

TRIPLE ECHO

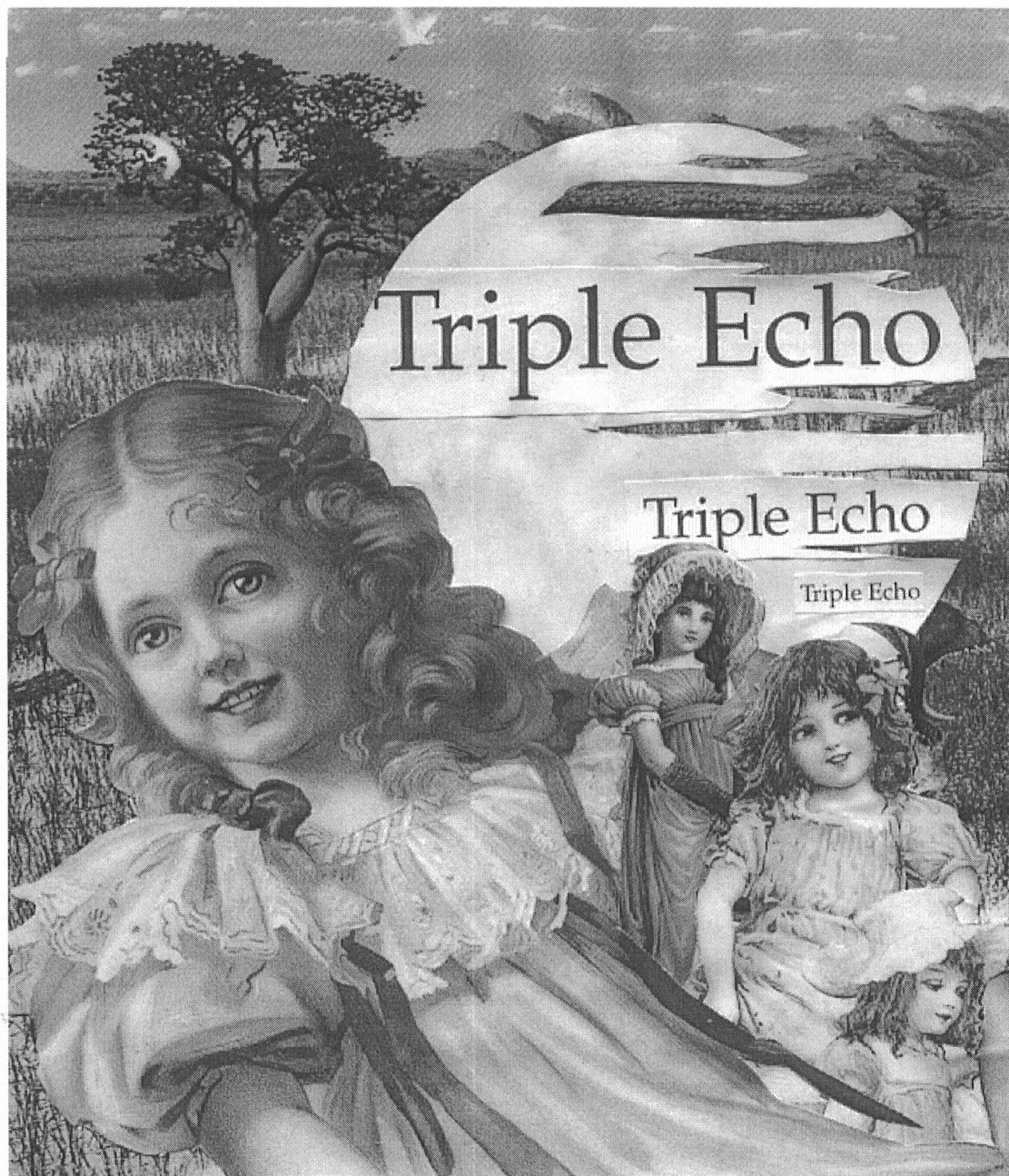
At the Crossroads of the Sexes ■ Volume 3 Number 1 2001



I Feel So Different: Trans Alienation

Growing Pains: Trans Support Groups

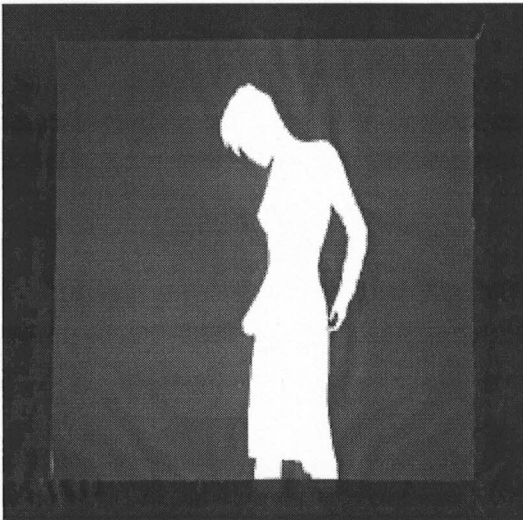
Plus: Invisible Lives, Sex and the Church and Trans Folk Tales



Triple Echo

Volume 3 Number 1 March 2001

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We're Back!

The last few months I have become increasingly agitated over my extended hiatus from publishing *Triple Echo*. In part this is because I was beginning to feel that all the work I had done to establish it in the first place was fast becoming eradicated by the passage of time. But mostly I realized that for better or worse it had become a part of what I do.

I'm a reasonably happy person who still carries around a lot of suppressed pain and anger. We are most of us - trans and non trans alike - wounded in some fashion, and we all act out our hurts in different ways. Many people who have suffered hurt or an injustice need to channel their energies toward something that they feel may help someone else avoid what they have endured. Superficially this impulse to make things better for the people who come after seems to be altruistic, but I suspect there's an element of self healing in it that isn't often recognized. In point of fact, I probably need to publish *Triple Echo* because in some obscure way it helps me reconcile myself with the world I live in. And if I weren't publishing *Triple Echo*, I'd need to be doing something else.

It was while pondering this strange relationship that I began to think about the pain we as trans people all live with and which, despite the vast amount of material written about us, is so rarely explored. This was the beginning of this issue and the result is on page nine.

Regular readers will also note that in addition to the minor design changes, we have removed the listings of trans organizations from the back two pages of the magazine. This was largely repeating information that was taking up space and can easily be obtained from many trans web sites. The changes are not so radical, but I'm trying to fine tune the publication a little. I'm also trying to put more in it while maintaining the 20 to 24 page format.

This issue also features a number of looks back, one of which I intend to keep as a regular feature called Folk Tales (page five). We all have many stories to tell, and I hope this particular space will encourage people to share some of the unique adventures that only trans people could have.

Aside from that, it's mostly business as usual. It was a nice little mental holiday and the time away did me good. Having resumed this minor publishing project, I hope to put out four issues this year and effectively resume a quarterly publishing schedule. This will mean that we will only have missed one issue. But as I tell anyone who is remotely interested, I think a new volume should start with a new year anyway, and this being the first issue of both volume three and 2001, all is finally right with the world.

Teddy Michaels

Triple Echo

AT THE CROSSROADS OF THE SEXES

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The principal aims of *Triple Echo* are to provide informed comment on issues of gender as they may relate to trans identified persons; to inform its audience in an accurate fashion and to facilitate awareness of trans people's lives.

Submissions and letters to the editor are welcome. The editor reserves the right to edit or refuse any submission. Submissions will not be returned. Please do not send originals or self addressed envelopes. Views expressed or implied are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher.

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Stereotypes and French Maids

Once upon a time, I was invited by friends, a married couple actually, to a Halloween party they were holding. This happened several years after I had come out to all my friends but not long enough afterwards for them to understand that this is who I am and not some quirk I dabble in from time to time. For this reason, I was reluctant to get dressed in my gender of choice for Halloween, as I thought it would only perpetuate their misunderstanding. In the end, I couldn't see myself going as a male either, and so settled upon going in some still unknown female costume. Since I had only started working, my prime consideration was that it had to be cheap.

