousness has been such an overwhelming, overriding preoccupation that it's an effort to get out of the fog. But slowly slowly I feel the fog lifting. It is so unusual, so fine to hear my voice—to *want* to talk, to *like* saying what I have to say, to be open in that way with strangers. I have to begin establishing myself as Lou Sullivan. —Anyway, I'd like to start establishing Lou Sullivan. Maybe I *should*

have them change my employment records, begin issuing my payroll check to L.S. so I can open a bank account in that name. That would make me feel great. I should maybe get together with Dain to talk these things through. –My body is being so adaptable. It seems my breasts are flattening out by themselves and I hardly need the binder I wear. I’m really seeing my male body develop before my very eyes. Got a super short haircut last weekend and with my little mustache I think I look like Clark Gable! I’m called sir on the phone almost all the time now and people who know I’m female are commenting that my voice sounds hoarse, do I have a cold? I really wish I could design good mock male genitals to wear. The stuffed sock get-up I’ve made gets stained and smelly and shifts around so I have to keep shoving it back in place. My male body is awakening all these pleasures for me—I even played with my nipples a little last night during masturbation, which was just gross and out of the question before.

2/17/1980

Goddamn, I really do feel so happy! Told Dain how very high I’ve been. He said he’d also felt super high, always waiting to come down when the initial excitement of the change was over...but still, 4 years after his surgery, he said he hasn’t come down! –I’m making a conscious effort to take the tension out of my face, to relax my facial muscles. I know I squint and twist up my face a lot and it feels so good to relax it.

2/19/1980

Damn, this is so incredible. It’s as though one day things aren’t there and the next day, **voila!** Suddenly I notice very long black hairs all over my legs! And short dark hair on the insides of my upper thighs, and on my stomach. This kind of hair I’ve never had before. It’s funny, too, because lately I’ve brushed at my legs cuz I’ve felt like there’s a long hair clinging to me. Now I understand why my legs feel so tingly. I wish dark hair would appear on my arms and backs of my hands instead! That’s where I really want it. And on the backs of my fingers. I have quite a few black hairs around my nipples, too. No extra hair under my arms, really, tho. They may be right—I’m gonna be a hairy one.

God, I’m really gonna be a man! A real man.

On March 6, 1980, Sullivan walked into the California Department of Motor Vehicles with an official letter from Dr. P, and he formally changed his name on his California driver’s license:

Louis Graydon Sullivan
Sex = M

“I was floating on air, no lie.” (Sullivan, 3/12/1980)

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Chapter 6

A Phenomenology of Embodiment

As we concluded in Chap. 4, positions that take the body to be either simply material or wholly discursive end up leading to noteworthy difficulties. Significantly, when these theories are applied to transgender experience, in neither case are the lived experiences of trans people given full voice. But as we have noted, both of these positions have elements of truth to them as well. First of all, the world *does* often seem to impress itself on us, and we do not always seem to have control over what we experience—especially when it comes to physical pain or certain pleasures. This seems to challenge the theory that emphasizes the ubiquity of discourse or social construction. On the other hand, we do seem to experience things that are meaningful to us, and we can be blind to what does not have any meaning, which would challenge the argument that our minds are just blank, waiting for the world to present itself to us. What we need, then, is a position that recognizes both the power of discourse in our experience and our foundation in some kind of material or sensory existence. Such a theory should be able to explain *both* how dominant discourses influence our sensory experiences and how sensory experiences can lead to new discourses or to shifts and challenges in existing discourses.

Let us consider the following: In a doctor's office, I wish to describe a certain lack of focus I am having, a disconnectedness, and a struggle with balance. Is it lightheadedness? Am I dizzy? Is the world spinning? The doctor has been given descriptive terms that she will link with various diagnoses. Each diagnosis starts with certain terms and then branches into different diagnostic assessments. But no, as I consider each of the descriptive terms, I find that none of these words fit. I can give longer descriptions, trying to avoid these words—no, it is not like when I stand up too quickly nor like when I spin around with my eyes closed... (In fact, both of these could be described as “dizziness,” although they are very different experiences.) The doctor and I can go on and on together, searching for the words that may or may not describe my experience. But let us say that we never find the right combination of words. Further, let us say that the doctor's tests do not “show” any maladies. I then get sent to a psychiatrist, who also finds “nothing wrong.” What happens then? One of several things: One of the professionals I have visited will try to

impose some kind of diagnosis onto my descriptions, even though it does not fit. Alternately, I might be dismissed, with the implication that I was making up my symptoms, trying to get attention, or imagining these feelings. Or I might be treated simply with regard to my symptoms, in an effort to make me more comfortable, where the cause of my discomfort is left in question. I might believe the “experts,” agreeing with their diagnosis or admitting that I must be imagining things and then pursuing the appropriate course. In each of these cases, we have further evidence of the power of discourse—how we make the body fit into the discourse at hand. And the discourse is so powerful that, if I were to be dismissed by the experts, I might no longer *feel* the symptoms I felt before. Or I might feel them in new ways, as symptoms of other, named afflictions. Or I might continue to feel them, whether I visit more doctors or just resign myself to living with them. But—and this is the point we need to pursue—prior to any diagnosis, during the time when the experts and I are *trying to name* this affliction but have not yet been able to do so, we are in an “in-between” space, between the body and discourse (or many discourses). We have a “thing”—a *feeling*—that is being, for the moment, *acknowledged without being fully named*. Of course, it is only acknowledged because we all *presume* that it *will* be identified at some point. And it is part of discourse already by being named as an “anomaly” or vaguely as my “discomfort,” etc. We do have open-ended or vague names for things that resist being named or that do not fit the names we have. But what is important for us is that we have an example of an embodied experience that does not really fit completely into any specific discourse.

In fact, prior to my even going to the doctor, there was *something that motivated me to go*. I had an embodied experience, I did not know what it was and could not give it a name, and so I went to a doctor to seek diagnosis (naming)—and more importantly, relief. Of course I was culturally or discursively motivated to see a *doctor*—or any other type of authority—but the point is not about whom I sought out but rather that I was motivated *by something* to address it in some way. I want to focus on the fact that it was only *after* the original sensation arose that language came into play. The original experience itself, whatever its cause and however it *felt*, motivated me to visit the doctor in the first place. It started out as unnamed and then became named in a vague way as a “placeholder.” The doctor and the experts then worked to try to replace the “placeholder” with specific terminology. But there would have been no reason for the placeholder or for the doctor’s efforts, if there were no original experience that surfaced in my awareness. In other words, the perception of an embodied content can be, at first, simply a perceiving itself, and only given this experience am I then motivated to address it in some way. When I express the experience, discourse is fully involved, and the dimensions of my body as discursive come into play. Such an experience is clearly closely involved with language; however, we can see that there are some perceptual contents that can arise for themselves before they are expressed.¹

This scenario parallels the rather stereotypical narrative of “transsexuality” offered in Harry Benjamin’s (1966) account but also seen prior to his text, such as

¹I have published an earlier version of this example elsewhere (Rodemeyer 2008).

in Christine Jorgenson's (1967) descriptions of her attempts to identify what she was feeling prior to her diagnosis in 1950. It is not the self-description of every trans person, clearly, nor is it an experience exclusively belonging to trans persons; rather, it simply describes an original feeling that then might lead a person to act upon that feeling. With the popularity of Jorgenson, as we noted in Chap. 4, hundreds of people wrote to doctors in the hopes of "sex change" surgery. Joanne Meyerowitz (2002) points out that while some people may have been influenced by the media flurry about Jorgenson's transitions and some others may have had alternate reasons for contacting doctors with requests for surgery, many people described feelings that they had had for years, and the urgency of their letters (usually to the doctors that they had read or heard about in the media) indicates the struggles that they had endured. Meyerowitz also points out that many who wrote letters described not only the feelings that they had, their discomfort with the gender to which they had been assigned, but also the fact that they had been ridiculed by others, sometimes even beaten and/or arrested:

Many reported years of ridicule for their unconventional presentations of gender. Their parents had misunderstood them, their siblings had teased them, and their peers had taunted and bullied them. [...] The police rarely offered protection. Both MTFs and FTMs told doctors about their "fear of arrest and persecution" at the hands of law-enforcement officials. (Meyerowitz 2002, 136)

What would motivate anyone to live a life that would subject them to such suffering, unless they felt driven to do so? For many trans people, hiding or pretending about their gender leads to another type of suffering, deemed often to be worse than what other people would do to them—and this is a description also given by cisgender gays and lesbians (and others whose sexual orientation or embodied sense goes against the norm). As Meyerowitz (2002, 137) says: "They might avoid such conflicts, but only, they said, at a psychic cost." Whatever motivates a person to live a visible challenge to normative discourse must come from somewhere, and in cases where the discourse of transsexuality or homosexuality does not yet exist or is made invisible, it must come from somewhere other than the realm of pure discourse.

Something is indicated when dominant discourses are changed, challenged, or called into question. Most often, this "something" arises from discourse itself, as Michel Foucault (1980) and Judith Butler (1999) argue, but sometimes, it does not. In the latter cases, we often turn to the body. However, this body is not a simple material thing, as dead matter. Rather what *is* indicated is some level of embodied, lived experience: Certain embodied experiences can appear prior to their appropriation into discourse. While it is clear that these embodied experiences become themselves invested with discourse upon their expression, it is also clear that *they appear as lived, embodied motivation for that entry into discourse*, and that they often seek a very *specific* narrative about their material embodiment. In other words, trans experience usually does not motivate just *any* embodied changes whatever; rather, the transition sought—if a trans person seeks transition—is usually quite specific. This motivation arises out of a person's lived embodiment.

In order to describe such experiences, I wish to introduce the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl. As a method, phenomenology is explicitly focused upon descriptions of lived, perceptual experience, and a major area of analysis within phenomenology is that of lived embodiment. In fact, as we will see, Husserl's analyses demonstrate how our embodiment is experienced on several levels. The terminology and methodology developed within this approach, then, could be extremely useful in furthering and improving our attempts to describe the entry of lived, embodied experience into discourse.

6.1 Introducing Husserl's Phenomenology

Husserl, sometimes called the "father of phenomenology," introduced his phenomenological method in order to work through how we move from embodied experience to a highly scientific understanding of the world. He carried out countless analyses, working through the different levels of our experience, from the individual and sensory up through the "intersubjective" or social levels. At each level, he determined, we take the information given and synthesize or constitute it in such a way as to develop our understanding of ourselves and of our world. One of the most complex things that he analyzed was the body, because it is the one and only thing that is both *experiencing* the world and *experienced* like other objects in the world. The body, according to Husserl, engages in both "mind" and "world" at once (to recall the elementary division with which we began Chap. 2). It is to some of these analyses by Husserl that we will now turn.

Husserl is famous for introducing two terms that indicate the main ways in which we experience our body: *Leib* (usually translated as lived body or Body) and *Körper* (usually translated as corporeal body or body).² The *Leib* is our body as a sensory organ; it is the "medium of all perception," as he says in his *Ideas II* (Husserl 1989, 61).³ This is the body as an active, sensory experiencing of the world. It is the body that touches, sees, smells, et cetera, but it also has its other sensations such as proprioception, nausea, discomfort, pleasure, and so on. The *Körper*, on the other hand, is our body in the world, as a thing like other things. This is the body that can be measured: It has calculable weight, temperature, resistance, etc. Husserl's analyses usually move from our inner sense of embodiment, *Leib*, to an outer sense, *Körper*. In doing so, however, he discovers that this division is much more complex than it appears.

²This division is more complex than I make it out here, although my analyses in this chapter begin to break down this simple distinction. See also Rodemeyer (2014). Once again, I apologize for my reference to "the transsexual," as well as "the intersexual," in this article. I hope to have avoided repeating such egregious errors in this book.

³All pagination refers to the translation of Husserl's *Ideas II* (1989) by R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer.

