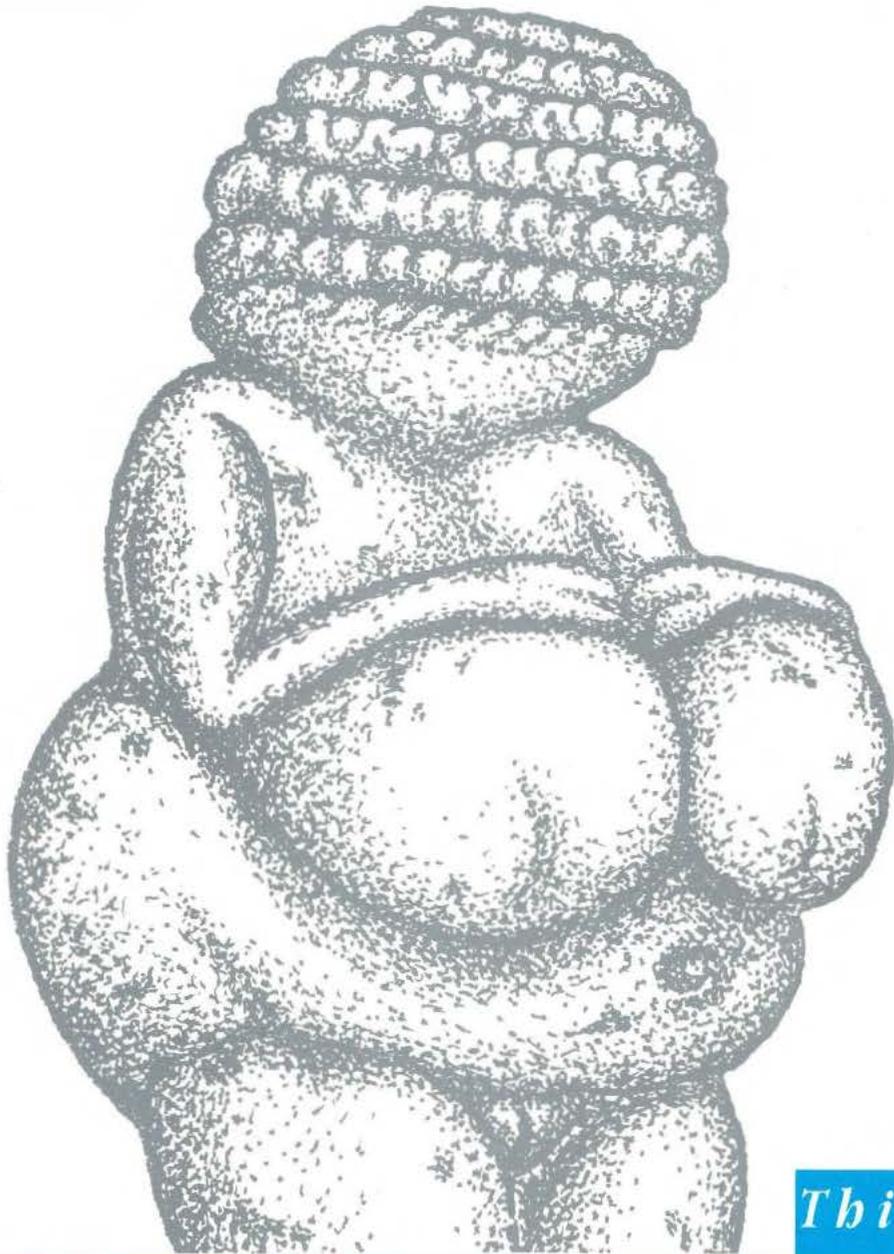


Chrysalis

Quarterly



Volume 1, No. 6 1993
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This issue.....

*Transgender Perspectives
On the Return of the Goddess*

contents

About this Issue

This issue of *Chrysalis Quarterly* is dedicated to *Rena Swifthawk*, who has been very special in the lives of many in the transgender community—including ours. *Holly Boswell* is guest editor. The theme is “Transgender Perspectives on the Return of the Goddess.” The cover features the most famous of the prehistoric “mother goddess” fertility figures, the *Venus of Willendorf*, an 11 cm tall carving found in Austria.

The public service advertisement on the inside front cover addresses the spectre of AIDS, a disease from which no one is exempt—least of all transgendered persons, who in their denial may engage in high-risk behavior. Unfortunately, HIV and AIDS are seldom mentioned in publications by and about transgendered persons.

Alas, denial can manifest itself in many ways.

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Upcoming in CQ:

Number 7

*Denial & Self-Destructive
Behavior in
Gender Dysphoria*

Number 8

*Mens' Issues
(Jason Cromwell, Editor)*

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Mission: *Chrysalis Quarterly* is dedicated to the in-depth exploration of gender issues. Our focus will be on topics which have been ignored or only lightly touched upon in other forums. Our treatments will be intelligent and unbiased.