So I rambled downtown to Flash Cadillac. In early 1980s Ottawa, Flash Cadillac was every budding trans woman's dream store. Not only was it awash in clothes made of exotically feminine fabrics like satin, taffeta, lace and spandex, it was staffed with people who didn't in the least bit care if you were buying it for yourself, and in fact generally assumed you were. Its clientele ranged from pretty young men pouring over some fancy gowns to the most drop dead gorgeous young women, giggling with delight at discovering some outrageously feminine piece of clothing. It was, in short, heaven.

Not surprisingly, Flash Cadillac liked to celebrate Halloween. Forsaking the fancy costumes on display, I was reduced to rummaging around in the cheapie section for possibilities when I came across french maid accessories for, I think, seven dollars. This "costume" consisted of a white satin apron, lace choker and wrist bands and a saucy little satin and lace headpiece. It wasn't much, but when worn with a black leotard and a black skirt, both of which I had, well, it was just the thing. I needed to cut several inches off the hem of my skirt to get it short enough for my stereotypical french maid to emerge, but this wasn't much of a problem. I still had far too many skirts in my closet that needed cutting up, the products of far too many fear obsessed shopping expeditions.

Now, I don't have a thing for being a french maid. Honest I don't. Because I don't, I never thought that others would think I did. It soon became obvious to me, in a slap your forehead kind of way, that while trying to avoid giving the impression that my transness was just a quirk, I had blundered into the most obvious sexual stereotype of a trans person imaginable. Had I been at a trans Halloween party, I'm sure people would have appreciated the post modern irony of it all, but instead what I got were a

lot of suspicious looks.

I soon discovered there was one other male at the party in feminine clothing, but he looked so bad he may as well have been wearing a sign around his neck saying, "I'm doing this to be wacky. I'm not serious. Really!" As if his appearance weren't enough, he seemed determined to act like a man in a dress, while I was clearly enjoying being a lady. The contrast between us was so obvious, I may as well have had a sign around my neck also, mine saying, "I do this all the time!". Still, once people warmed up to the fact that I was harmless, they became quite friendly. My presence seemed to arouse a bit of sexual energy, although I don't believe this was because of me personally, but rather because most people are fascinated with transgenderism.

There's something about being dressed as a woman in particular that causes people to take liberties with your space. Several people, male and female, were trying to lift up my skirt, presumably to check what was underneath. I suspect this was not a genital check, so much as it was a panty check. Over the years, the number of times I've been asked whether I wear "women's" underwear has convinced me that this is the last true test straight people use to determine whether someone is truly deviant, as if the presence of male underwear under a skirt and pantyhose is some sign of hope, however dim.

I also had a most unusual experience with an attractive woman who kept giving me cold looks, but who would then slip up behind me while I was dancing and untie my satin apron. I wanted to go over to ask her about this unusual behaviour, but she would invariably retreat to the safety of her hulking boyfriend, who glowered at me every time I came near. What the heck was that all about?

In the end, it proved to be one of my more successful Halloweens. I won over a lot of people - even if they did think I spent Sunday afternoons on my couch watching television in a french maid outfit - and had a lot of fun in the process.

But there was one thing that I came away with that was especially worthwhile. Many people have a thing with gender that they suppress, but which, when the opportunity presents itself, they reveal in astonishing ways. I wonder how many other people would discover interesting sides to themselves if we trans people succeeded in throwing off our oppression.

And I wonder too what that attractive woman and her hulking boyfriend talked about on the way home that night.

PERIODICALS

Crossroads

Crossroads is a new quarterly trans magazine "designed to provide a forum for the various transgender societies of western Canada."

Subscriptions \$25 per year. For more info write Site 9, Box 17, RR #1, Okotoks, AB T0L 1T0, Canada or e-mail Mhart@webminder.com



INTERNET

Park your web browser at www.pfc.org.uk, the web site of Press for Change, a London based political lobbying and educational organization. Press for Change campaigns "to achieve equal civil rights and liberties for all transgender people in the United Kingdom". Their web site contains over 400 articles, news reports, and documents on trans issues. Lots of interesting and intelligent information about our UK trans brothers and sisters.

Studies in Sexuality and Gender

Studies in Sexuality and Gender is a new scholarly journal for academics and "developmental researchers concerned with gender and sexuality".

The promotional literature describes it as "drawing on the traditions of feminist scholarship, postclassical and postmodern psychoanalytic theory, developmental research and cultural studies". *Studies in Sexuality and Gender* "provides a forum for examining gender and sexuality that is both multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary."

Early issues of volume one, which appeared in 2000, focused on transgender identities and intersexuality. Subscriptions \$39.50 US for individuals. Contact PO Box 1897, Lawrence, KS 66044-8897, USA. E-mail tapjournals@analyticpress.com

COMING TRENDS

Students wishing to renew their membership in the University of Western Australia's Student Guild are required to fill in a form that asks them whether they are "male", "female" or "other".

It's about time!

LANGUAGE

The second edition of *Editing Canadian English* has been published by the Editors' Association of Canada and Macfarlane Walter & Ross. Here are their rules regarding the trans vocabulary:

"Although transgendered usually refers to people who live, occasionally or permanently, as members of the opposite sex, without surgery, it is becoming an umbrella term for both transsexuals and the transgendered. Transsexual usually applies to people who are in the process of having, or who have had, sex-change surgery or hormone therapy. Intersex, the condition of being between the sexes, is used particularly with infants or children whose anatomy or physiology differs from their culture's definitions of male and female.

A homosexual, especially a male, who dresses in the clothing of the opposite sex for emotional or sexual gratification is called a transvestite. Anyone who wears the clothes, makeup, etc., of the opposite sex, regardless of motivation, can be called a cross-dresser. When any person wears the clothes of the opposite sex to entertain other people, that person can be said to be in drag or doing drag."

Not bad, I think, although I would prefer that we used the term trans to cover all of us, and transgender in its original definition. These rules are gradually being codified through continual usage, however, and there's not much chance of turning it around now.

What do you think?

TELEVISION

Ally McBeal

How bad can TV writer and producer David E. Kelley get? The two shows for which he is best known, *Ally McBeal* and *The Practice*, have deteriorated beyond silliness and now veer perilously close to stupidity.

In a two part episode of *Ally McBeal* that aired late last year the legal firm that employs Ally represented a transwoman who took her employers to court to prevent them from forcing her to have a physical examination. The court case itself was dismissed in quick fashion so that Kelley could focus on stringing together a plot line full of sniggering schoolboy jokes about a woman with a penis. The only male lawyer who doesn't know the woman's secret falls in love with her, which allows the other two male lawyers to titter behind his back for the entire two hours. When he finally does find out, he goes through a very brief examination of conscience and then essentially decides that yes, he's superficial. So he dumps her, an action that meets with the approval of the other two male lawyers. The behaviour of all these characters is thoroughly despicable, and yet because the trans woman is made out to be a kind of freak, it's seen to be somehow acceptable.

During the February sweeps, our transwoman was back. This time she wanted the law firm that had humiliated her so thoroughly in the previous episodes to defend her right to have a "same sex marriage". (I guess she couldn't find another law firm in the phone book.) Throughout the episode, Kelley seems to have serious problems distinguishing transgender from homosexual, much like his

transwoman who spends half the time claiming she's a woman and the other half thinking she's nothing more than a homosexual in a dress. Oh, please.

In an episode of *Ally McBeal* that aired several years ago and which featured another trans figure, Kelley approached the trans theme with a little more sensitivity, before he ultimately had our trans woman conveniently killed off in the end. The only role trans people have in a Kelley production is as a salacious plot device with which he can titillate viewers before he returns them to the deeply disturbed but fortunately "normal" people that routinely populate his shows.

I can't believe we let this guy get away with it.

In the Flesh

On a more positive note, The Women's Television Network recently screened the National Film Board of Canada's 47 minute film, *In the Flesh*. The summary in the TV guide made it sound like another dreary exposition on transsexuals, but this is a fabulous film, very much up to the standards of the NFB. We are spared the misery of an all knowing narrator. Instead, the four intertwined life stories are narrated by the transsexuals themselves. Their struggle to make sense of their lives and of their place in the world is creative, honest and inspirational.