Let us take a look at one of his analyses.⁴ In the following example, Husserl (1989) is touching a table that is “solid, cold, and smooth.” In the background, though, he is also sensing his body:

Moving my hand over the table, I get an experience of it and its thingly determinations. At the same time, I can at any moment pay attention to my hand and find on it touch-sensations, sensations of smoothness and coldness, etc. In the interior of the hand, running parallel to the experienced movement, I find motion-sensations, etc. Lifting a thing, I experience its weight, but at the same time I have weight-sensations localized in my Body. And thus, my Body's entering into physical relations [...] with other material things provides in general not only the experience of physical occurrences, related to the Body and to things, but also the experience of specifically Bodily occurrences of the type we call *sensings*. (Husserl 1989, 153)

Thus, we see that, in the simple case where I run my fingers over the surface of a table, I am actually experiencing not only the table but also my body—and my body in several ways. My focus in such cases is usually on the table; I am learning about its surface, and so I attend to its smoothness, how cool and hard it feels. In a phenomenological analysis, though, I can direct my attention to other aspects of the experience. When I shift my focus to the tips of my fingers, I discover that I am not only feeling the table, but I am also feeling my body as a surface; I am not just touching the table, but the table is also touching me. In this mutual touching, I might sense whether my fingers are soft or rough, damp or dry, but more importantly, this experience reveals an interface between my body and the things it touches. Simply put, I feel the surface of my body through its contact with other things.

But that is not all. Husserl, as we see, then directs his “gaze” to the interior of his hand. Here he is no longer focusing on his body as a surface but rather as a depth. Within this depth are other sensations: movement, weight, location, and even temperature. These “sensings” are “localized” in the body, giving it its shape and form. I experience sensation in specific areas of my body, whether as a surface or as a depth, and in doing so, I learn the limits of my body. As my body senses the world, it also senses itself; the other objects in the world do not have this dimension for me. In this way, my body is synthesized both as a “bearer of sensations” and as a thing in the world—a thing that is very different from all other things: My body is the *only* thing that I experience directly as sensing, as *Leib*. In fact, my body senses itself doubly when it touches itself. In an example later made famous by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962, 92–3), Husserl discusses two hands touching each other in order to demonstrate that the multiple aspects of sensation and constitution that take place in touch are doubled as the body touches itself.⁵

⁴A more extended and technical version of the following analyses was presented at the University of Graz, in a paper entitled “Phenomenological Gymnastics: An Analysis of Levels of Embodiment,” December 10, 2015. I thank the coordinators and the participants of that workshop for their feedback.

⁵See Al-Saji (2010) for a critical assessment of Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of Husserl's example: “Merleau-Ponty reads the touching-touched experience as a relation of subject and object—for-itself and in-itself which are mutually exclusive to one another. In this context, my hand can be either absolute subject, ‘alive and mobile,’ touching and exploring the world; or it can be touched

In the case of one hand touching the other, it is again the same, only more complicated, for we have then two sensations, and each is apprehendable or experienceable in a double way. (Husserl 1989, 154)

Therefore, the sensation of touch is an important ground for the constitution of my embodiment. And as we have just seen, surface touching is only one aspect of my sense of embodiment; I also sense my body through its depth, and this inner sense of embodiment is not reducible to the sensations I experience on my body's surface.

As I experience different types of sensation on and in my body, the sense of my *body* becomes integrated with my sense of self—this body is *mine*. Now, my relationship with my body might be troubled by all sorts of social factors, including my gender, race, ability, or whether I fit certain expectations about cleanliness, fashion, beauty, etc. I might even distance myself from my body in some way or other by engaging in practices that treat my body as a thing to be manipulated or as something that imposes itself upon me. But I can only distance myself from my body, whether I try to subject it or feel subjected by it, if it is mine. This notion of my body being mine rests in the original way that my sensory experience is given to me and not to anyone else. These sensations appear together in ways that form my sense of embodiment, and they also establish this as *my* embodiment.

The touch-sensing is not a *state* of the material thing, hand, but is precisely the *hand itself*, which for us is more than a material thing, and the way in which it is mine entails that I, the “subject of the Body,” can say that what belongs to the material thing is its, not mine. (Husserl 1989, 157)

This pain, this pleasure, this discomfort, all these sensations are given not only in such a way that they form my body in particular ways but also in such a way that they form me as belonging to this body and as this body belonging to me.⁶

In his discussion of *Leib*, Husserl explicitly mentions feelings such as pain and pleasure. These also have “localization” in the body, he says, and he even expands his description to “the ‘sensuous’ feelings, the sensations of pleasure and pain, the sense of well-being that permeates and fills the whole Body, the general malaise of ‘corporeal indisposition,’ etc.” (Husserl 1989, 160) In fact, Husserl (1989, 160) continues, there are many types of sensations that “form the material substrate for the

by my other hand, and descend into a passivity that does not even feel itself as such. It seems that the touched hand loses its affectivity; it cannot feel its being touched *while my other hand consciously palpates it*. At that moment, the touched hand becomes an object, a ‘bundle of bones and muscles.’ Its power to touch, and its awareness of itself, is there only in memory and anticipation, waiting for the next instant when it can regain this power and, touching the other hand, reduce it to the status of an object.” (Al-Saji 2010, 21).

⁶To elaborate, in the formation of my embodiment, I feel the surface of my fingers while touching an object, and I also feel the thickness and movement of my fingers, hand, and arm as I slide my fingers along. These sensations group together since they are distinguished from all experiences of objects that *do not* have this inner sense of thickness, movement, and sensation. The body begins to appear, then, as a particular object—the only one that is sensed in this way. This is the “primordial” formation of the body as *Leib*. This formation is then unified with my sense of self, a perceptual perspective that is mine.

life of desire and will, sensations of energetic tension and relaxation, sensations of inner restraint, paralysis, liberation, etc.” In other words, sensation is not limited to the traditional five senses. Rather, the body is constituted through a host of sensations, all of which contribute to my sense of embodiment overall. Many of these sensations arise on the surface of the body, but many, such as tension or relaxation, well-being, etc., are experienced throughout my body, in my body as having a certain depth.

So, let us review: My body as *Leib* appears to have several layers to it. First, it is the “organ” through which I experience the world around me. I reach out into the world with my sensory body, and I learn about the things that I touch, hear, see, smell, etc. I perceive things in the world through my sensing body. As I do so, I learn about the surface of my body; as my body touches and encounters the objects (and people) around it, I sense my body as my sensory interface with the world. Now, this interface can expand and contract, based upon how I am engaged with the world. A backpack or a purse can become part of my body and how I “feel” the world. As Merleau-Ponty (1962, 143) famously pointed out, a blind man “sees” with his stick—it is not an object separate from his body. Merleau-Ponty also refers to a woman who always knows how to bend so that the feather on her hat is not broken off and to how we always know—without measuring—whether our car will fit through a narrow street. “To get used to a hat, a car or a stick is to be transplanted into them, or conversely, to incorporate them into the bulk of our own body” (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 143). At the same time, I can “forget” where my foot might be moving or my hand might be resting—so much so that I can bump into things that should be quite obviously in my way or close a car door on my fingers. But this flexibility and adaptability of the body rest upon the original sensory experience of that body: If I were to have no sensory experience of my body at all, there would also be no sense of its surface and thus no expansion or contraction of that surface in relation to the world around it. I need to have an original sense of *Leib* in order to “sense” my car as I parallel park; the car becomes an expansion of my own body but only on the basis of my body as an original sensory experiencing thing.

In addition to experiencing my *Leib* as a surface that engages with the world, and as one through which I learn about the world, my body also has a sense of depth. I feel my body from within as it moves more quickly or slowly, I sense its weight in addition to the weight of the things that I pick up, and I also experience specific sensations throughout and within my body—pain, pleasure, tension, relaxation, discomfort, anxiety, well-being, and so on. These feelings both tell me about my body for itself and inform how I engage with the world. If I am exhausted, objects might feel too heavy to lift, for example; if I am experiencing great pain or pleasure, I might not notice many other sensory experiences; certain modes of well-being or relaxation can heighten other sensory experiences or my attention to details. Thus, my *Leib* is a complex set of levels of experience: It is neither simple material being, nor is it just a compilation of five senses.

If we recall the example given at the beginning of this chapter, I go to visit a doctor because I experience a sensation that is unknown to me and is disturbing me. That sensation—I described it vaguely as “dizziness”—would be located at the

level of *Leib*, because it arises as a sensation for itself. This sensation might be in the “background” before I notice it—such as when I hear the humming of the refrigerator or feel my clothes on my skin without noticing them—but when I do pay attention, I know that it has been felt all along. Then it could come to the “foreground” of my attention, forcing me to acknowledge it in some way. Or it could just jump directly into the foreground of my attention. In whatever way it comes to my attention, once I begin to express that feeling, it will move beyond the most basic level of *Leib* into discourse. Nevertheless, the fact that it can rise up for me as an immediate sensory experience, even when I do not know what it is or how it should be called (whether from the background of my attention or in the foreground), is an indication of how it rises up from the ground of *Leib*, of sensory embodiment, and how such embodied experience can push itself into a level of discourse.

Husserl’s (1989, 160) description of those sensations that give a general sense of the body in its “well-being” or “malaise,” “sensations of inner restraint, paralysis, liberation, etc.”—which he says are “difficult to analyze and discuss”—connects not only to the example with which we have been working but also with descriptions of a “material” body often presented in trans theory. Here this materiality, as we see, is not brute or dead matter; rather it is a sense of embodiment that is interwoven with all of my sensory experience. In addition, this “material” embodiment is not reducible to discourse, as it can arise immediately for me or lurk in the background, prior to being named. In fact, according to descriptions given by trans theorists, the experience of trans embodiment is often a feeling that at first is difficult to put into words. As Jason Cromwell (2006, 512–3) describes: “I don’t know that I’ve ever really felt like a man. I’m not even sure I, as a transperson can feel that way. [...] I identify as an ‘other,’ as a transman.” And then he adds: “However much they may pass, transpeople, whether they identify as trans or not, are always aware of their transness—an awareness situated in their bodies” (Cromwell 2006, 513).

There’s so much written about all kinds of sexually weird people but a female who imagines herself a bi-sexual male is way beyond anything I’ve ever read. And so how do I cope with myself. (Sullivan, 1/13/1971)

The descriptions offered by trans theorists are usually of living, sensing, embodied subjectivities. They experience aspects of their embodiment that do not fit with the discourses about gender available to them—discourses that insist that gender identity is determined by anatomy, for example, or discourses that insist upon a gender binary that is exclusively male/female, or those that equivocate between gender identity and sexual orientation. Thus, they enter into these discourses in a variety of ways, from attempting to conform completely, to rejecting certain discourses as much as possible. But as Cromwell (2006) points out above, this engagement is specifically different from that of cisgender people for whom the discourse “fits.” Trans people maintain an embodied awareness of a lack of “fit” with the discourses about gender that exclude or deny their experience. It is an “awareness situ-

ated in their bodies,” as Cromwell says, but this embodied “awareness” is also the motivation for many trans people to engage in these discourses in new ways, such as challenging the gender binary or the presumed alignment of anatomy with gender identity or sexual orientation.

Cisgender discourse is generally not equipped to describe the embodied experiences of trans people, but the experience of trans embodiment is often what prompts challenges to cisgender discourse.

How could I fit into all this? Even if something did happen...what could I do? I could only imagine or wish. Never participate the way I want to. [...]

Imagine how mixed-up I am...how I don't even know what I want to get, much less how to get it. (Sullivan, 2/13/1973)

The experience of trans embodiment forces a different type of engagement with discourse precisely because cisgender discourse does not reflect any alternate experiences of embodiment. Thus, not only are our bodies grounded in sensory experience, but that embodiment is also deeply involved with discourse. How can embodiment participate at both levels, especially when they seem to exclude one another? Let us return to Husserl and to what I find to be one of his most interesting descriptions.

In addition to describing the “inner” sense of *Leib* (which we have been discussing up to now), Husserl also describes what he calls the “outer” sense of the body or *Körper*. The *Körper*, as we mentioned above, is the physical sense of embodiment—that which can be measured in objective ways, such as weight, height, temperature, etc. But unlike other objects in the world, which we can also weigh and measure in various ways, my *Körper* is distinguished precisely by the fact that *it is also my Leib*. In other words, *my material body is also necessarily a sensing body*:

To the apprehension of Corporeality [*Leiblichkeit*] as such belongs not only the apprehension of a thing but also the *co*-apprehension of the sensation fields, and indeed these are given as belonging, in the mode of localization, to the appearing Corporeal body [*Leibkörper*]. (Husserl 1989, 163)

The body, therefore, is not a purely material object out in the world nor is it purely a sensing organ, but rather, it is always co-apprehended as a *sensing material body*.