Submissions: We welcome your stories, articles, letters, editorials, news clippings, position statements, research reports, press releases, poems, and artwork.

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A major purpose of AEGIS, and so of *Chrysalis Quarterly*, is to foster communication and respectful interaction between caregivers and consumers. We have done that in these pages, and will continue to do so in a variety of ways.

This issue is a bit of a departure. The first five issues of *CQ* reflected my training as a behavioral scientist. The magazines and the articles in them were logical and sequential. But the world is not always logical and sequential. Science, as marvelous as it is, is but one way of seeing ourselves and our surroundings. There are other, more ancient, and equally valid ways of ordering reality.

This issue, which was edited by Holly Boswell, gives us a less sequential, less Aristotelian way of looking at transgender phenomena.

Those who have gender dysphoria often feel in their hearts, and will tell you, if you bother to ask, that despite the troubles their condition may have brought upon them, they feel they have been blessed with a duality of nature, a merging of masculine and feminine energies that they would not give up. They feel a spirituality and a pride in being transgendered that they sometimes do not have a name for, a connection with what we have called in this issue the Goddess.

— Dallas Denny
Publisher & Editor-in-Chief

Perhaps the most blatant and ludicrous example of sex discrimination in human history has been the claim

that God is exclusively male. This absurd premise is based on a polarized view of gender, where women embody the physical and emotional planes of being and men are imbued with the higher faculties of intellect and spiritual awareness. There is an overwhelming accumulation of evidence that the subjugation of the Feminine is directly linked with the exploitation of Nature. All living beings—including soil, water, and air—are suffering the devastating consequences of this profound imbalance.

I was blessed as a child to live next to an expanse of forest laced with creeks. Most of my free time was spent there, both as playground and as refuge. Over those years, I was infused with the sweet scent of damp mosses and rotting leaves, the delicate music of water's rush and gurgle over smooth sculpted rocks, and the dazzling flicker of warm sun through swaying trees in pulsing breezes. I came to feel her breeze through my own breathing, the splash of her creeks in my laughter, the total caress of her body surrounding my skin, and the sparkle of her life glowing through my smile and shining eyes. As I became aware of our oneness, I realized: it is our love that is divine and eternal. Who needs a church when this sacred union is naturally intact? Just before I went away to college to embark on the preordained path of my supposed "manhood," the bulldozers came.

So why is the Goddess returning, and what does it have to do with

.....
Those who have gender dysphoria often feel in their hearts, and will tell you, if you bother to ask, that despite the troubles their condition may have brought upon them, they feel they have been blessed with a duality of nature, a merging of masculine and feminine energies that they would not give up.
.....

Just as women are reclaiming their connection with the divine, transgendered people are beginning to reconnect with a rich spiritual heritage that extends back through all cultures throughout history.

being transgendered? It is important to understand that the ancient world-view and spiritual practices of the Goddess are Nature-based, being most akin to shamanism and Native American traditions. The purpose is not to replace the male godhead with a female one, but to celebrate the whole of gender and reverence for all life without hierarchies. To quote Starhawk, a major voice in the "Reclaiming" movement: "The Goddess, like nature, loves diversity. Oneness is attained not through losing the self, but through realizing it fully." There is no prescribed dogma. Access to the divine is achieved personally from within. The sacred and the secular are one, becoming "heaven on earth."

The transgender spirit transcends the simplistic cultural dictum that anatomical sex is synonymous with gender expression. Gender cannot be polarized. It is a rainbow that is far too splendid in its diversity. The expression of one's true gender is intuitive and ever-changing. There can be no rules.

Just as women are reclaiming their connection with the divine, transgendered people are beginning to reconnect with a rich spiritual heritage that extends back through all cultures throughout history. Traditions of alternative gender are diverse and have many names, but they also have a potent commonality. They form a strong foundation that speaks to us now, to inspire and empower us as visionaries, artists, mediators, healers, and spiritual leaders. We embody the Goddess' spirit of diversity and inclusiveness. We can be a bridge between polarities to help restore balance and wholeness. Our very

own gender liberation is a key. We must cultivate "whole gender" in order to meet the critical challenges of our time.

When the first Europeans came to America, they called us "berdache" and fed us to the dogs. Like gay men and lesbians, who are reclaiming the pejorative words "faggot," "dyke," and "queer," we can reclaim and cleanse our past through pride in who we are. Before we can help heal the planet, we must heal ourselves. We must tell our truth, refashion our myths, and reinvent the tools we need to operate in today's world with deep compassion and fresh relevance.

This anthology is largely the result of a collaboration of "new berdache." A circle of us from around the country recently converged in the southern Appalachians to revive our tradition and explore new potential. We are encouraging a ripple effect of widening circles. These are exciting times.

—Holly Boswell
Editor

This first-of-its-kind anthology is dedicated to our dear sister Rena Swifthawk, a Native American berdache who has empowered us with her wisdom, love, and laughter to live in balance with all things and offer all our words and deeds in a good way.