In the Flesh is available from the NFB web site (www.nfb.ca) for \$19.95, or phone 1-800-267-7710, fax 1-514-283-7564, e-mail webcustserv@nfb.ca.

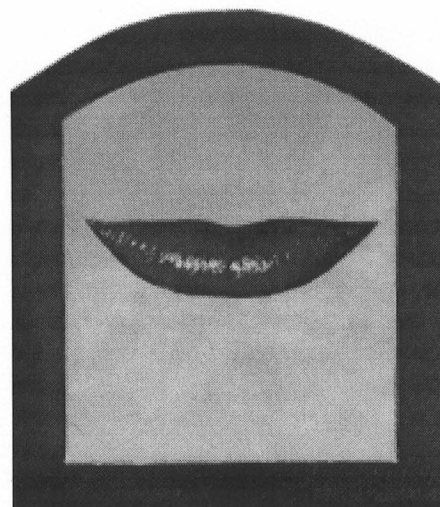
Now, SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

Bloomberg, one of London's top financial information companies, threw a \$2.5 million staff Christmas party. The opulent bash, which took place in a specially renovated unused office building, was based on the seven deadly sins. Spread over four floors, there were massage and shiatsu rooms, manicure booths, a casino, cabaret and disco, live bands and, oh yes, drag queens.

The second floor represented gluttony and featured the cabaret and "pig bar". *The Times of London* reported that entertainers "acting as 'fatties' lay on the floor having food shoved into their mouths." Despite the decadence of the event, most people reported that they had a great time. Except the drag queens.

"I had an absolutely vile time," said Ivan Cartwright, who appeared as Candy Floss. "They just weren't the right audience for a drag queen."

Apparently money doesn't buy class.



Collage by Rachel Steen

TRANS HISTORY

April 1735

French Order in Council nullifies the will of Pierre Aymon du Moret, citing his mental incompetence. It appears that Aymon du Moret, or Mademoiselle Rosette, as she preferred to be called, never lacked for courage in her transgenderism. Her father threw her out of the house when she refused to work at his office in the courts, because, she declared, it was not moral for a girl to be working in a lawyer's office. She outraged the family by walking the streets in her chosen gender, although she was often jeered at by boys who ran after her. The local authorities threatened her, but they had no power to interfere with Mademoiselle appearing in the streets in women's clothes so long as she kept within the law. On one occasion, after suffering a fainting spell, she was treated by a local doctor who took it upon himself to cure her of her trans leanings by having all her feminine clothes removed. When Mademoiselle recovered she was understandably enraged. She won that argument too, her clothes having been eventually returned to her. In the end, however, the courts decided she was out of her mind and awarded her property to her relatives.

May 1702

Edward Hyde, better known as Lord Cornbury, appointed governor of New York and New Jersey May 3rd. Most historical accounts of Cornbury claim he was a corrupt and incompetent governor, and his political enemies reported his wearing women's clothing as evidence of his poor judgement. Recently historian Patricia Bonomi, in her book *The Lord Cornbury Scandal: The Politics of Reputation in British America*, argued he wasn't so bad after all, and that there was no evidence that he was a transvestite. There is also some dispute over whether the portrait of Cornbury, which today hangs in the New York Historical Society, is in fact Cornbury, as art historians agree it is of English rather than colonial origin.

Nevertheless, most historians regard Bonomi's theory as historical revisionism. Even so, they feel



compelled to explain away his transvestism with far-fetched theories. They say he dressed to emphasize his likeness to his cousin, Queen Anne. Another theory suggests that he was told to represent her Majesty, and so he thought he should do so literally by presenting himself as a woman.

Author Dick Leitsch, who wrote about Cornbury in 1970, suggests a possible solution to the problem of how presumably intelligent people could concoct such ridiculous theories. He says that historians are "a rather dull lot who don't understand sexuality."

WANTED!

Collector of transgender literature, books, magazines, novels, club newsletters, papers and photos. Special interest in Canadian materials. Wish to correspond with senior members of our trans community, to preserve and record our his/her/story. Would like to hear from others interested in establishing a Canadian Transgender Library and Archive. Best prices paid for small or large collections. Contact:

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TRANS ALONE

By Teddy Michaels

A financial high-flier who once controlled assets of more than \$2.2 billion but now dresses as a woman and does crochet was found unfit to stand trial yesterday for an alleged \$490 million fraud.

Peter Young, 42, a father of two, who prefers to be called Beth, has mutilated his genitals on at least three occasions, Southwark Crown Court was told.... Richard Latham, the prosecuting attorney alleged that Mr. Young began claiming to hear voices in his head and expressing a burning desire to be a woman only when his activities at Morgan Grenfell came under scrutiny in 1996.... While acknowledging that Mr. Young, who has grown his dark hair to below his shoulders and wore a pink top, check skirt and high heels to court, was mentally frail, Mr. Latham said he was fit to stand trial.

Clare Montgomery, Mr. Young's attorney, said he was suffering from a profound psychotic illness and was mentally unfit to handle any trial.

Ottawa Citizen, December 16, 2000

In the past, being trans was frequently, ipso facto, a sign of mental illness. We know that most trans people are not insane, of course, but because we are outside one of the primary paradigms of human existence - male and female - we have all experienced at one time in our lives a feeling of intense alienation from society. This alienation in its "milder" form causes much anger and unhappiness, but allowed to fester it can have far graver consequences.

While it is impossible to speculate upon the relationship between Beth Young's gender problems and her mental frailty, it would not be outrageous to suggest that one has had a large effect on the other. If we look back on our own darkest moments, who can

deny that we too have been close to the edge?

This alienation is our distinguishing feature. Our drive, the thing that motivates us most, is generally believed to be a desire to live in our gender of choice, but what we are primarily seeking to do is escape this dreaded separation we feel, not just from the world, from family and friends, but often from our own bodies.

The word alienation is derived from Latin and denotes "the condition of being an outsider or in a state of estrangement". It is an estrangement from the world we live in and from our inner life, and the inability to establish harmony between our inner self and our place in the world. It is our central pain, and

considering how familiar all trans people are with it, it's odd that we speak so little of it.

This may be because most of us learn to live with it, although doing so inevitably has its price. It becomes a component of our personalities, whether we realize it or not. It affects the choices we make and the people we become.

An alienated individual will respond to his or her alienation in a number of ways. One of the symptoms, according to Ernest Schachtel, is the sense that one lacks an identity. In an essay titled *On Alienated Concepts of Identity*, Schachtel, who wasn't talking about trans people, says that when alienated people finally go for help they are often searching for a definite and fixed identity, which they hope will solve their dilemma. But, Schachtel claims, this will not solve their problem. The preoccupation with this desired object called identity interferes with the actual experience of living.

The danger of any alienated state is that it creates the conditions for one to become self absorbed.

Schachtel argues that a person living with a "negative identity", like transgenderism for example, can embrace this negative identity as the focal point of his or her self image:

The preoccupation with the reified identity directs attention away from what he does to what he supposedly is. Furthermore, he now no longer has to do anything about it because, obviously, he can't do anything about it. Thus, the anxiety, fear, and effort that would be connected with facing and acting upon the real problem is avoided by putting up with the negative, fixed identity which, in addition, may be used to indulge self-pity and to enlist the sympathy of others.

Sound like anyone you know? I've encountered this paralysis in my own life. When I see it in others, I can't help thinking, "Just do something!" But of course, that's something each person has to negotiate in their own time. Unfortunately, some people never do.

The alienated individual will also believe that, just as his or her own thoughts tend to revolve around this alienated, negative identity, other people will be similarly preoccupied with this quality in him or her. This accounts for the astonishment and exhilaration most trans people experience when they go out in the real world for the first time and discover that most people really don't care too much. (It also feeds the delusion that they're actually passing seamlessly in their gender of choice.)

Schachtel also claims that in every case of a negative alienated identity, there is a comforting counter image. The closeted trans person may believe that if it weren't for his or her transgenderism, he or she would be okay, successful, wonderful, etc. Or this comforting counter image may take the form of some grandiose, or exaggerated fantasy about one's positive qualities. This probably accounts for the absurd self-descriptive trans phrase "gender gifted".