Husserl's use of the term *Leibkörper* (translated as corporeal body) is revealing, since it highlights how the body is both sensory and objective at once. In fact, I would like to argue that this term points to a fundamental way in which we are “material”—but it is a “materiality” that is necessarily interwoven with my sensory experience. This “materiality” identifies a shift from a fully “inner” attitude of sensation toward the constitution of my body as involved with the world. It is a sensory-based materialization wherein I transition as embodied subject from inner sensing to outer engagement, without dissolving the two levels into one another or

dismissing either one in favor of the other. This fundamental level of sensory materiality is evident, I would argue, in that gray area where objects seem to become part of our body and where the body starts to appear as an object. Such examples are easy to find: We noted earlier that Merleau-Ponty offers a famous example of a blind man with his stick, where the stick is not a foreign object but rather an extension of his arm and hand. The blind man *sees* with the stick. In this way, the body extends beyond its traditionally defined contours. And this can happen in the other ways as well: I “feel” my food through utensils as I am cooking and eating it; I sense the ground through my shoes; I feel one with the bicycle as I ride down the street, etc. This blending with objects can occur in the opposite way as well: My body can appear foreign to me, as an object out in the world. In my example of going to the doctor’s office, I report to the doctor that I “don’t feel like myself”—my body seems sluggish or unable to function in its typical ways. When my body resists me in ways to which I am not accustomed, then it begins to appear to me as an object similar to other objects while remaining integrated with my sensory experience.

Trans embodiment also offers examples of this sensory-based materialization, since it is often felt through, with, and beyond specific body parts, modifications, and appropriated objects. Trans embodiment demonstrates how embodiment is a sensory engagement with the body’s sexual “materiality” in a variety of ways. As Cromwell (2006) explains:

A normal transbody may well have both a penis and breasts. Another normal transbody will bear the marks from chest surgery, and a penis may not be present but an enlarged clitoris (probably renamed) may be. (Cromwell 2006, 515)

Cromwell (2006, 516) also cites Kristen K., the partner of a trans man: “I go down on both cocks. I can suck his dick [dildo] off or I can suck off what medically would be his clit, but I see both of them as cocks.” The medical discourse about transsexuality—following Benjamin’s descriptions—insists that most presurgical trans persons are disgusted by their genitalia and thus rarely find pleasure in them. Trans persons, to the contrary, often do not fit this description. Cromwell (2006, 515) cites a trans man named Rich who says: “I am one of those who ‘enjoy my cunt’ but still see myself as male. [...] I am a sexual being and will be sexual with the organs I have.” Our ability to include or reject different aspects of our embodiment therefore is not a denial of the sensory ground of the body but actually is in interaction with it.

So I finally got myself a cock. [...] Got it yesterday & I was even afraid to open the box. But finally harnessed it to myself & it was like it was supposed to be. No big deal. It felt real & I wished it had sensations. Slept with it on all nite. Have it on under my clothes now, writing this. I fantasize it is erect becuz I am alone with a beautiful boy. [...] I fear it will come to be as important to me as my jockey shorts & I won’t be able to be without it. (Sullivan, 5/17/1974)

Husserl's descriptions of *Leibkörper*, therefore, along with all sorts of examples of how sensory embodiment extends into the objective world, demonstrate a fundamental level of "materiality," but it is clearly not the materiality of "dead matter." Rather this materiality is precisely the "matter" of sensory experience, a "material" engagement between my embodiment and other objects in the world.

For some theorists, the ability to appropriate different objects into our embodiment is evidence of the discursive fluidity of gender, the body, and identity in general. However, while I would not deny the fluidity of how our bodies incorporate and shift into different ways of being—in fact, this fluidity is essential to how the body lives—I would argue that this shifting often takes place on the ground of the sensation that underlies it: Given the basis of sensation and inner sense, certain objects and shifts feel "right" while others do not. My body moves me in specific directions, and it indicates through sensations such as pleasure, discomfort, pain, and well-being which meanings and materialities fit best. For this reason, I am neither completely subjected to discourse, nor a free agent beyond all discourse or materiality, nor absolutely determined by a material body. I am called by my *Leib* to move in specific directions, just as I am influenced by the discourses that surround me. My embodiment—my *Leibkörper*—is a negotiation of these influences.

And so I had to sleep with the boy I am & make love to myself, like I have every nite. I pretend I'm a boy in bed & think how it feels. I've done this for years—as long as I've had sexual feelings. (Sullivan, 9/16/1973)

While moving through various discourses based on the sensory ground of my embodiment, I am engaging them through acceptance, rejection, denial, etc. Thus, the sensory basis of my *Leib* does not determine me through some type of material determinism. In fact, as we know well, we can train ourselves—or be trained—to ignore, bypass, or bury certain tendencies or embodied directions. Often, as we have seen, this training works: Women learn to walk, talk, gesticulate, etc. in one way (depending on culture, history, etc.); men learn another way. We sit for hours in a classroom or in front of the computer, in spite of the fact that we yearn to move and stretch. In those instances when the training does not work to subdue specific tendencies, then we can consider whether some aspect of *Leib* is pushing past the dominant discourse that surrounds it.

Because the *Leibkörper* is not just *Leib* but also *Körper*, though, we also experience moments where certain objective aspects of my body come to the fore. Husserl (1989) says that the body presents itself,

as a material thing of special modes of appearance, a thing "inserted" between the rest of the material world and the "subjective" sphere [...], as a center around which the rest of the spatial world is arranged, and as being in causal relationship with the real external world. (Husserl 1989, 169)

While my material body is closely linked with my "inner" sense of embodiment, it has certain attributes particular to it that I cannot control. These limitations indi-

cate both the materiality of my body and the particularity of this body as *mine*: For example, I always experience the world from the perspective of my body, i.e., that the world is oriented around my body—above or below, to the right or left, etc. In addition, I cannot see or touch all the parts of my body, which makes it ironically an object with which I perceive but which I cannot fully perceive myself; others can see the back of my head directly, surgeons can see inside me while I am unconscious, etc. As Husserl (1989, 167) says: “The same Body which serves me as a means for all my perception obstructs me in the perception of it itself and is a remarkably imperfectly constituted thing.” Finally, I cannot leave my body; I am stuck in this “orientation,” whether or not I want to be. In other words, while there is a certain fluidity to how my embodiment is lived, there are also very clear limits. I can change my body to a certain extent—but I cannot transform it into just anything. I remain rooted in this materiality, as a thing in the world.

I had an urge to lean over & kiss the boy as I left the car...but I knew I could never be a part of the life & I had just admitted it to myself...I left the car hoping he didn't notice I was female.... (Sullivan, 12/23/1972)

The limits that my materiality imposes upon me can hit me in all sorts of situations. My physician, for example, will often approach my body as an object to be measured and tested. In the doctor's office, my height, weight, blood pressure, heart-beat, etc. are measured, calculated, and documented. Any anomalies compared to other bodies of my type might be noted. But although I might willingly subject myself to these measurements and tests, I remain a sensory body that is co-apprehending itself as materially given. If I have gained or lost weight recently or if my blood pressure is high or low, I might also have sensory perceptions that correlate with these measurements, although some measurements might surprise me because they are not accompanied by any sensory experience at all. All of these tests reveal my body as a material thing that is connected with my perceiving embodiment.

While this “materiality” of embodiment affects everyone, trans writers often offer descriptions that correlate resoundingly with Husserl's analyses of a material body that is connected with sensory experience. Riki Anne Wilchins (2006) describes how she was suddenly troubled by aspects of her male body that she could not change when she transitioned to female:

My voice was unnervingly deep. My hands were too large, my shoulders too broad, my hips too narrow, and my feet much too big. The same size basketball sneakers I'd been wearing for over ten years suddenly looked ridiculous, even to me. (Wilchins 2006, 547)

Wilchins' transition was not a smooth, happy switch from one gender to another but rather a painful acknowledgment of the material limitations of that transition. The large hands, deep voice, and broad shoulders remained a frustrating part of her body. Prosser (2004, 171–2), as we noted in Chap. 2, also points to the failure to construct a fully functional penis for trans men in order to highlight the material limitations of transition: “What's painful about photography and gender reassign-

ment surgery both is that, in spite of how close they are to reproducing the referent, to making it present [...], they ultimately fail.”

I told them I wanted to dress up in female drag & be a queen but I couldn't since I AM a female...so I'm frustrated. (Sullivan, 1/22/1973)

But this recognition of the body's material limitations is not always so negative. Often, trans writers describe their transition as achieving alignment between a sensory *Leib* as ground and a *Körper* whose materiality imposes itself upon them. As Jamison Green (2006, 503) explains: “The tremendous sense of relief that transitioning men feel marks what is probably one of the most satisfying periods of their lives.” The co-apprehension of a sensory and “material” body is essential to all embodied experience. But it is often—although not always—highlighted in trans embodiment, whether the experience is positive or negative.

Theorists from the perspective of social construction usually dismiss Husserl's phenomenology, assuming that he does not recognize how we can be alienated from ourselves, and from our own bodies, through the gaze of another. And if Husserl's analyses had stopped here, this assessment might have been correct. But Husserl does not deny that we can become alienated to ourselves, nor does he deny that we can experience ourselves as material bodies beyond the fundamental level of sensory materiality that we have discussed so far. In fact, Husserl's description of a materialization that renders my embodiment completely “other” to me is eerily parallel to the philosophies that argue for the social construction or discursivity of the body. The crucial difference is that Husserl sees this as a higher level of materialization, one that is grounded in the (lower) levels of materialization and sensory embodiment that we have been discussing so far. Let us look at his description.

According to Husserl (1989), when another person appears physically before me, I might first perceive her body as an object like all of the other objects around me. But her appearance also calls me to “apperceive” her—a perceiving beyond what is directly given as sensory data—as another conscious subject like myself. This perceiving beyond what is directly in front of me is an important aspect of perception for Husserl, and it takes place in all of my activity of perception. I always apperceive objects as already possessing other sides and aspects to them that I cannot see or feel right now. Apperception is implicit in every perception. In the case of perceiving other people, though, this apperception yields the recognition of another person like myself. Husserl (1989) calls this apperception of other subjects (as opposed to objects) “empathy”:

In my physical surrounding world I encounter Bodies, i.e., material things of the same type as [...] “my Body;” and I apprehend them as Bodies, that is, I feel by empathy that in them there is an Ego-Subject [...]. (Husserl 1989, 172)⁷

⁷Husserl's analysis is not without its difficulties. However, the issue of solipsism is not the topic of these analyses. Moreover, the topic has been dealt with extensively in the secondary literature, from Martin Heidegger and Alfred Schutz to Simone de Beauvoir, and many more in phenomenology as well as feminist theory and other areas.

In empathy, I recognize the other subject as a subject with her own perspective—with her own set of material limitations similar to what I experience with my own body. This means that I see her with her own spatial “here” as opposed to my “here.”⁸ She is a subject whose “there” from my perspective is a “here” from her perspective. But when this happens, when I see another person and I apperceive a “here” that belongs to her, then I suddenly recognize another “here” that is not my own. According to Husserl, without my experience of other people through empathy, I would be incapable of experiencing any other “here” except my own. This moment enables me to see objects as having many perspectives at once, other than just my own, as being perceived by many subjects at once, rather than just by me. In doing so, empathy opens up the world for me as an *objective* world.

[T]heir place is given to us as a “here,” in opposition to which everything else is “there.” [...] [W]e have at the same time the other Body as “there” and as identified with the Body-as-here phenomenon. I then have Objective movement in space, the other Body is moved just like any body whatsoever, and, in union with it, the man “himself” with his psychic life moves. So I have an Objective reality as the conjunction of two sides [...]. (Husserl 1989, 176–7)

The bodily encounter of two or more subjects, then, reveals the objectivity of a shared world, according to Husserl. The world is no longer just there for me; it is there for everyone.