While Schachtel has described some of the features of an alienated concept of identity, Kate Bornstein and Riki Wilchins have taken a cue from queer theory and have advanced the concept of no identities at all. In *My Gender Workbook*, which on the surface appears to be an exploration of gender but which actually

Voices

So here I am on the terrace of a cafe on the Place Blanche, and this boy walks by, then sits down at a table near mine - I know that his Coke is just an excuse, and that he's going to talk to me any minute. As ever, I'm feeling a mixture of pride and embarrassment, but of course I'm proud of being seductive. I even start feeling reassured, but then something else pops into my head.

Does he know? Does he suspect? Or is he totally unaware of it? I've always sought to be truthful, and here I am facing a dilemma. I look like a woman, I've done everything I could for that, even going so far as changing my sex. The years have gone past, and now I know that I'll never be a woman, or a man. I have never been either of these things, and I have just come to terms with my life as a transsexual.

So this boy asks me politely if he might join me. I invent an appointment, then watch him walk away in the direction of the Moulin Rouge. Alone. Just like me.

Kim Harlow

From *Kim*, by Kim Harlow and Bettina Rheims
(Gina Kehayoff Verlag, 1994)

often seems more a meditation on trans alienation, Kate Bornstein summarizes the problem with identity:

Pure identities (or identities that pass as pure) are valuable things. They're valuable to those who have them, because there's a sense that someplace will always be home, a space with others who claim similar pure identities. And our pure identities are valuable to others. We become easier to deal with. Other people know who we are. So we begin to lean into an identity, and when we or someone else starts to mess with it, then all of a sudden we've got something, this identity, to lose, and we get very protective not only of our identity, but of the purity of that identity...

But is that identity who we really are, or are we fashioning it because it gives us a sense of belonging to some larger group? We always run the risk of alienating ourselves from ourselves further if we fail to listen to the voices that run deeper than our fear of aloneness.

Still, desiring an identity is a powerful need for people who feel that they have been denied identities of their own. When closeted trans people feel like frauds in society because they've repressed or consciously hid their transgenderism through shame or guilt, establishing an identity is the first step on the road to recovery. They are saying, "This is who I am and I'm sick of making excuses for myself".

The problem with achieving an identity is that it is no guarantee of happiness.

People who question the validity of sex reassignment surgery often refer to surveys done of post operative transsexuals that attempt to determine whether the surgery improved the life of the individual. Since the point of the operation was presumably to make the patient happier, and if the patient is no better off than he or she was before, then, they argue, the surgery was not warranted. Doctors at Johns Hopkins University stopped performing sex-change operations in 1979 because in their view the patients they operated on were no better off than a sample of transsexual patients who received psychotherapy but no surgery.

Unlike gays and lesbians, who ameliorate their alienation through their community and through political activism, trans people are prone to believe there is a personal solution to their alienation. Unfortunately, it's still a trans phobic world, and having sex reassignment surgery does not change that. Although it seems likely that the pain of alienation will diminish if you change your body to align with your self image and then the rest of society affirms your self image (and your identity) by the manner in which it relates to you, it is probably optimistic to think that's all there is to it. You have a history and that history sets you apart from the average person in the street. I don't doubt that most transsexuals are happier after surgery, but are they ever allowed to forget that they're different?

The majority of trans people do not have surgery, and living with their difference, and with the unhappiness that results from that is a fact of life. So how do we diminish the pain? Obviously, there is no easy answer. Some solutions, like having access to a trans organization, are already well established, at least in some communities. Unfortunately, there are great gaps in what a trans

Voices

...You want to feel my pain? Put your head on the railroad tracks. Just lay it right down and just wait until you don't have to wait anymore. Just go to sleep and someday, you'll be free.

Shahn David Dickson

I don't live without gender. Every day I'm forced to make a conscious choice about what part of myself to reveal on that specific day. How vulnerable am I willing to be? How strong do I feel? Sometimes it's great fun and sometime's it's a real drag. It's never not an issue, but it makes me who I am.

Justin Bond

My rage comes in part, I'm thinking, from having been told "You're not our kind" so many times in so many places by so many people. It's why I want to see "transgender" mean "transgressively gendered." That way, we all can belong to the same team if we want to.

Kate Bornstein

All quotes from *My Gender Workbook*, by Kate Bornstein (Routledge, 1998)

organization can provide, and beyond that is the realization that even a trans organization is a ghetto in itself. Only a fully integrated life, which is possible only with a greater social acceptance than we currently enjoy, will provide the relief we crave.

We cannot fall into the trap of thinking we "can't do anything about it". Life gets better if we put some effort into making it so. It is easy to overlook the amazing gains trans people have made in the last decade, but they are real and they were accomplished because a great many people contributed. Not everyone can be on the front line, but when we each make a contribution, no matter how small, we become part of something much bigger. And when one is part of something greater - when one is doing something - one's aloneness diminishes.

Of course, being trans is often a very personal journey. Alienation and loneliness come with the territory. But even here, there is room to grow. If we can go beyond the self congratulatory fantasies of how special we are, so typical of alienated people, and genuinely learn from the experience of being

separate, we can turn our "negative identity" into something positive. Compassion, empathy, insight into other people, these are all qualities that grow in the fertile soil of separation, if we don't poison them with bitterness and self-absorption.

Goethe said that the real meaning of self-knowledge is in taking notice of oneself and becoming aware of one's relation to other people and to the world. He spoke against self-preoccupation, which concerned itself - fruitlessly - with a negative self-identity, and spoke in favour of an awareness of one's relation to the world, to others and to oneself. In other words, we need to develop a self awareness that goes beyond our most immediate preoccupation, which is our transgenderism. We need to see how that separation has influenced us personally and how it continues to influence the ways in which we engage the rest of the world.

In the absence of a more trans friendly world, it's about the best we can do.

WHY NOT US?

Right now, you're probably asking yourself: "Wouldn't it be nice to go somewhere?"

Well, when you think about it, most people do. You want to go to the movies? You can do so. You want to go to a restaurant? A club? Or maybe a play? All it takes is a little cash and desire. And who are these people I'm talking about? Well, two groups come to mind: straights and gays. In most urban centres, these two groups of people have a variety of choices, all of which contribute to their culture.

But there is a third group called, among other things, transgendered.

We go through life largely invisible, hidden by veils of ignorance. Many people in the world don't even suspect we exist. I know. I've met people like that. So our lives are led in secret, and loneliness, and a host of other unwanted feelings. If some of us get lucky and meet other like minded folks, we can then go to each other's homes for a visit and a good talk, and once in a while rent a hall for a bigger function. While these things are great, we're still not taking our place in the larger scheme of things. It's like we are interlopers outside with our faces and hands pressing on the candy store window, looking at the marvels

within.

Why not us? We are a part of humanity. We have a long history, although most of it is unknown, even to ourselves. I realize that I'm only one person, and really, I don't have any money and I have no knowledge of business, but I'm willing to do whatever small thing I can do. It's the little things that make up the big things, I'd say.

So, this is the problem. What can be done to create a place for ourselves in this world?

I suspect it would depend on a variety of things. Money. No matter what, it's always a consideration. Your local community, or even if you have a community. Expertise. Everyone has their talents. And then there are the intangibles, inspiration and motivation, time and patience.

The gays are doing all right for themselves, and more power to them. We could probably learn a lot from them, and in doing so ultimately create a better society. We're not going to go away, so we might as well take our place, and be counted among the living.

Rachel Steen

Inclusion, Identity, Invisibility

American trans people debate the merits of identity politics

By Teddy Michaels

As an interested observer some way removed from the events, I have been following with interest the controversy over GenderPAC's new mission statement. For those of you who missed it, GenderPAC, which most trans people in the U.S. considered their lobbying organization for trans rights, has moved toward a broader definition of their purpose and is now lobbying on behalf of all gender rights, whether it be for the woman who is fired for not wearing makeup or the gay male harassed for not being sufficiently masculine. This more mainstream approach has alienated a number of trans activists, many of whom played a major role in supporting GenderPAC since its inception, and has left American trans people without an exclusively trans organization lobbying for changes in Washington.

Not surprisingly, this move by GenderPAC, which its executive director Riki Wilchins maintains was always central to its mission, has caused a little tension in the trans community south of the border. Joanne Roberts, of *TG Forum*, has even suggested that GenderPAC has "betrayed" the trans community and has called on trans people to "retaliate in kind".

Those are pretty strong words, and about the only ones I've read with which I disagree. It's not like GenderPAC is the enemy here. After all, if they succeed, we are all better off. Talk of betrayal and retaliation reminds me too much of the old, petty trans community that I detest, and that is a pathetic reminder of how powerless people eat up their own in a kind of frustrated, subconscious rage against the rest of the world.

So, I'm not interested in retaliation. But what does fascinate me, and what makes the solution to

the problem so complex, is that this whole issue revolves around two of the most basic and related trans concepts. Our invisibility in society and our alienation from it.

First, our alienation.

Riki Wilchins told the Bay Area Reporter: "I won't build another identity-based movement because I've been locked out of everyone I tried to join. I'm not welcome at cross-dressing, feminist, or gay groups, and I'm not going to lock anybody else outside the door. We embrace everyone or we embrace no one."

Every thinking trans person should be able to appreciate that argument. In this country, we only have to look at the Kimberly Nixon case, in which Ms Nixon was barred from being a counselor with Vancouver's Rape Relief because she was born male, to know how identity bound movements have barred the door to trans people. For most people the solution is to create another identity based movement, which in effect is what the opponents to the "new" GenderPAC are proposing, even if they do so reluctantly. "I hate identity politics," trans activist James Green told the Bay Area Reporter. "And yet to a certain extent these issues are identity issues, and to say we're going to leave identity behind and not address things that have to do with identity is very short sighted in my mind."

So, our experiences as trans people have left us with a sympathy for inclusion, but with a corresponding difficulty in seeing how we can include everyone without losing what's important to us in particular.

The issue that concerns me most is that by pursuing "a vision of 'post-identity' politics"

GenderPAC is doing what most of our enemies and, indeed, we ourselves have been doing for years: rendering trans people invisible. It is hard to see how, in an identity bound world this approach will improve the lot of trans people when up to this point it has been such an effective tool in our oppression. GenderPAC claims it is not distancing itself from trans people, but James Green cites GenderPAC's filing of an amicus brief in the Brandon Teena wrongful death suit in which every reference to the trans word was eliminated from the brief.

Is it possible to go from a situation of complete invisibility and oppression to the ideal world of post identity politics without making a stop along the way to let people know that trans people exist, that we have been here for a very long time and that we no longer intend to put up with the abuse that we have historically suffered? That kind of message can best be delivered by old time identity politics.

Wilchins herself acknowledges that GenderPAC's vision may be ahead of its time, and that many trans people don't get it. If that's so, then she must surely appreciate that many people are uncomfortable seeing the organization that they have been supporting forsake an easily understandable approach to securing human rights, and

one that even GenderPAC admits has worked well for other organizations, for one so vague and uncertain. Regrettably, the new GenderPAC has probably created an unbridgeable political schism between trans activists in the United States.

Even so, GenderPAC's vision is well worth pursuing. It's an interesting strategy, and certainly a progressive approach to human rights that may, if it succeeds, bring together a huge number of diverse people working toward the common goal of securing gender rights "free from stereotypes, discrimination, and violence". The momentum behind such a movement could be very powerful indeed.

The final irony is that despite its post identity politics, in some ways GenderPAC could only have been created by trans people. Never fitting in psychically and socially, constantly being barred from participating in the things we wish to participate in, we can either take our pain inside and suffocate in anger and despair, or let it out and do our best to see that others aren't treated the way we have been.

Inclusion is a beautiful thing. Whether it will be the best thing for American trans people at this time remains to be seen. Even so, I wish GenderPAC much good fortune.



Growing Pains

Teddy Michaels pulls out her diary to mark the anniversaries of two of Canada's longest running trans groups

Longevity has never been a distinguishing characteristic of trans organizations. Most of them start with great expectations, but crumble under the weight of infighting and too much work shouldered by too few people. This spring, however, two of Canada's longest running trans groups will celebrate anniversaries. Ottawa's Gender Mosaic turns 13, and Illusions in Calgary marks year 11.

A decade can appear to go by quickly, but when you think of how far trans people have come in that time, you realize it couldn't have happened without that most fundamental of institutions: the trans support group. The longevity of these two groups is a remarkable accomplishment and worthy of celebration. To commemorate this longevity, I thought I would mine some more of my journal for nuggets from the early years of Gender Mosaic.

Reading these now reminds me of how far we have come and how much things have changed. In particular, you'll note my inappropriate use of pronouns and my use of the now much despised word "transvestism". In the interests of veracity, however, I present much of this as it was written and hope I don't embarrass myself too much in the process. I have only edited out some personal details about some people which I don't feel authorized to disclose.

THURSDAY, JUNE 2, 1988

Last night Lary and I went to our second TV meeting. I got dressed but decided after a talk with Lary that I'd put my pants on and take my skirt in a

bag. Doing this annoys me a little, but Judy still doesn't feel very comfortable about non-passable TVs coming to his door.

Besides Lary, Jenny, Judy and me, there were present a fellow named Charmane (I believe) and a young woman named Natalie who I thought was a guy when I first came in. Charmane didn't say much to me all evening and I still don't know much about him, but Natalie, who - if I must use a label - was probably a transsexual, had some interesting contributions to make throughout the evening.

It was a far more interesting meeting than the last time and the main reason I found it so was Jenny. He had many interesting observations on the nature of transvestism and the sex roles. This separation of the personality into a male and female persona, which I could never understand, was explained to me in such a way as to almost make sense.

"If I don't do it this way, I think Judy would try to take over." This was Judy's explanation, and he suggested that his transvestism would interfere with his working life and become a destabilizing force. I found this worthwhile because lately I've been obsessed with my transvestism and have wondered whether it's become more powerful as the years have gone by. It has, of course, always interfered with my working life and my love life, but for the first time I realized that maybe my way of achieving personal fulfilment is completely impractical. I pursue my goal of complete freedom, but the more freedom I acquire the more I want, and though I'm happier than I ever was, the feeling that says "I have finally arrived" will probably never happen. And in the meantime, while I pursue this, my working life and my love life are in shambles. Still, I can't accept the notion that because

I was not looking for a fight, but for probably the first time in 25 years I was cranking up my hate level enough - it wasn't hard - to consider the possibility.

what I want is not likely to happen, I should give up and settle for something second best that may be more reasonable. My belief that my personal happiness lies within my freedom of expression is so rooted in me that it won't change, but for a brief moment last night it occurred to me that it might be wrong.

MONDAY, JUNE 27, 1988

...The real drama occurred after everyone left. Lary and I decided at around midnight to have one more beer. Lary suggested we go to Patty's Place, a pub on Montreal Road. Even though I had had a few beer for courage, I didn't think this was a great idea because Patty's Place is still a little too redneck for my liking. Still, after some humming and hawing while sitting across the street in the car, I agreed.

Well, the waitress was friendly enough and one of the hostesses came by five minutes later to make sure we had been served, but we got a lot more stares than we would have at a more liberal minded place. Then, two guys came into the patio (where we were sitting) and stared at us long enough that I knew we'd see them again after they had got some beer. And of course, we did.

They started asking us questions, but it was obvious by their tone they weren't much interested in being enlightened. Lary was being patient with them for awhile, but I didn't see why I had to answer their questions. People seem to think that just because you're wearing a skirt, they have certain rights over you. So I was hostile to them as I thought they were to me. One fellow was worse than the other and kept making vague threats, like "they don't look too big. I think we can take them." I was not looking for a fight, but for probably the first time in 25 years I was cranking up my hate level enough - it wasn't hard - to consider the possibility.

The situation diffused somewhat when the worse jerk got bored and left and the second jerk found out we weren't gay. When he left, he still opined that he thought we were "fucked up somehow". I figured he was entitled to his opinion and left it at that.