This description offered by Husserl is not a proof of the existence of other subjects or an attempt to overcome solipsism; rather, it is a description of how the material world (a world of things that I can measure in various ways) appears as an *objective* world, as a world beyond my own experience of it, and as one that is shared by others. But there is a second, even more important moment in this encounter: When I recognize the other subject has having her own perspective, I then can imagine myself in her place. In doing so, I suddenly see my own body as an object in space just as her body appeared to me as an object in space. In other words, the objectification of the world that takes place when we recognize our different perspectives also *folds back upon me, objectifying me as part of this same world*.

But from that “here” I can then consider even my own Body as a natural Object, i.e., from that “here” my body is “there,” just as the other’s Body is “there” from my “here” [...] and I represent it, the Body, in just the way that it is given to any person who encounters a man as one with it. [...] I acknowledge that each encounters every other as the natural being, man, and that I then have to identify myself with the man seen from the standpoint of external intuition. (Husserl 1989, 177)

⁸Husserl understands the term “perspective” quite literally here. It is a spatial perspective, not a personal one. Simply put, I do not gain insight into another person’s experiences, history, culture, embodiment, etc. by imagining myself in her place; rather I simply understand that her spatial position provides another angle on the world than the one I have. Husserl makes clear that I cannot access the other person’s thoughts or her direct experiences (see, e.g., Husserl 1989, 171–2).

This encounter with another person, then, is a momentous occasion, one that renders the world objective as well as my own body. As Husserl summarizes more succinctly:

Empathy then leads, as we saw earlier, to the constitution of the intersubjective Objectivity of the thing and consequently also that of man, since now the physical Body is a natural-scientific Object. (Husserl 1989, 178)

My body, through my encounter with other subjects, becomes understood as a physical body for others. Of course, this moment occurs repeatedly and continually in my engagement with others. This is a new level of materialization, though, one that is disconnected from the “inner” attitude that I have on my body. At this new level, I am being constituted (and objectified) by other people. The details of how I am objectified can therefore shift and change depending on the individuals I encounter, their culture, background assumptions, etc. They can be uplifting or detrimental. I can be objectified in ways that empower my subjectivity or imprison it. At this level the subject is taken up as a subject-object—or just as an object—in the intersubjective sphere. For this reason, Husserl sees this as a higher level of materialization than the one we discussed earlier. It is no longer based in my own sensory experience but instead is produced through the constitution of my body by others.

Much work has already been done on this type of objectification in feminist theory, queer theory, disability studies, critical theories of race,⁹ and other areas, so we do not need to work through the details of this position here. The point is that Husserl agrees with these theories about the existence and importance of this level of constitution. As mentioned earlier, though, for Husserl, this higher level of materiality is grounded in *Leib* and a more fundamental level of “materiality.” So, when I am in the doctor’s office, not only is my body a sensory-material phenomenon for me, but it is also a material thing through which I am objectified to such an extent that I, as a person, might no longer be “seen.” In fact, I might no longer be able to experience myself in the same way as I adopt the language and objectification that has been applied to me by professionals. In this way, this level of intersubjective materialization can influence the other levels of my embodiment, just as the *Leib* and my “materiality” as *Leibkörper* can enter the discourses that make up my intersubjective materialization.

When people ask me at work “What do you want for yourself in the future?”, how can I tell them that I just want to be a man? (Sullivan, 9/10/1979)

⁹The objectification of women and people of color is usually a background presumption in most theories in the humanities and social sciences today. De Beauvoir’s seminal text, *The Second Sex* (1953), was a crucial work that launched such discussions from the perspective of feminist philosophy; Franz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* (1968) was similarly influential with regard to critical race theory. Butler (1999) and Foucault (1980), as we have been discussing, developed this notion with regard to sex, gender, and embodiment in general, which resulted in subsequent focused areas, such as queer theory, transgender studies, and disability theory.

Although everyone undergoes this objective materialization, descriptions given by trans people often highlight this sense of objectification. Wilchins (2006) details how, while transitioning, she learned to see herself as others saw her:

Over a terrifyingly short period of only one year, my entire perception of my body changed to match the social truths everyone else read there. [...] It shocks me to this day how quickly I learned to make my body over, to embrace the various social truths about it, and to see on it what I was told. (Wilchins 2006, 548)

Have been worried about my lack of self identity and purpose now that I've decided to remain female. Maybe I'm being too hard on myself & expecting to adjust to the new identity too quickly. It seems I'm more bold and positive the way I am now, yet I don't have that "hold" on myself I did before. I'm not as self-conscious about my every movement or as aware of myself as I was trying to be male. (Sullivan, 8/7/1977)

Our experiences of objectification often come with a struggle, but when a trans person faces objectification in a discursive world that presumes a "natural" alignment between anatomy and gender identity, this struggle can be intensely felt—especially when that objectification could lead to insults, beatings, and even being killed. Wilchins (2006, 549) describes how she loses connection with her "inner sense" of embodiment because she works so hard to see herself through the eyes of others, and Sullivan, as we see in the citation just given, often feels self-conscious when he goes out in public as a man but recognizes also that he loses his sense of self-identity when living as a woman. Other people see us in ways that we cannot control, and when we negotiate this, we often recognize a tension between our inner sense of *Leib* and how we are constituted by those around us. This tension is heightened when social discourse is restrictive about how my body is supposed to appear.

My self-consciousness has been such an overwhelming, overriding preoccupation that it's an effort to get out of the fog. But slowly slowly I feel the fog lifting. It is so unusual, so fine to hear my voice—to want to talk, to like saying what I have to say, to be open in that way with strangers. I have to begin establishing myself as Lou Sullivan. (Sullivan, 1/31/1980)

Husserl acknowledges that this objectifying encounter can lead to outcomes other than those I expect or desire. I can be an "object" for others in ways that do not coincide with my own perception of myself. And this objectification can have dire effects on my subjectivity. In order to demonstrate this point, Husserl imagines a solitary *solus ipse*—a person who lives entirely within his experiences as *Leib*—who then encounters other subjects and engages with them in conversation about their shared world. In the moment of his encounter with others, this person and his experiences become constituted objectively in ways that he did not expect:

As I communicate to my companions my earlier lived experiences and they become aware of how much these conflict with their world, constituted intersubjectively and continuously exhibited by means of a harmonious exchange of experiences, then I become for them an interesting *pathological* Object, and they call my actuality, so beautifully manifest to me, the hallucination of someone who up to this point in time has been mentally ill. (Husserl 1989, 85)

While this is clearly a hypothetical scenario—since a truly isolated individual would not really be capable of discussing his experiences with people that he suddenly encountered—Husserl's point is clear: The objective world cannot rest upon any individual experience but rather depends upon intersubjective co-constitution. But the objectification that *I* undergo in this moment might be entirely in conflict with my own subjectivity and experience. Further, this conflict could take place not only with regard to *how* I am objectified, i.e., what type of subject I am taken to be, but also with regard to the fact that I might not be taken as a “subject” at all.

At the bar I talked openly to D. about myself & she was freaked when I told her I felt like a gay male. She kinda asked me all kindsa questions like she couldn't believe it. Was very honest with her & told her I was feeling less afraid of exposing myself & ready to get my ass kicked if that's what it would mean. When I think back now, she was kinda offish toward me the rest of the night. But by then I was too high to care. (Sullivan, 7/1/1973)

In Chap. 4, we discussed at length the medical and professional objectification of transsexuality, which trans theorists have criticized extensively and justifiably. We also discussed how our embodied experience can act as a source for new discourses as well as challenge established and dominant discourses. But without an integrated connection between the sensory level of embodiment as *Leib*, a fundamental level of sensory materialization as *Leibkörper*, and then our objective materialization through social encounters, we would not be able to challenge dominant discourses on the basis of lived, embodied experiences. Husserl's descriptions of embodiment as consisting in several, connected layers enable us to understand how a person can feel tension between her “inner” sense of self and the outer objectification of her body, how one might lose a sense of identity or self if he identifies too strongly with the social objectification of his gender, and how certain embodied experiences might rise up for me as a challenge to specific ways in which my body is being objectified. In other words, if we were to exist only on the level of intersubjective constitution—or on any of one of these levels—these tensions could not be experienced and they would not make sense. And while we certainly can identify moments in our lives where one of these levels is clearly emphasized over the others, we can only do so from the perspective of living through all of these levels of embodiment.

So, for Husserl, while “reality” is a constituted, shared concept—one that arises out of the co-constitution of subjects—the perspective of the individual, based in her embodied, sensory experience, remains an essential ground. Thus, we can iden-

tify, with Husserl, several levels to our embodiment: The first level is that of our sensory experience of embodiment. This is not just our experience of the world through the traditional “five senses” but also, and more importantly, a tactile sense of depth to the body as well as less specific sensations, such as well-being or discomfort. This sensory level grounds an important shift from sensory embodiment toward a fundamental level of sensory materiality, where I recognize my body as a thing in the world. At this level, I experience my materiality through the limitations of my body that are particular to me—my spatial perspective, the ways in which I can and cannot perceive or change my own body, etc. I also “expand” my sense of embodiment through material objects that become “part” of me. My encounter with other people brings me to higher level of materialization, where my body is constituted by others in such a way that may or may not conflict with my own senses of embodiment. Here, my body is perceived by other people around me, and they objectify me in ways over which I have very little, if any, control.

Super heavy scene last Friday nite...one of the best times I've ever had! I wore *P.*'s black leather jacket with real police handcuffs hooked on the shoulder. [...] I felt super hard-guy & all drunk & don't know how it all started but soon I was the big stud guy. [...] For the first time in public I was the man hiding inside of me for so many years. Some things *K.* told me I did I don't remember doing. But shit I was real!! (Sullivan, 2/26/1973)

These levels of embodiment intersect and overlap with one another. The constitution of my body by others clearly influences how I take up my own sensory experiences. At the same time, the sensory level of embodiment as well as the fundamental level of my body as “material” can motivate various discourses in ways that adjust, correct, or substantiate existing discourses or, in rare cases, establish new discourses about the body. We can see this in how the self-descriptions of trans embodiment that were told to Benjamin (1966) by his clients, led to his clarification of terminology that subsequently led to a more widespread recognition of transsexuality. His own explanations, however, were not only limited but also became a dominant and restrictive discourse focused primarily on “high intensity transsexuality.” Thus, trans theorists responded—often turning to their own embodied experiences—in order to challenge and revise this discourse. Often, they have referred to an “inner sense” of embodiment or to a materiality, essence, or identity that is felt or that yearns for fulfillment. Husserl’s phenomenological descriptions of embodiment present a terminology, and even a methodology, that acknowledges the complexity of this experience. Reference to a material body points to a complex intertwining of sensory feeling, a fundamental level of materiality, and finally, a socially constructed material body. These levels of embodiment could be said to touch upon Merleau-Ponty’s notion of flesh, which was invoked by Gayle Salamon (2010) in her discussions of gendered embodiment and trans theory, and which we discussed in Chap. 2. Merleau-Ponty describes flesh as an intertwining, often understood as an

intertwining of mind and body—although it is much more than this. Husserl’s descriptions are clearly not to be equated with Merleau-Ponty’s “flesh,” though. I have turned to Husserl’s descriptions in favor of Merleau-Ponty’s notion of flesh precisely because Husserl lays out the different levels of this embodied experience in such a way that would be useful to those theorists who analyze how we negotiate between our inner sense of self and the objectification we undergo by others. Trans theorists, as we have been pointing out, often describe such experiences, where we all—trans and cisgender—negotiate these levels in a variety of ways.

6.2 Body Sense: Our Embodiment and Discourse

The “inner sense” that we experience at the sensory level of *Leib* could easily be understood as synonymous with the “inner sense” of gender identity often discussed in cases typical of Benjamin’s “high intensity transsexual.” But in fact, we have seen that Husserl describes a sensory level of *Leib* that is much broader than gender identity and much less specific. While Husserl’s *Leib* includes the sensory experiences of the traditional five senses, it also includes much more vague senses of well-being and discomfort and pain and pleasure. So this “inner sense” of *Leib* does not simply say “I am a man” or “I am a woman.” Rather, it provides me with all sorts of sensory feelings that feel good or not and that feel “right” or not, and then I express these feelings in one way or another. One way to express them is to assert that “I am a man,” but there are many other ways as well. Kate Bornstein (1994), for example, writes that she does not have a sense of gender identity of either male or female:

I’ve no idea what “a woman” feels like. I never did feel like a girl or a woman; rather, it was my unshakable conviction that I was not a boy or a man. It was the absence of a feeling, rather than its presence, that convinced me to change my gender. (Bornstein 1994, 24)

And we have seen multiple examples of trans writers throughout this book who have argued that they do not follow the standard description of male or female gender identity.