It's a real education meeting people this one dimensional. Even if they were open to new ideas, I don't think they could grasp certain concepts. They

just aren't programmed that way. Even the one simple idea that I feel more comfortable this way is incomprehensible to them because they could never imagine themselves in the position. They have nothing to identify with, and their imagination fails them.

In any case, although it wasn't the most enjoyable beer I've had, I have to log the experience on the positive side. I encountered open hostility and lived to tell the tale. I doubt if it will be any easier the next time, but at least I've gained a little more confidence in my ability to get out of tight situations.

MONDAY, JULY 11, 1988

Wednesday's meeting was attended by Rachel, Lary and I, and Judy, Charmane (?) and Jenny. It seems like the period of finding new members has lost momentum and now it's the same five or six of us that are keeping things going. Although it's not serious for the time being - we're all still having a good time - it is important that a few others find the courage to attend one week. Without sufficient numbers, it seems unlikely we'll be able to continue having regular meetings and without regular meetings, the whole project is likely to collapse.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1988

Last Wednesday we had our meeting here for the first time and to judge by the crowd and the late hour of leave taking - 2 a.m. - I'd have to say it was a success. Those present were Lary, Rachel, Judy, Dr. Karen, Karen the ts, Sharon (the person whose name I thought was Charmane), Jenny and Ron. The latter was a good fellow who was a little put off by our elaborate get ups and the transsexuals present. I really don't think he realizes how similar he is to us. He had a moustache, but wore a skirt, pantyhose and some low heeled pumps. I don't know if we'll see him again, although Lary, Rachel and I tried to persuade him to call or come again.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 21, 1989

We've had several more meetings since New Year and I'm pleased to report that the membership continues to grow. There is an amazing interest in the

newsletter also and I can see I'm going to have no trouble filling it up with items and articles. Sometimes I get very excited about the future of this organization. I already think I've got more out of it than I expected to get out of it, and to be quite honest I think we're just beginning to roll. As a result, I'm beginning to take my position as editor seriously. With the way the group is blossoming, the newsletter has taken on more importance than I thought it would. Finally, we may have something here.

MONDAY AUGUST 7, 1989

I was right to worry about having the meeting at my place since it turned into a large drunk. There weren't that many of us here actually, since it was very hot and most people left at a reasonable hour, but Rachel, Judy and I stayed up very late. I sometimes think this group of ours will flounder on alcohol. I think I should do my best to reduce its consumption if only by reducing my own intake. I love a beer, but I don't need totally unfocussed drinking like we had Saturday night. It isn't fun and it does me no good at all.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1989

The west dining room of Rosie Lee's Café is an intimate little place with a fireplace in the corner. It's two steps down from the pavement, but it doesn't feel like you're in the basement, the occasional exposed pipe notwithstanding. There were nine of us for dinner, Jenny having had to bow out that night.

Lary and Nikki had come over to my place prior to going to the restaurant. Lary was decked out in overwhelming white and pink and Nikki was wondering whether he was going to get dressed at all. Finally he decided he would, and the two of us, me in my black suede skirt, took my car while Lary drove alone.

All of us were in good spirits and the food was very good. The evening had that feeling of a special night stamped all over it, particularly since for Nikki, Lee, Karen, and Barb it was their first night in public. Our waitress Mimi was really fine too and contributed to the convivial atmosphere. A lot of pictures were taken that night, and too many of me.

MONDAY, AUGUST 13, 1990

Sunday night our sub-group got together to discuss where we're going and how we're going to educate the public. There was an astonishingly good turn out and the level of discussion was intelligent and useful. We got things done! We're planning a pamphlet, thinking of getting a phone and we actu-

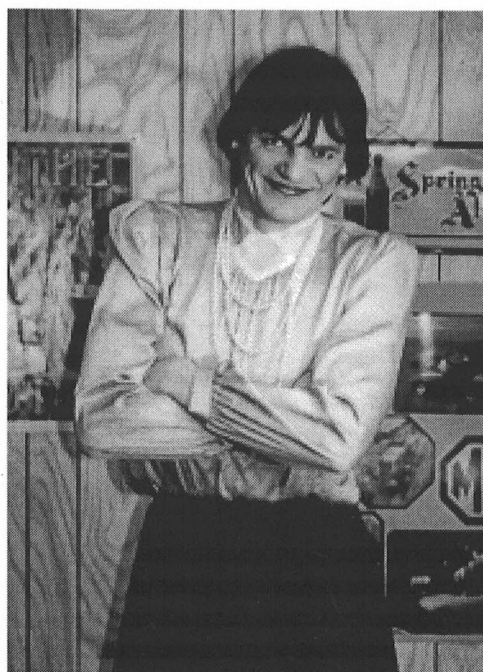
ally brainstormed a new name: Gender Mosaic. It's not perfect, but it's good, and considering the options I've seen, I'm delighted with it. There were other things set in motion too, and though I was exhausted by the afternoon I had, by the time everyone left at 10:30, I was satisfied with the results.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1990

Our trans group is going along fine. We've allowed all types of transgendered people to become members if they wish, the result of the guest appearance of a drag queen at the beginning of the December social. The latter event made me realize how little I want to hold major social events in my house every month, and with potentially many new members coming into the fold after we advertise in January, I don't see how this will improve. I think I'm going to have to keep this issue at the top of the agenda so people don't take this for granted.

I was searching for some final defining entry that would sum up this article, but of course there is none. The battle continues and the story is not finished. Reading these entries again reminds me of the many people that have come and gone, and the commitment it takes to keep a trans organization going. Those of us who have managed to escape our isolation cannot forget that many others have no place to turn. So support your local trans group!

Congratulations to Illusions and Gender Mosaic, and here's to continued long life.



A lot of pictures were taken that night, and too many of me. Teddy Michaels, Easter 1990.

Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People, by Vivian K. Namaste. University of Chicago Press, ISBN 0-226-56810-5 (paper).

By Teddy Michaels

"That looks like an interesting book," the obviously gay male said to me as he rang in Vivian Namaste's book *Invisible Lives* on the cash register at Chapters. "What's it about?"

Oh dear. Where to begin.

As a gay male, he must know something about invisibility. Gays and lesbians in our society reside in a curious sub-reality. They've made it to television, but if you haven't had much experience with alternate lifestyles, you'd swear there weren't any where you worked or played.

I had assumed this would be the theme of Namaste's book, particularly since compared to gays and lesbians, trans people are - not to put too fine a point on it - completely off the radar. *Invisible Lives* is instead about research on trans people and how society comes to understand us. While this is primarily a scholarly discussion, Namaste makes a convincing argument that our invisibility extends far beyond the street. We are removed from academic discussion even as we are the principal topic of it.

This "erasure", as Namaste calls it, occurs in a number of ways.

The first focus of her discussion is queer theory. Queer theory interprets sexual behaviour in the context of history and culture. The meaning of homosexuality, transgenderism, and even heterosexuality will vary widely depending on their historical and cultural contexts. Consequently, queer theorists question the usefulness of such categories. Not only are they relatively undefinable, they serve to separate human beings into a hierarchical system that makes the oppression of one or another category inevitable.

Namaste objects to queer theory on both political and theoretical grounds. She contends that queer theorists have little regard for the individuals that are the objects of their study and that they have reduced trans people to the "merely figural". Trans people become a kind of allegory to explain issues of sex and gender relations, race and class, but trans people themselves become invisible in the process. Queer theory talks about the liberating aspects of defying gender roles, but never about the consequences. "The voices, struggles and joys of real transgendered people in the everyday social world are noticeably absent."

Namaste also objects to queer theory on a

theoretical perspective. "Its restricted conception of text determines the selection and interpretation of evidence, facts, and objects - in other words, what counts as knowledge." Furthermore, queer theory fails to take into account how these texts (that is, books, movies etc.) are selected.

While the work of social scientists is an improvement on queer theory in the sense that it examines the real world, it too is limited because the issues it identifies as important are important to sociologists and not to the people examined. Much of their work is focussed on the medical or psychiatric production of transsexuality and on sociological theory. You can see the results of this kind of study in the work of people like Janice Raymond, of *Transsexual Empire* fame, and Dwight Billings, Thomas Urban and Bernice Hausman who all more or less argue that "transsexuals are the dupes of gender". Namaste rightly points out that a "restricted consideration of transsexuality distorts the complexity of the social world as it is lived and experienced by transsexual and transgendered people."

I suspect this argument that trans people are the dupes of gender will one day blow up in the faces of its proponents. It is, after all, a remarkably arrogant argument which positions the liberated academics who profess to understand the constructed nature of gender against what Namaste calls, in one of her rare lapses into sarcasm, "the poor duped transsexuals who are victims of false consciousness."

We need to go beyond the limitations of queer theory and objectivist social science to make sense of the everyday lives of trans people. Namaste proposes a kind of "institutional ethnography" patterned after the work of Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith. In this research, trans people would be the subjects rather than the objects of study and the focus would lie on the institutional relations that influence their lives.

Namaste's analysis of institutional exclusion, the ways in which social institutions effectively wash their hands of transsexuals and transgendered people, is ruthlessly efficient. This portion of the book is complementary to the theoretical bits that come before it in that it demonstrates just how complicated the world can be for trans people and how inadequate is the "neat theoretical overview of transsexual lives as offered by critics in queer theory or objectivist sociology".

This is a serious issue for all trans people in that institutions are largely responsible for legitimating our existence in the social world. Unfortunately, the difficulties we face in securing the documents we need to live like so-called normal people in society suggests that institutions as a whole have no interest

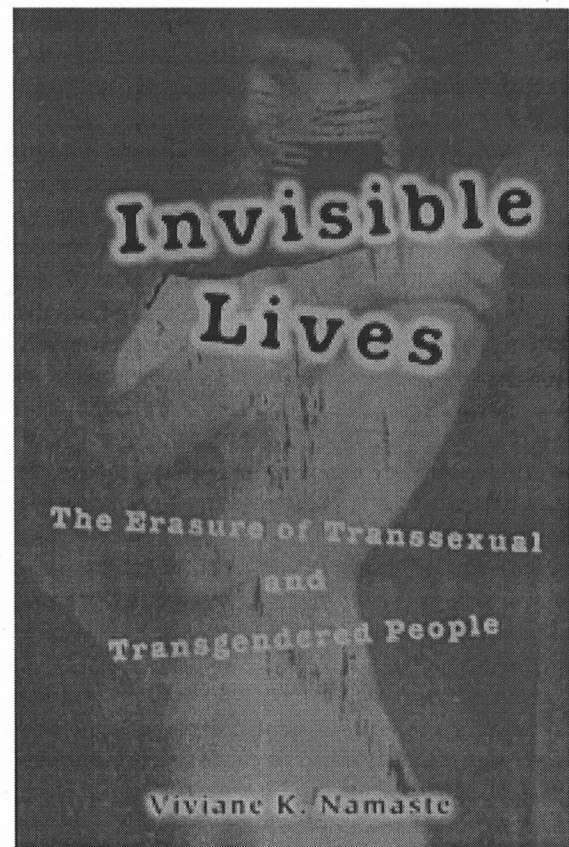
in integrating us into the broader society. From health care to social services, trans people are erased from the institutional world through specific policies and administrative practises.

Namaste goes about detailing this erasure with commendable restraint, but it is easy to believe that many of these policies are implemented out of sheer cruelty. Whether it is dealing with Quebec's Direction de l'état civil, the police, shelters, health care institutions or the Clarke Gender Identity Clinic, the overwhelming impression is that institutions feel it is their duty to cure trans people of their "transness" by making it as difficult as possible for us. One transsexual quoted in the book calls it "aversion therapy". If you manage to survive all the obstacles they put in your way, you must be a transsexual. But the more general result of all this exclusion is that trans people effectively refuse to deal with institutions, and by doing so they are erased from what are, after all, the foundations of our society.

Knowledge is produced by the accumulation of research through academic inquiry and in the workings of institutions. Our invisibility in these areas, Namaste argues, means that trans people are not so much produced by medicine or psychiatry as we are through erasure. Words, images in the movies and television, the work of government and institutions, all these are "the primary medium of power". If our real lives are excluded from these spheres, then they are in effect rendered as inconceivable. This, I think, is the crux of the issue. The oppression of trans people begins with a lack of understanding by a population that is deeply attached to prevailing conceptions of sex and gender, and deeply unwilling (or incapable) to reexamine them in any way.

As a transsexual woman, Namaste does not have this problem. Her book begins with a simple premise that is not generally found in books by non trans authors: "I take it for granted that transsexual and transgendered people exist, and that we shall continue to do so even as the theoretical frameworks that explain our etiology, celebrate our transgression of a sex/gender binary, or condemn us to psychosis go in and out of style." As trans people, we all know this to be true. It is our misfortune that much of the rest of the world cannot know it also.

Invisible Lives is especially worthwhile for the Canadian reader because it demonstrates how limited and, in many cases, irrelevant the "international" trans activism originating in the United States is to Canadian trans people. Namaste notes that many Canadian trans activists have emerged from the street and that trans activism in this country is centred on access to social services. She reflects that activism with an appreciation of the diversity of trans



people and in particular with her defence of trans prostitutes.

Although the book's scholarly discussion can be turgid at times, *Invisible Lives* is a significant contribution to understanding the sometimes subtle and apparently innumerable ways in which trans people's lives are marginalized.

Sex and the Church (Continued from page 20)

need and to live a Christian life.

Anyone who has argued about religion will know that an argument can only go so far and then you may as well be banging your head against the wall. This is why Rudy's proposal for a new definition of moral sex, while thoughtful, compassionate, well meaning and certainly Christian, is ultimately of no consequence. She suggests that this principle of hospitality relocates the religious work that women in the Christian Right perform and makes it a duty that all Christians would share. It's a nice idea, but not one the Christian Right is likely to embrace given that their whole system of beliefs is based on gender.

Sex and the Church is, nevertheless, an excellent, informative read and highly recommended for a better understanding of what queer folk are up against.

Sex and the Church: Gender, Homosexuality and the Transformation of Christian Ethics, by Kathy Rudy. Beacon Press, 1997. ISBN 0-8070-1035-9 (paper).

By Teddy Michaels

In her book *Sex and the Church*, Kathy Rudy demonstrates what we've always suspected. Many Christians on the Right believe that gender is one of the primary ways one comes to know God and that the model for this gendered theology is indeed the stereotypical 1950s family.

The trouble is there is no scriptural basis for such a family. It was only after industrialization that the role of men and women was defined by public and private spheres. Owing to world wars and the early excesses of capitalism, this social model did not achieve its economic potential until the 1950s. Even then, of course, it happened primarily in America.

The theology of the Christian Right, is based upon the perceived stability of this social arrangement. But while it might appear to be easily mocked on these grounds alone, there is a rationale behind it which many people undoubtedly find appealing.

Because women were confined to the domestic sphere in the years following industrialization, churches often provided them with their first opportunity to meet with other women and organize social and reform movements. "During this period, women were seen not simply as better human beings, but also as better Christians than men. Here, morality and spirituality were deeply intertwined; a woman was better suited to raise the children, it was believed, because she was better at living and teaching the Christian faith." If women changed, then this important spiritual relationship with God would be broken.

Men, in the meantime, are the leaders of the family and provide for its material well being. However, since women are so intimately connected with spirituality, men must assume dominant formal roles within the church, such as preaching or developing theology, so as not to become emasculated.

Well, you don't need to be a genius to see that this gendered theology will never be friendly to gay and trans people. Since gender is the first organizing category for conservative theology, the two categories can only meet within the terms of the heterosexual family. "In this system, where God is male, women relate to God directly, and men can only know God one step removed. In using the heterosexual family as the model for Christian theology, the ideology of domesticity constructs and verifies the idea that

heterosexuality and the nuclear family are both necessary and intrinsic to human existence. If God is the father and women are responsible for conducting that relationship, then the family, the home, and the heterosexual relationship appear to mimic the most holy way of negotiating life."

And you always thought they were just a bunch of wing nuts. There is a logic to it, however unfriendly it may be to people who don't fit into their paradigm of living. That's the problem, of course. Basing a theology on gender inevitably increases the importance of gender in all other areas of life as well. When trans people upset the gender applecart, the Christian Right believes we are also upsetting a fundamental relationship with God.