[W]hat can become of a girl who’s real desire & passion is with male homosexuals. That I want to be one. That I fancy him to be one & I pretend I’m a man when we make love. (Sullivan, 11/22/1970)

David Valentine argues in his *Imagining Transgender, an Ethnography of a Category* (2007) that the very notion of transgender, as well as that of a “transgender community,” is a socially constructed one. He argues, moreover, that this construction is not simply based upon the medical and psychiatric professions that maintain this terminology (as well as limited definitions of it) but also on service and social work groups that name this “community” in order to provide services to

its “members.” Now, the fact that this terminology has been constructed to some extent is already clear to us, given our analyses of Benjamin’s (1966) work and reactions to it. But so far we have been maintaining certain distinctions that are in alignment with Benjamin’s as well as most professional attitudes (and many academic ones), namely, the distinctions between a given body, a person’s gender identity, and a person’s sexuality or sexual orientation. In fact, I chided Benjamin in Chap. 4 for privileging a person’s birth anatomy, rather than gender identity, in assessing sexual orientation. And Sullivan’s situation, as noted in the introduction to this book, provided substantial evidence for the distinction in psychology between gender identity and sexual orientation. Sullivan himself argued for this distinction. Valentine (2007), however, is troubled by the fact that the many individuals under the “umbrella” term “transgender” are often at odds with one another when it comes to such terminology—even though they supposedly live out what the terminology is meant to describe. Further, he finds that the term “transgender” excludes certain types of individuals—such as those identifying as gay rather than trans—from services that focus on the “transgender community.” Most troubling, though, is the fact that the employment of the use of transgender as *distinct* from homosexual has a few problematic effects: First, this distinction “normalizes” the identity of homosexuality and establishes it as comparable to white, middle-class straight people (or couples). Second, in doing so, “transgender” becomes the problematic “other” to homosexuality—that which is not stable, which needs treatment, etc. Finally, the issues of race and class affecting those who identify as either homosexual or transgender become marginalized in the effort to maintain this dichotomy.¹⁰

These effects bring about serious issues both socially and politically, as Valentine (2007) points out, some of which have also been identified by trans scholars, such as Vivian Namaste (2000). But the interesting thing for our discussion on embodiment is that, in spite of this terminology, the experiences of some people identified as “transgender” do not mirror the discourse at all—even terms that have been created to better reflect certain types of gendered experiences. Instead, Valentine encounters people identified as transgender who vehemently deny the term; others confuse, conflate, blend, and subvert the standard distinctions between gender identity, body, and sexual orientation. Valentine finds that some social workers tend to dismiss those who reject or subvert the terminology, arguing that their clients are merely uneducated about the proper distinctions. But this is further evidence of how the experiences of people identified as trans are not allowed their own expression. In addition, as Valentine points out, this especially silences the voices of those who are seen as lower class and people of color, i.e., those who are usually labeled as “uneducated.”

Valentine (2007, 3) begins his book by citing Fiona, a “trans woman” who says in a group meeting, “I’ve been gay all my life, been a woman all my life.” Fiona, along with others in the group—all of whom are African American or Latina—most often refers to herself as a “girl.” But although—or rather, because—she and the others are in relationships with men, they call themselves “gay.” In doing so, it

¹⁰This argument also parallels specific arguments made by Namaste (2000), some of which we have already discussed in Chap. 2.

would seem that they privilege their birth anatomy when it comes to their sexual orientation. But it is not as simple as that, for when Valentine, himself a gay man, returns to the group two weeks later, the members ask him not to join them anymore. Although one member is not bothered by Valentine's presence, because "we're all gay," another explains their reasoning, saying,

"You aren't a girl, you don't have boobs and this figure," motioning down her body with her hands. [...] Even though Diana, Frederique, and other members of the group had spent much time jesting with me about our common identification as "gay," it was clear that being "gay" meant something different for me and them. (Valentine 2007, 5)

Who is the authority on "gay" and on "trans" here? Valentine, who is a trained social worker and a gay man? Fiona and her fellow group members, born as men, living as women, and referring to themselves as gay? What about Foucault, Butler, and those theorists who point toward a body that is completely discursive? Or those who attend to bodies in their materiality, Alfred Kinsey and his colleagues, Benjamin, doctors, and psychologists? What about Husserl? Or Lou Sullivan? Or me? An awful lot of people, from a host of academic and institutional positions—as we have seen throughout this book—seem to have an interest in nailing down the definitions that apply to gender, embodiment, and sexuality. And most of these, as has been pointed out by trans writers, have been cisgender people in positions of authority. All of us—myself included—need to be careful when we try to apply theories and terminologies to embodiment in general, and trans embodiment in particular. The important thing is to allow trans persons to speak about their own embodied experience, on all of its levels, and to listen to them.

Valentine makes a point in his book to give voice to the many expressions of gender and trans that he encounters, and he reflects upon his position as a cisgender theorist who is analyzing the notion of "transgender." I hope to have done the same here, through Lou Sullivan's diaries and the many trans scholars and writers that have been cited. But my position remains problematic: Not only am I a cisgender scholar analyzing and writing about trans embodiment, but also, I am introducing a philosopher whose presumptions are clearly those of a cisgender, straight, traditional male. But Husserl insists that his phenomenology can be carried out by anyone. We simply need to focus our attention on our embodied experience and on the different levels at which we experience it. We need to listen to each other in order to determine what may or may not be shared across different embodied experiences. I would like to suggest that Husserl's analyses of embodiment can provide us with ways of describing gendered embodiment and with useful terminology. At the same time that he describes sensory embodiment, he allows for an understanding of embodiment that is constituted through our experiences with other people, and vice versa. He acknowledges shifts in our levels of experiencing embodiment, the depth of our embodied experiences, and the fact that certain levels may sometimes be emphasized over others. For these reasons, I hope to have combined the attunement to trans voices that we find in trans scholarship and Sullivan's writings, as well as in self-aware cisgender work such as Valentine's, with the relatively "democratic" terminology and insights offered by Husserl's phenomenology of embodiment.

Thus, while we cannot engage Valentine's (2007) argument about the construction of "transgender" in detail here, I have introduced his descriptions because they give voice to trans experiences, and in doing so, they also connect with our discussion of the layered experience of embodiment. Valentine sees many different lived experiences—and that these lives are expressed differently—in spite of an overwhelming discourse that identifies this multitude of experiences as "transgender." In fact, it is the proliferation of different lived embodiments, the rejection and acceptance of alternate (and seemingly contradictory) ways of naming, and the evidence of specific embodiments that do not fit any terminology that lead Valentine to his analysis of the construction of "transgender."

Valentine discusses Rita, for example, who, like Fiona, describes herself as a "girl":

Rita has had breast augmentation and facial surgeries, but not sex reassignment surgery (SRS); that is, she has male genitalia. Far from being a hindrance, such an embodied state is a selling point in the sexual marketplace of the Meat Market. [...] Rita is very angry that [the cops] "don't care about gay people." Surprised, I ask her if she thinks of herself as "gay." She looks at me as if I had asked a very stupid question and says: "Yes, I know what I am." She's not a woman, nor does she want to be a woman, and she would *never*, she says, have SRS. Like most of the Meat Market girls, Rita refers to herself as a fem queen, a drag queen, a girl, or as just "gay," [...]. At the same time that she "knows what she is," however, Rita does not want other people reminding her of it and resents people saying "You're a boy." (Valentine 2007, 11)

So Monday was a weird day. I met my first "queen" today in drag. We had attended the Russian class together last summer & even then I noticed he dressed & moved a bit girlish. But I guess he's decided to "come out" & came to say hello to me (he has off & on) with eye make-up, earrings, nail polish & a girl's pant suit. I was pretty freaked out, played it cool. Asked if he was in a theatre class & he said no, it's just me. Said stuff like he wanted to get an operation to complete the transition. Asked if he went to any gay lib meetings & he said no, he's not gay. Said he has a bi-sexual roommate. (Sullivan, 2/10/1971)

Rita and Fiona defy the discourse of transgender that still has its roots in Benjamin's seminal text. Instead of distinguishing, they conflate their embodiment, gender identity, and sexual orientation under the heading of "gay." Meanwhile, Valentine (2007, 8) mentions Cherry, who is a self-identified transsexual woman (describing herself also as transgender), and Cindy, who dismisses such terminology as "tranny crap." He also describes various members of Crossdressers International, some of whom are heterosexual, cross-dressing for erotic pleasure, and others for whom cross-dressing has a different meaning. "She points out Clara, who is attracted to men when she is cross-dressed, and Irene, who only likes women." (Valentine 2007, 9) Those who appear to inhabit apparently similar genders or embodied experiences, then, prove to fall under distinct categories, and they

have differing reactions to the terminology that supposedly describes them. In this way, arguments (such as Salamon's 2010) that claim that transgender is only possible on the basis of a preexisting gender binary within discourse, fall short of explaining the differentiations that are lived within the same terminology.

The inevitably social structure of even our most intimate and personal apprehension of gender would seem to be confirmed by the fact that even the most interior felt sense of gender seems to be confirming the social binary by which gender becomes legible. That is, Hansbury feels like *a man* and not some obscure and private gender for which there is no name or common cultural point of reference. (Salamon 2010, 124)

[He said that] when he read the part where I said I felt like a male homosexual, he just about flipped & thought that's one of the weirdest things & it's really way-out. Told him I knew that better than anyone! (Sullivan, 5/31/1973)

We have seen that many trans people *do not* insist that they belong to one or the other side of a binary gender structure. Simply put, not all trans experience registers on the socially constructed binary of gender or even a gender continuum that slides between two "opposite" poles. And, as we see in Valentine's ethnographic descriptions, the diversity that is lived, and the multiplicity of the ways in which the terminology is engaged, is even greater than the term "transgender" implies.

Foucault (1980, 1995) argued, as we saw in Chap. 2, that discourses and counter-discourses all arise out of the flow of discourse itself—the interrelation of power, language, and knowledge. But just because discourse can be formulated into a counter-discourse does not mean that discourse must, or will, do so of its own accord. What would motivate strong resentment against a term? Why take on one description and eschew another? Why combine discourses that contradict one another to describe oneself? If we are fully socially constructed, if we are only discursive beings, there is no real impetus for the differentiation, conflation, combination, and rejection of discourses that we see—not only among those identified as trans persons but in lived experience altogether. The answer to these questions can only come from a position that allows for the sensory and fundamentally material aspects of embodiment, on the one hand, and the socially constituted aspects, on the other (even those aspects that have not yet been recognized). Husserl's phenomenology of embodiment describes the motivation that comes from our embodiment as *Leib*, grounded in sensory experience, which then enters into discourse in any number of ways. It also allows any person—trans- or cisgender—to offer further descriptions that add to, modify, or even challenge the descriptions already given.

Nevertheless, the discourses that surround us that constitute us as embodied beings are an essential component to how we live in our bodies, and they clearly influence how we live our embodiment. For this reason, it is important—having already demonstrated how sensory experiences rise up into the realm of discourse—that we work through how the social construction of my embodiment filters into the levels of "material" phenomenon and *Leib* that ground it.