One of the interesting arguments that Rudy evolves from her discussion is the notion that by attempting to win the right to marry, gays and lesbians are seeking to legitimize their relationships through the very family values argument the Christian Right has been promoting. But, she counters, queer folk have never had conventional families. They have, in general, been more communal, with, for example, good friends frequently serving in the role of uncles and aunts. These communal living arrangements have, nevertheless, been moral, loving and life-giving. "We need a way of discussing sexual morality that does not hold up heterosexual marriage as the only ideal."

In attempting to define a more inclusive concept of sexual morality, Rudy first describes the Christian churches' traditional views on what constitutes good and bad sex. After sifting through all the flesh hating and misogynistic bits, Rudy comes up with a number of common factors that have traditionally determined what the Church regards as moral sex. The two primary ones are procreativity and unitivity, unitivity being intimacy, steadfastness, and the union of body, emotion and spirit. Both these principles, when taken together, have traditionally defined moral sex.

The problem with procreativity is that sex has never been just about procreation, and by insisting it should be, the church is in effect undermining relationships by telling couples that they cannot be intimate if they don't intend to create babies. Meanwhile, an emphasis solely on procreativity ends up condemning homosexuality while potentially going easy on rape.

Rudy's solution to the dilemma of what constitutes moral sex is unitivity and hospitality, where hospitality is extending the love one gets in a sexual relationship outward. Being in a loving relationship enables one to reach out to others in

Continued page 19

TARA TAYLOR TRANSWOMAN!

Episode two: Conformity

Story by Teddy Michaels

Drawings by Alison Terry

UNABLE TO OVERCOME HER FEARS AND CONFUSION FOLLOWING TRANSGENDER CORRECTIVE SURGERY, TARA TAYLOR IS RELEASED INTO THE WORLD AS A MAN, THE ONLY EVIDENCE OF HER PAST LIFE, A SIMPLE BLACK DRESS STUFFED INTO A BATTERED SUITCASE.



AT WORK, REINTEGRATION PROVES DIFFICULT.

I HEAR TARA IS REALLY A MAN! HOLY MACKEREL, I USED TO FLIRT WITH HER, I MEAN HIM. HOLY MACKEREL!



I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING WRONG WITH THAT QUEER BOY!

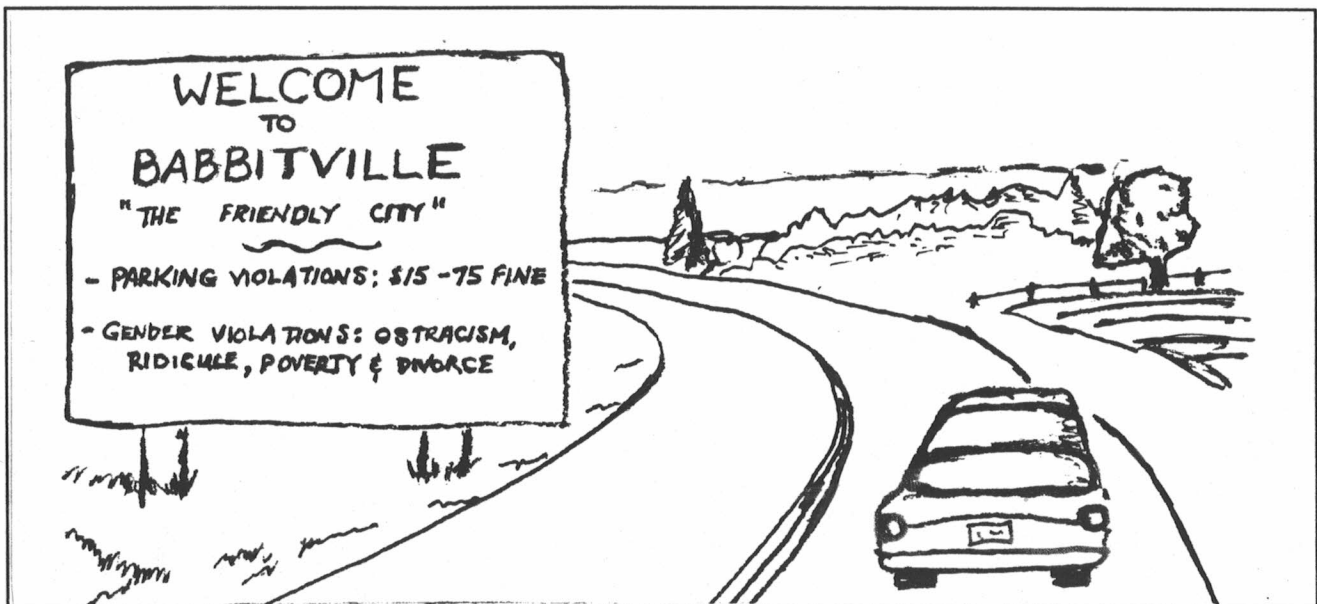


A SYMPATHETIC BOSS

WE COULD FIRE YOU, I HOPE YOU REALIZE THAT, BUT I'M GIVING YOU ANOTHER CHANCE. I'M TRANSFERRING YOU TO OUR BABBITVILLE BRANCH.

BUT NO FUNNY STUFF YOU HEAR?!





YES, BABBITVILLE WAS A VERY FRIENDLY CITY



ANOTHER SYMPATHETIC BOSS!

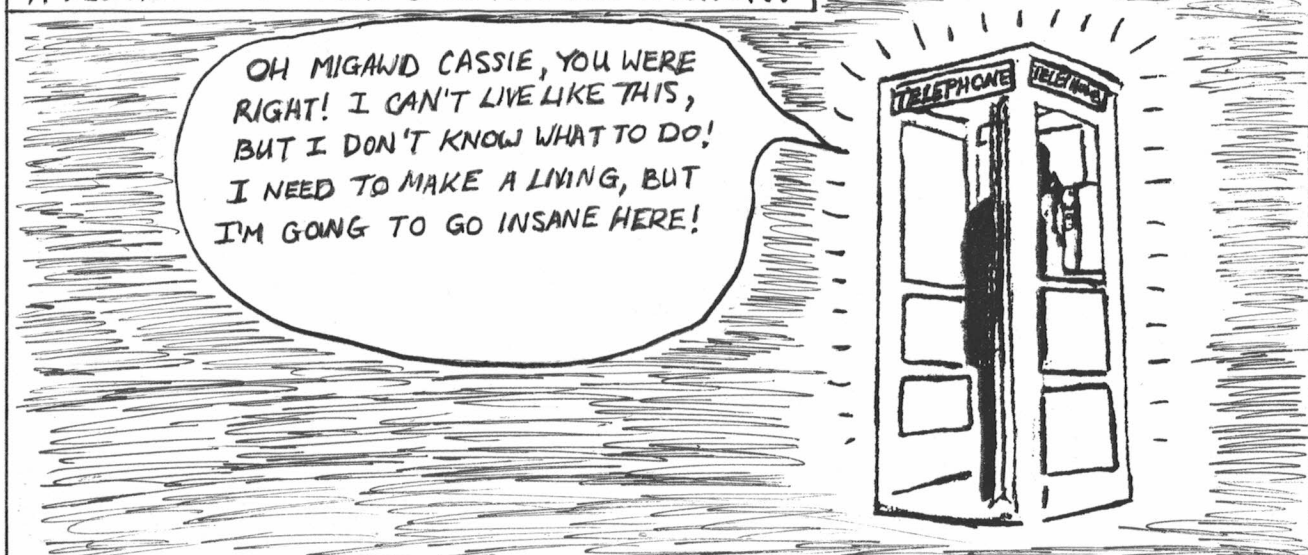


AND SYMPATHETIC CO-WORKERS!





A DESPERATE LATE NIGHT CALL TO A TRUE FRIEND...



BACK AT HER SPARTAN APARTMENT, TARA RE-EMERGES. SHE CONTEMPLATES WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HER LIFE AND SHE STARTS TO GET ANGRY...



NO MORE CRYING, SISTER!



TO BE
CONTINUED
...



Collage by Rachel Steen