If we begin with the social constitution of gender, we find a general restriction of gender to a binary model of male-female. In certain periods in history and in specific cultures, this restriction could even be called a compulsion. Meyerowitz (2002, 130) cites one FTM who wrote to a doctor in the 1950s or 1960s, “something inside me just told me that I was a boy.” We also see this restriction in Benjamin’s descriptions of “high intensity transsexuals,” where a person’s desire to transition was always described as a complete “switch” between male and female. Those who did not wish to transition in such a way learned to tell their story so that they sounded like a “high intensity transsexual”; only then could they obtain the assistance they needed and/or desired. So, on the one hand, we see the dominance of discourse, in that gender—even in the case of many who “deviated” from the norm—was always seen through the restrictive lens of a gender binary. On the other hand, as we pointed out in Chap. 4, even Benjamin noted that there was quite a bit of variance within trans experience, which he described on his “scale.” More currently, within the discourse of “transgender”—which has become its own dominant discourse—we see variances within and beyond the limits of Benjamin’s terminology. As Valentine (2007) comments after his meeting with Rita:

Rita knows “what I am,” but it defies my social-service and ethnographic categories. Is she “transgender”? Undoubtedly, in the language and vision of transgender activists. But at the same time, she sees herself indisputably as “gay,” something Cindy, Cherry, or Melissa would fiercely reject. (Valentine 2007, 11)

And as Cromwell (2006) cites C. Jacob Hale,

What is it when a transfag and a transdyke get together and make magic together with their bodies and hearts? [...] Whatever else it is, it isn’t lesbian or gay or bisexual or heterosexual, because all of those miss the crucial fact that his transsexuality and queerness, her transsexuality and queerness, are a major part of what gets them together in the first place [...]. (Cromwell 2006, 517)

Valentine (2007) also describes “white *gay*-identified” (as opposed to heterosexual) men who cross-dress for erotic pleasure. Usually these persons would be described as “drag queens,” but they refuse this term, since that term applies to those who perform on stage—and we saw in Chap. 4 how drag queens are often restricted to the stage within gay male culture. He explains:

For them, cross-dressing is an erotic practice, *not* a performative one, but there is no space for their desires in the predominantly white downtown gay male scene where masculinity in presentation and behavior is the accepted (and eroticized) mode. (Valentine 2007, 87)

These men fit somehow *between* the terms of “drag queen” and “transvestite,” but in spite of their exclusion by the terminology, they still find ways to express themselves.

Showed him all my “drag clothes.” Had to explain what “drag” is (“It’s when gays wear what they like...”) I’m not sure he got it. (Sullivan, 3/17/1973)

So, from the perspective of social constitution, it is clear that my body is constituted before I am even born and that there are institutional attitudes about my body—especially my gender, race, abilities, etc.—before I enter the world in any way. These attitudes, discourses, and constructions filter into how I experience my body. The discourses about my body might close off certain experiences from me, or modify them in specific ways. They might open me up to certain experiences but not to others. But this does not mean that the experiences which are discursively closed off do not exist, that they are not experienced at all. The experiences that are discursively closed off lead to confusion, marginalization, inner tensions, and struggle—which are evidence that I have had some type of experience. And sometimes those experiences can lead to new discourses that allow for and describe what had formerly been excluded. As Green (2006) explains:

The transition itself opens so many windows on the gender system that we may be compelled to comment on our observations, which could not be made from any other vantage point than a transsexual (or sometimes transgender) person. (Green 2006, 503)

Got home & sat & cried bitterly like I did yesterday. I think “oh I should join a club or do volunteer work to get myself out of myself,” but everywhere I look I see nothingness, no bridge to cross over. The gays—but how are they to accept me? how do I fit in? The feminists—they always object to my dress, they won’t embrace me. The lesbians—but I like men & don’t want to jeopardize Tom’s and my relationship by getting a female lover. The straights—no way. The transvestites—they’re all male-to-female & put the make on me, no friendship possible. I can’t relate to anyone. (Sullivan, 11/26/1976)

Discourse can also infiltrate the sensory level of materiality, where I experience the limits of my material embodiment. Here we often find ourselves forced to speak of our bodies as either our own sensory experience or as a thing out in the world. Embodiment is forced into a dichotomy of “material” (or sensory) being or discourse. But this is perhaps where the difference—between language, with its logic of either-or, and embodiment, with its shifting among paradoxical positions—becomes most apparent. The material and sensory limits of embodiment do not exactly overlap with the limitations embedded within discourse. As Meyerowitz (2002) describes the hundreds who wrote letters to doctors asking about sexual reassignment surgery in the 1950s and 1960s:

Sometimes they expressed their desires with the language of “being” – being the sex they knew they were. At other times they positioned their longings as matters of “becoming” – becoming the men or women they knew they ought to be. However they defined the quest, they laid claim to their own sense of authenticity and their own self-knowledge about whether they should or could live and count as women or men. (Meyerowitz 2002, 131)

The authenticity to which Meyerowitz refers arises through the fact that I have a connection to my sensory ground. However, it also makes my self-description difficult, as these different modes of embodiment appear contradictory when I try to

explain them to others. They might even appear contradictory to me, when I am trying to understand a body that appears mine and not mine.

Things are still shitty but the chaos seems to have subsided. Saturday the 18th went to bed & began crying. I held myself & stroked my skin like I always do & imagining I was a beautiful boy I was sleeping with & then it began to get too real & I felt my mind & my body separating. Got so scared & realized I had to get outside & talk to someone if I wanted to stop. (Sullivan, 8/22/1973)

It is for this reason that, in response to discourses that do not seem to fit, we often search for answers at the level of *Leib*. Clearly, though, this level of *Leib* is difficult to access for itself. Most of the time, as we have noted, we are already *describing* our embodied experiences, and/or they have been described for us. In these cases, my *Leib* is already appropriated into the social discourses about embodiment and about my body. But, as we have been pointing out throughout our analyses, there are occasions that point to an embodiment that grounds the objectification of my body. That body as ground will surprise me (and sometimes others) with sensations I do not know, with feelings I cannot describe, and with sensory input that calls me to move, act, or react in one way or another. And while I can ignore, deny, channel, augment, or celebrate these feelings, their existence as ground is never completely covered over. My body can always surprise me again.

This level of experience is not a proclamation “I am a man”; rather this is simply a sensory feeling that something is not quite right and that something feels uncomfortable or off in some way. Cromwell (2006, 513) cites Joshua Goldberg, who says: “I certainly don’t fit the ‘man trapped in a woman’s body’ or any other stereotyped idea of what a ‘real transsexual’ is like.” And Chris K., also cited by Cromwell (2006, 513), says: “I don’t force myself to identify with one or the other but explore both my male and my female sides. It is okay to feel/be male with a feminine side.” While admittedly, these descriptions have obviously already entered the realm of language; what they reveal is a basic sensory level that does not proclaim that it belongs to one or the other side of a (constructed) gender binary. Instead, these trans writers experience an embodiment that is other than the dominant discourses about them, and so their descriptions are part of the counter-discourse that rises from trans voices.

I love to blend female & male—I think of myself as 2 people finally coming together in peace with each other. Of my other half, I sing, “Nobody loves me but me adores you!” (Sullivan, 2/28/1973)

Simply put, trans and nontrans people alike live their embodiment through the discourses available to them—for the most part. But on occasion they also live between, in spite of, against, or beyond those discourses. The motivation for this can arise from the *Leib*.

I feel in a daze and my mind's a blank about this all. I can never be a part of it and I want to and need to so bad. I want to be a beautiful youngman. I deeply want to.... (Sullivan, 7/7/1973)

In this way, then, we live an embodiment that is grounded in sensory givenness, that transitions to a fundamental materiality, and that is objectified through intersubjective constitution. The social construction that “materializes” me sifts into my sensory embodiment, informing it, often covering it over, but without obliterating it. Sensory feelings also rise up for me, surprising me sometimes and challenging the construction and discourses that surround my embodiment. We live through these levels, whether seeking harmony or adversity, somehow seeking to exist in some way. We live a negotiation, a necessary tension of embodiment that is sensory, material, and discursive.

6.3 Body Sense: Final Thoughts

So, why did I write (half of) this book? I have admitted, along the way, my own tentative position in writing about trans embodiment as a cisgender academic. No matter how many analyses I carry out nor how much research I do, my position will remain essentially tentative, because I can only directly experience my own body, my own history, and my own culture and time. Those of us who are academics, especially in the area of theorizing the body, need to include humility in our work—and I am still learning. We need to acknowledge the limitations of our disciplines, our “evidence,” and our bodies.

But in the introduction to this book, I also described my passionate connection to the many topics discussed here. I found a similar passion in Lou Sullivan’s diaries, which is one of many reasons I shifted the approach of this book to become a “team effort” between Sullivan and myself. I also found passion in the descriptions offered by many trans writers, a passion that ultimately guided my analyses. Finally, I found that Husserl’s work, in spite of the fact that it remains embedded in cisgender presumptions, could contribute to the subtleties and distinctions that seemed to come to the fore in many descriptions of embodiment.

Husserl considered his work to be a radical new approach. His was meant to be a philosophy that anyone could carry out through careful analysis of experience. He never claimed that we would get it right the first time. And even Husserl did not always get it right, since he carried with him his own presumptions—among those, the presumption of cisgender embodiment and that of society as usually relatively rational and positively open to critique. But his method survives even Husserl’s own presumptions. Critiques coming from areas such as feminism, queer theory, and transgender studies offer new perspectives that shed light upon our experience, and they can be accounted for phenomenologically.

The position that our bodies are fully socially constructed, or fully discursive, is a powerful one, and much can be gained from taking up that approach. But recognizing the many layers of embodiment, as phenomenology does, can radicalize how we address many theoretical questions of the body. Understanding the body through its many layers can offer not only a better understanding of our own embodied experience but also a richer source for analytical discussions about the body—all bodies as well as particular types of bodies. In fact, a phenomenological understanding of the body offers a more solid ground upon which we can suggest changes in policy, enter discussions in politics, and substantiate the voices that express many, and very different, types of embodiment. Examining discourses about the body is an essential project, as it demonstrates how different types of embodiment become marginalized or even invisible. But we must also attend to concrete lived experience, both from an economic, social, political perspective and from the perspective of sensory embodiment. Phenomenology, always open to new experiences, takes up embodied experience on each of these levels, and it can address how experiences at each level can modify the others. With this approach, then, we can become attuned to our bodies. Simply put, and in so many ways, we can—and we need to—acknowledge our body sense.

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Conclusion: By Lou Sullivan

At first I wore boy's clothes cautiously. Then I went full force without any women's clothes, to a fear someone would know I was female. Then back again to women's things, and I even felt sad about my wish to abandon men's clothes. Now I find myself yearning for the total male look again, even though I have no fears of being female.

If I am ever going to do anything with my life that I can be proud of, it must be my success at living full time as a young man. (*Sullivan, 9/10/1979*)

Now that I'm alone, I see that if it *is* true that we are all responsible for our own happiness, that we cannot expect others to fulfill us, and in the end we only have ourselves, then I better make peace with the feelings inside me. If I don't, it will be the only thing on my deathbed I will regret not doing. (*Sullivan, 10/3/1979*)

I'm actually going to live as a man. I can't believe it. Something I've wanted to do since I can remember—be a boy! God, it's too good to be true. There's no going back now; I just know it. It just seemed everything fell into place—when it's right, it just happens. (*Sullivan, 2/19/1980*)

God, I'm really gonna be a man! A real man. (*Sullivan, 2/19/1980*)

Appendix: *San Francisco Chronicle* Articles About Steve Dain

San Francisco Chronicle, August 7, 1976:

“Sex Change Uproar in Emeryville”

San Francisco Chronicle, August 11, 1976:

“Sex-Change Teacher: He’s Happy as a Man”

San Francisco Chronicle, September 3, 1976:

“Sex-Change Furor: Emeryville Teacher Arrested”

San Francisco Chronicle, October 8, 1976:

“Sex-Change Teacher Wins Court Test”

San Francisco Chronicle, October 9, 1976:

“Charges in Emeryville: School Suspends Sex-Change Teacher”

San Francisco Chronicle, October 13, 1976:

“‘Disturbance’: Sex-Change Teacher Wins Another Case”

San Francisco Chronicle, June 18, 1977:

“Sex-Change Teacher Still Faces Hearing”

San Francisco Chronicle, August 8, 1978:

“Transsexual Quits Fight for His Teacher’s Job”

San Francisco Chronicle, May 22, 1980:

“Sex-Change Teacher Wins in Wage Case”

Permission to publish granted by San Francisco Chronicle/Polaris

Sex Change Uproar in Emeryville

By Carolyn Anspacher

Until six months ago the job of physical education teacher at Emery High School in Emeryville had been held by Doris Richards, pert, pretty, immensely popular and, in the words of a former superintendent of schools, "the sweetest girl I've ever known."

But in those six months Doris Richards underwent a sex change operation, with all the accompanying hormonal and psychiatric therapy, and — as Steve Dain — has informed the school board he wants to continue teaching, preferably in the same tenured job.

Dain did not appear at Thursday night's long and agonizing school board meeting, which was conducted behind closed doors and discussed the future of the teacher and the controversies that have erupted in the small East Bay city.

But he did come in to the administration office last week — short, stocky and unrecognizable with a luxuriant beard — "to pick up my check."

The check was made out, as it had been for the last 13 years, to Doris Richards.

According to school officials, it was just about six months ago that Richards called in sick and after two weeks reported she was going to have to undergo surgery.

Her sick leave checks were mailed to her regularly and no questions were asked about her operation.

Flo Blgelow, a member of the five-member school board, said there were hints that Richards had undergone a sex change operation.

As a worker in the Board of Education office put it: "Everybody had heard about the operation and a lot of us had seen her, too."

"Why she was here just last week. She stood

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DORIS RICHARDS
She returned with a luxuriant beard

SEX CHANGE

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around in the middle of a circle of people. She had a beard, closely cropped. It kind of makes your skin crawl . . ."

Bigelow was not nearly so critical.

"I can walk with him," she said. "It's a delicate matter and it looks like a case for our lawyers. Some parents are up in arms.

"Life is complex — full of change and if it makes, this person happy to change lifestyles, that's all right with me."

What puzzles most people, including Bigelow, is that Dain is not seeking a new identity in a new locale.

"This certainly is the first time such a thing has happened to Emeryville," she sighed.

Lewis Stommel, Emeryville's new superintendent of schools and on the job less than a week, had no official comment, but did note that Richards gave no warning that she was returning as a man.

It was generally agreed that Richards was an outstandingly successful physical education teacher.

As Cheryl Burton, one of her young pupils put it: "She coached

us to championships and everybody just loved her."

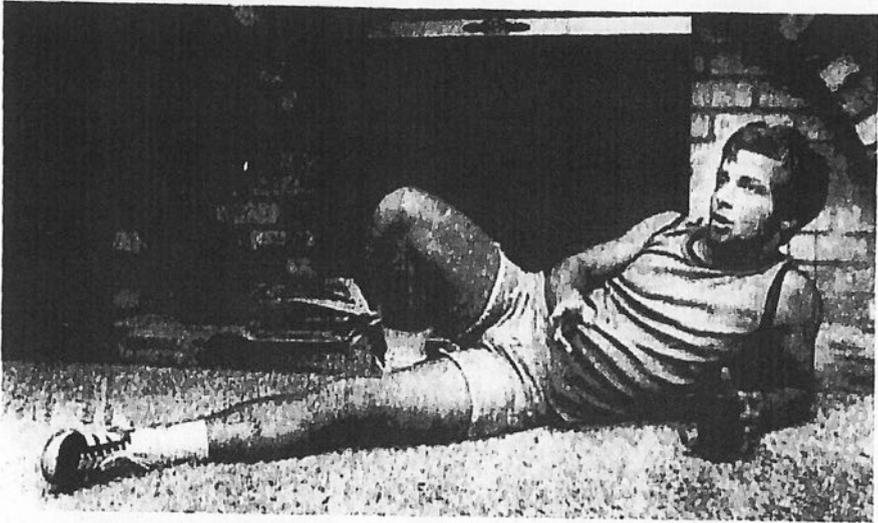
Most of Emery High's students want Richards retained, beard or no beard.

Many of the city's parents, however, are reported to be "up in arms" and at least some of the board members are said to be "terribly upset."

"I don't think we yet understand all the legal ramifications involved," said Stommel, the bewildered new superintendent. "We certainly can't practice sex discrimination under Title 9 and we've got to do what is legally proper."

Although Dain could not be reached for comment, it is understood he is already writing a book on his metamorphosis, and is "recording reactions when he shows up with a beard and reveals his new identity."

Sex-Change Teacher



Steve Dain, in his Union City home, said, 'I am alone in what I am doing. But I know who and where I am' *By Susan Lohrey*

He's Happy as a Man

By Marie Hoemussen

Steve Dain looks different since his operation, but he says he's the same person inside.

To the kids in his Union City neighborhood, he's the same good friend who taught them to swim in his pool and who lets them play in his game room.

That he used to be a woman named Doris Richards doesn't faze them much, although they do confuse the problem.

But that's forgiven. He does it sometimes himself. He has only lived as a male for eight months of his 37 years, and there are a lot of old habits to break.

Steve says he is happy and at ease with his sexual identity change. He is a warm, attractive person, and he says even the animals in his household — three dogs and a four-month-old raccoon — are more relaxed these days.

Dain said he never intended to try to return to his old job as women's physical education teacher at Emery High School in Emeryville — a misapprehension that stirred up the small East Bay community last week.

"I don't meet the physical qualifications anymore to be a woman in a locker room."

As a credentialed, tenured teacher, he said

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DORIS RICHARDS
Teacher of the Year in 1975

SEX CHANGE STORY

From Page 1

In an interview, he can teach other subjects and would like to try English or science — physiology, biology, health, etc.

Dain has applied for a "subject transfer" to the Emeryville School Board, which promised a decision by September 1. The board meets again tomorrow to wrestle with the issue.

Dain said he had not intended to return to the 280-student school where Doris taught for the past ten years, or even to tell the board of his plans.

But he did confide them to former School Superintendent David Baker, who advised the board without Dain's consent, Dain said. Dain then felt he had to go to the board, and he said he met with board members in May, after he had undergone extensive psychological and physical therapy and some surgery at Stanford University.

He wanted to talk with the board members "so they would realize I hadn't blown my mind," he said. In his opinion, at least some of them understood, and one said, "We'd like to have you back," he related.

"I said I would like to come back ... if it would not involve a lot of hassle. I knew the kids would adjust."

Dain said he met with a group of students, "to erase any freak-out trip that might be imposed on them by other people.

"They were concerned to see that I was the same person. They were concerned with how I felt about Doris. I said I was proud of Doris."

Doris felt she was a successful woman. She had a four-bedroom home in a quiet, multi-ethnic suburban tract, a pool and barbecue in the backyard. Her students chose her Teacher of the Year in 1975 and she had been head of the teachers association.

She was popular and attractive, but she wasn't entirely comfortable with herself. Her 5-foot-3 frame was heavily muscled. She had enough facial hair to require shaving.

She had a dominant, outgoing personality and felt "I always had to keep it in check and behave more femininely than my real self."

psychological testing will also continue.

He said there are other teachers in the schools who have had sex changes, but no one knows who they are. "I'm not trying to make a precedent," he added. "I had not desired this to be publicized."

But now that it has been, Dain vowed he won't quit the effort to remain a teacher at Emeryville in another subject area. "I'm going to stick this out. I don't want to give up what I want for myself."

"I'm not doing anything wrong," he said.

"There's a lot more going on in every school system that is far more detrimental than what I'm doing, and much of it is under the table. This is open. People can cope with it."

His family has had mixed reactions. Dain said he thinks his sister and brother understand, but his mother is undergoing "a lot of trauma. She feels her daughter has died."

Former dates have been "understanding. They say 'hang in there. It takes a hell of a lot of courage.'"

Women's libbers have accused him of copping out. Men "who have difficulties with their own sex identity are fleeing from me." But most people, particularly after seeing him and talking with him, have reacted with more equanimity.

"There's a fellow I used to wave at as Doris. Now I wave as Steve. He didn't know. He came up one day and said, "You and your sister are twins, aren't you?" I said, "No. My sister and me are the same person."

Steve goes to the same barber as Doris did, with no problems. He sees more of his friends than before. "I'm entertaining more now because I feel more at ease. Everything goes together."

Basically, however, "I am alone in what I'm doing. But I know who and where I am."

He has been chronicling his reactions to the change and intends to publish them if possible. "I wanted to analyze my feelings about living in a male world. It's not just the way you cross your legs, you know. I'm exploring this 24 hours a day."

She felt she had been in conflict, "half male, half female" most of her life. As a kid growing up in Oakland, she was a fleet runner, but the boys she ran track with jeered and coaches wouldn't encourage her athletic prowess. She had dolls, but she played with them as though she were a doctor, fixing their scratches.

Doris grew up at a time when there was no room for women with mannish traits. She tried to compensate as an adult by dieting often to stay petite and by wearing makeup and pretty clothes.

Now her 110-pound weight has gone to 146, still trim.

"I had muscles like a male athlete," said Dain. "So at school, it was Mr. Richards . . . If I went to the supermarket, even with makeup, sometimes they would stare at me from behind the counter, and it would be 'sir.'"

Now, he has discovered an entirely different feeling, "being called 'sir' when it really is 'sir.'"

After two years of thinking about the move, Dain applied to Stanford's sex-change program. He began taking hormones that, in a month, gave Doris a man's appearance.

"Very quickly, I was able to live as a man and see if that would solve the identity problem I had." It did, he felt, and he proceeded. During a psychological re-evaluation, doctors found him to be "much more in harmony with the male image I projected. I thought so too."

He said others undergoing the same change at Stanford would tell themselves that "you have to feel like a man. But I want to be who I am."

Dain underwent a mastectomy so skillful that he can shed his shirt with confidence, exposing a manly chest. Other operations may follow.

Hormone therapy, which Dain understands to be safe for women changing to males, will continue the rest of his life. Physical and

"I am gentle and loving, but a man can be that too." However, he finds the world of men is "very dry. I feel sorry for them. I have a lot of compassion for men. Their world is so cold emotionally — and yet they have emotions. I can see why they feel they must come home to a woman."

Who will he come home to?

"In all our lives, we have to give up something.

"I made a decision that if (living mateless) had to be my existence, I'd still rather be male than female."

He's tempted to compare his experience to reincarnation. "Do I have to die before I can come back and experience a different thing?"

When he broke the news to his neighbors, in advance, he said they responded, "Our kids love you for who you are."

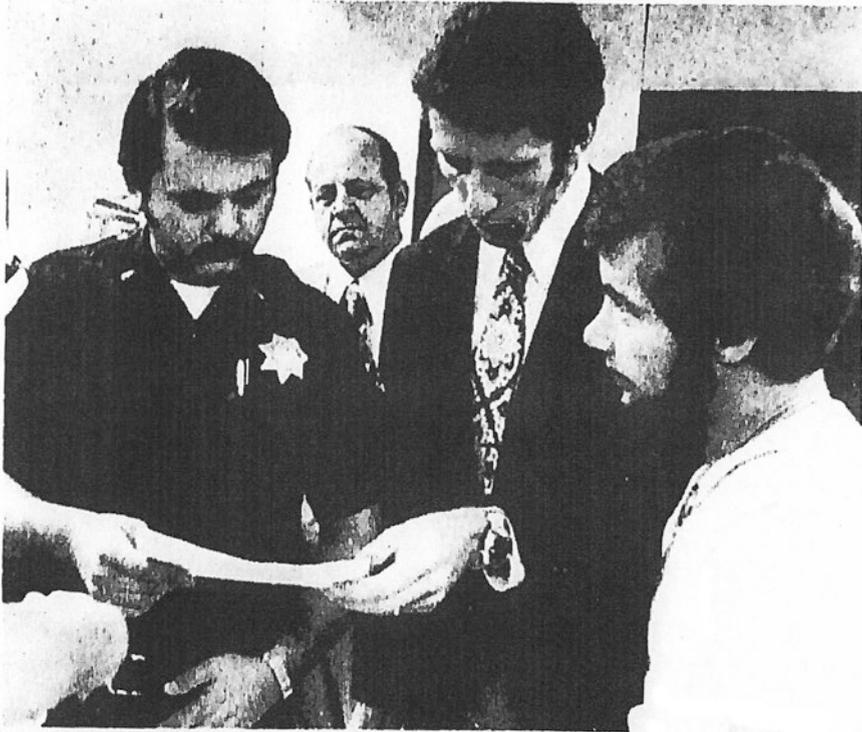
Fifteen children, aged 2 to 14, clamored outside while Dain was being interviewed. They were anxious about the reporters inside — they have a protective air about Steve.

How do they feel about him? "GOOD," they responded in chorus. "It's what she wants to do," said Sherry Garcia, 14. "She is our best friend." "He," the others corrected. "There isn't one of us she hasn't helped."

★★★★

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1976

Sex-Change Furor



Steve Dain (right) stood by his lawyer, Larry Steizer, as Lieutenant Dave Reno served the citation, while Emeryville Superintendent Lewis Stommel looked on from behind

Emeryville Teacher Arrested

By *Marcie Rasmussen*

Steve Dain — who was Doris Richards, a tenured Emery High School teacher before undergoing a sexual identity change — was arrested by the school superintendent yesterday when he appeared for a teachers' orientation meeting.

Superintendent Lewis Stommel, newly on the job in the Emeryville Unified School District, made a citizens arrest in the hallway as about 100 district teachers assembled for the meeting looked on quietly.

He cited an education code section making "willful disturbance" at a public school or school meeting a misdemeanor.

Stommel summoned three police officers who, appearing somewhat uncomfortable, escorted Dain, 37, to the Emeryville police station where he was booked and given a citation.

Dain, accompanied by his lawyer, was first confronted by Stommel outside the school as he approached with a group of other teachers. Dain was carrying a huge, bag-wrapped bowl of salad intended for a pot-luck luncheon the teachers were planning for a break in the day-long meeting.

Stommel read Dain a statement in tones too low to overhear. But

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TEACHER

From Page 1

the message apparently informed him that the superintendent would call the police if Dain did not leave voluntarily.

Stommel, who had told the *Chronicle* earlier "I'm going to make sure the Emeryville School district doesn't become a carnival," then disappeared to make his call to police. Dain proceeded inside and was greeted by several teacher friends.

The orientation session joined by Dain, had a festive air as teachers chattered and renewed acquaintances. But the conversational hum stilled as Stommel came in, called Dain into the hall and the officers appeared.

Dain talked with several teachers, and others came up to give him a warm welcoming hug or handshake.

Sergeant Dave Reno asked Stommel if a disturbance had occurred.

"As far as I'm concerned, yes," the superintendent replied. "This is not a normal teacher orientation . . . I'm declaring a disturbance, gentlemen. Do your duty."

Last December, Dain left work as Doris Richards, Emery High School's women physical education teacher, and underwent hormone treatments, extensive testing and a full mastectomy at Stanford University's sex-change clinic.

The controversy began when Dain decided to try to return to the school — but in another teaching capacity.

His application for reassignment is still before the school board, and the job of women's physical education teacher is posted for applicants, officials said.

William Johnston, the board's attorney, said the district is not satisfied that Dain is medically able to return to work, and the board fears Dain could be a "distraction" to school students.

Johnston said he had asked Dain to stay away from the school until his job status is resolved — with the assurance that his absence would not affect any rights he has as a district employee.

Dain said he feared he could be fired for not showing up for duty at the teachers' meeting.

But Johnston also suggested the board could decide to put Dain back in the position, hire a matron to supervise locker and shower room activities and reduce Dain's pay accordingly.

Dain is scheduled to appear for arraignment in Oakland Municipal Court on the misdemeanor charge on September 10 at 9 a.m.

Sex-Change Teacher Wins Court Test

By Marie Hasmussen

Steve Dain, the Emery High School teacher who became a male through a sexual identity change, won a court order yesterday directing school officials to assign him a teaching job and turn over \$2300 in back pay.

Dain said he would go back to school this morning ready for work. Dain was formerly Doris Richards, the women's physical education teacher at the school for the past ten years.

The Emeryville school board had neither fired him nor returned him to work this year, after he emerged from a leave of absence with a male identity acquired through the Stanford University sex change clinic.

William Johnston, attorney for the Emeryville Unified School District, contended Dain had used up his sick leave during his absence since last December and had abandoned his job.

Dain's attorneys countered that the teacher had given the board two medical releases certifying that he could return to work and that Dain had in fact tried to return. However, Superintendent



STEVE DAIN, FORMERLY DORIS RICHARDS
The court ordered him assigned, with back pay

SEX-CHANGE TEACHER

From Page 1

Lewis Stommel had him arrested when he appeared for a teacher's orientation meeting at the school September 2.

Dain faces trial Tuesday in Oakland Municipal Court on a charge of "wilful disturbance" of that meeting.

Alameda county Superior Court Judge Robert K. Barber, when shown the medical releases, said, "This removes the medical question."

"Not to the board," Johnston contended. "Dain was a girls' gym teacher."

However, following the lengthy hearing, Barber ordered Dain reinstated with two months' back pay.

Dain "has the same Social Security number" as Doris Richards, Johnston said at one point, "but is it the same person?"

The ruling came in a suit Dain

filed September 22, accusing the district of wrongfully withholding his pay since August 1 and depriving him of his tenured teaching job.

Stommel, who was in the court audience, said later he would poll the five-member board by telephone to determine what to do next. If directed to fire Dain, Stommel said, he would comply.

"I don't know about this free-floating chromosome," Stommel said. "Where do you place him?"

Dain's teaching credential would allow him to teach any subject, and he has said he would prefer sciences. Stommel said he considers the general secondary credential "old-fashioned."

Dain, whose lawyers included representatives for both the California Federation of Teachers and the California Teachers Association, said the ruling strikes a blow "for the protection of tenured teachers everywhere."

Charges in Emeryville

School Suspends Sex-Change Teacher

By *Maricle Himmussen*

Steve Dain, who assumed a male identity after undergoing sex change surgery, was suspended yesterday from his Emery High School teaching job on charges of "immoral conduct" and "evident unfitness for service."

The news was greeted with tears and dismay by some of Dain's former students, who had been waiting to greet the popular teacher upon his expected return to the school yesterday morning.

On Thursday, Alameda county Superior Court Judge Robert K. Barber ruled that the Emeryville Unified School District must reinstate Dain, 27, formerly women's physical education teacher Doris Richards, and give him two months' back pay.

But Dain—who left work last December as Richards and tried to come back this fall as Dain—said when he returned home shortly after midnight yesterday Superintendent Lewis Stommel was waiting to serve him with the suspension notice.

Stommel, who school officials said had the support of most of the school board members, alleged five charges as "causes for dismissal."

They were:

- Falsely claiming absence for illness.
- Doing potential psychological harm to pupils.
- Potentially disrupting the educational process.
- Transporting students outside the district without their parents' knowledge or consent.
- Conducting an unauthorized lecture—on "sex changes" with students on school premises.

Dain maintained he has not violated the education code sections that spell out cause for firing tenured teachers. He said he would demand an appeal hearing, if his lawyer determines that the papers

were legitimate and properly served.

Stommel said the judge's ruling applied only to Dain's suit

accusing the district of wrongfully withholding his pay since August 1 and depriving him of his job.

"The judge said you've got to

fish or cut bait," Stommel said. As Stommel viewed it, the alternatives were reinstatement—which he fears could spark a taxpayer's suit over payment of some \$10,000 in sick leave money to Dain during his absence, firing Dain, which the board would have to do, or suspending him by superintendent's order. He chose the last, which sets up a hearing process.

If Dain requests it, a state hearing examiner and a three-member panel will consider the charges and make a ruling.

"If a person believes they are not who they are and they are somebody, then who are they?" mused Stommel. "People who undergo these sorts of things have been termed as having 'unresolved identity crisis problems.'" He said Dain has been quoted as saying he had a double mastectomy and hormone injections which must be maintained.

"Since a person's undergone this, can we guarantee fitness for service?" Stommel added. He said the charge concerning the "immorality" part of the code concerned the sick leave payments "and has nothing to do with whether I agree with the sex change or not."

Dain said remarks made by Stommel and the district attorney, William Johnston, show they "feel I am a carnival act. That's an unprofessional and uneducated approach to a person's rights."

Dain did not appear at school yesterday, under Stommel's orders. Tamara Sutton, 16, could not contain her tears as she told some of her friends about the suspension. "I'm pretty upset," she explained to reporters. "I don't understand what's going on."

Another women's physical education teacher has been hired at Emery High School, but Dain's general secondary school teaching credential enables him to teach other subjects.

'Disturbance'

Sex-Change Teacher Wins Another Case

Steve Dain, the Emery High School teacher, who underwent a sex-change operation, won another legal victory yesterday when Oakland-Piedmont Municipal Court Judge Roderic Duncan dismissed "willful disturbance" charges against him.

The charges had been brought by Superintendent Lewis Stommel of the Emery Unified High School District in Emeryville on September 2 after Dain refused an order not to attend a teacher orientation meeting.

Dain, formerly a women's physical education teacher at the school under the name of Doris Richards, had attended the Stanford University sex change clinic earlier this year and returned to school this fall as a male.

Stommel testified yesterday that he had Dain arrested because he had seen him, before September 2, lecturing some students about details of his sex change.

The superintendent said this violated regulations calling for school board and parental approval of sex education on campus.

Dain, who has been in a kind of occupational limbo since schools reopened last month, won another legal victory last week.

Alameda county Superior Court Judge Robert K. Barber ordered school officials to assign him a job and pay him \$3200 in back pay.

That was not the end of Dain's trouble with the district, however. The next day, Stommel suspended Dain on charges of "immoral conduct" and "evident unfitness for service."

Trustees of the Emery Unified School District will consider those charges at a meeting tomorrow evening.

Sex-Change Teacher Still Faces Hearing

A state Department of Education disciplinary hearing ordered by Alameda county Superior Court Judge Harold Hove for Steve Dain, the Emery High School teacher who underwent sex change therapy, will consider three allegations.

Last January State Hearing Officer Charles H. Bobby ruled that five accusations against Dain, preferred by school district trustees, were invalid and he dismissed all of them.

Thursday Judge Hove, acting on an appeal filed by the trustees, upheld Bobby's dismissal of two of the allegations; that Dain's continued teaching constituted potential harm to the pupils, and that his presence potentially disrupted the educational process.

There will be a re-hearing by Bobby on the remaining three allegations: that Dain falsely claimed absence for illness from December, 1975, to June, 1976; that Dain transported students outside the school district without consent of parents in the summer of 1976, and that he gave an unauthorized lecture on sex changes during the summer of 1976.

Dain, formerly Doris Richards, has filed a \$600,000 damage suit against the school district and its superintendent, Lewis Stommel.

Transsexual Quits Fight For His Teacher's Job

Suspended transsexual teacher Steve Dain has quit his contested job at Emery High School, ending a two-year legal struggle with the Emery School District in the wake of his sex change operation.

Dain, a Union City resident now in construction work, submitted his letter of resignation to the district's board of education on June 9, according to California Teachers Association attorney Penn Foote, who represented Dain.

Foote said Dain's decision to resign was influenced in part by the possibility of facing further

hearings on the "transsexual element" of his case.

Dain, 39, was formerly Doris Richards, a popular girls' physical education instructor at Emery High School in Emeryville.

In December, 1975, Richards took six months' sick leave to undergo the surgery at Stanford University and subsequent hormonal and psychiatric therapy.

Upon returning to school in September, 1976, as Steve Dain, he was suspended and later dismissed for falsely claiming sick leave payments.

Sex-Change Teacher Wins in Wage Case

The California Supreme Court yesterday declined to review a lower court decision ordering the Emeryville School District to pay back wages to Steve Dain, a teacher suspended after undergoing a sex change operation.

The high court denied a hearing sought by the school district, which claimed appeals court rulings in favor of Dain conflicted with earlier decisions.

Dain, who as Doris K. Richards, was a popular physical education teacher in the school district. She took a leave of absence between December, 1975, and June, 1976, to take part in a gender change program. The district learned of this in April, 1976, suspended Dain the following October without pay, and eventually fired him.

Dain fought his case for two years, in a series of court and school board hearings which culminated in an Alameda County Superior Court ruling that said his suspension was fair, but that he could collect back pay if he accepted dismissal. Instead, Dain resigned in June, 1978, and filed suit to collect the money.

Yesterday, Dain was elated with his victory. "It's about time," he said. "And I am glad it's over and let's get on with it."

The former teacher, now a therapist counseling people with sexual dysfunctions and who is working toward a Ph.D. in human sexuality, will receive more than \$40,000 in back pay and interest.

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