Thank you for the copy of the *Chrysalis Quarterly*. I found it very interesting and had to think how far we all have come since the 50's when we would meet in the old brownstone in Brooklyn Heights, where the home-printed copies of *Turnabout* were put together in the basement. They are certainly far removed from the days of Dr. Burou in Casablanca, so long ago. Keep up your good work.

—Renée Richards, MD
New York, NY

It's good to know that Dr. Richards is doing well. To those few readers who may not know who she is, Renée Richards' life was intruded upon by the news media after a reporter at a womens' tennis competition figured out that she had undergone sex reassignment. Her courage in the face of fire was an inspiration to those who came after.

First, I would like to compliment you and your staff at *Chrysalis Quarterly*. I am impressed with the quality of articles and contributions. I would also like to acknowledge the important role that AEGIS fulfills by being a responsive resource for the transgender community, including the clients of our Gender Dysphoria Program. I am pleased to be able to refer many of the transgendered persons contacting our clinic for information and resources to AEGIS. AEGIS also facilitates a dialogue between the transgender community and service providers such as our staff. I would like to sincerely thank you for these accomplishments, and to express my support.

I am writing specifically in response to your article "From the Publisher" in issue 4, calling for an enhanced cooperation between transgendered persons and service providers and a balancing of control between client and provider in the decision process regarding hormonal and/or surgical sex reassignment.

I agree wholeheartedly with your declaration of a need for balance of control and responsibilities between

service provider and client. In our program, the provider's role is to facilitate a process through which the client discovers the most effective way to manage his/her sexual identity. If the client is considering hormonal and/or surgical sex reassignment as an option to alleviate his/her gender dysphoria, a list of criteria based on the Harry Benjamin Standards of Care and our Program's treatment philosophy guides the decision process.

In order to improve communication of our Program's criteria for sex reassignment, we have worked in the past six months with our clients and the local transgender community on revising our prerequisites for sex reassignment. I can attest to the benefit of input from clients and consumers, as suggested in your article. Feedback on a number of drafts of the prerequisites under revision clarified both parties' position, experiences, and needs. We discovered that the rationale for some of our prerequisites had not been clear; that there was basically little disagreement about the criteria themselves, but that the way in which they were communicated was perceived as patronizing and as undermining the client's self-control. Helpful suggestions resulted in a document that is far more consumer friendly. We also decided to develop an explicit written contract between client and provider, arranged through mutual negotiation. This contract reflects an individualized treatment plan incorporating both the client's personal goals and the recommendations of the Program's clinical staff. Criteria for hormonal and surgical sex reassignment now are clearly defined at the onset of treatment. Progress in meeting these criteria is reviewed on a quarterly basis.

In our program, recommendations for hormonal and/or surgical sex reassignment are made by a committee of psychologists, physicians, and a psychiatrist. The client who requests professional consultation on his/her decision to undergo sex

Concluded on page 7

P.O. BOX

Gender Happenings

The following appeared on 8/8/92 in Volume 21, Number 39 of San Diego's *The Reader*.

Holy Megabytes!

In Her Crusade against AIDS, a Social Justice Nun Goes On-Line to the World

by Abe Opincar

It's been a hell of a ride. Sister Mary Elizabeth, in her 54 years, has been both witness to and product of the passionate controversies that forged the latter half of the American Century. In 1957, as a stalwart Cold War-generation Southern Baptist, she went to Memphis, Tennessee to teach electronics at the Naval Air Technical Training Center, submarine warfare division, and saw first-hand the meanness of segregation and the birth of the civil rights movement. The year 1968 found her in Vietnam, flying missions into and out of Tan Son Nuit and Cam Ranh Bay. In '88 she was at the heart of a sexual politics scandal that capsized the Anglican order that she had founded, the Sisters of Elizabeth of Hungary. For the past three years she has worked with and served men and women held hostage to AIDS. Ultimately, her unique take on the world was formed by two matters at once personal and public: her steely devotion to Jesus Christ and her physical transformation via sex-reassignment surgery.

"Don't write about that," she says from her office in San Juan Capistrano. "Don't write about me—I'm not the story. My work is the story."

There is, however, no way of writing about her work without writing about her, about her technical talents, about how she believes the Almighty uses her as a singular vessel for His love. It is not every day, after all, that a transsexual Anglican nun who once served in Vietnam single-handedly launches and maintains the largest AIDS information computer bulletin board in the world.

"It all started in 1990," she says, "When I went to rural Missouri to tend a herd of cows that had been left to our order..."

While the area was isolated, its residents insular, she found people living there with AIDS, struggling on their own with the disease with little or no state-of-the-art information to help them. Television reception was very poor and newspapers scarce, but Sister Mary Elizabeth noticed that many of the area's residents had personal computers—and that, she says, started her to thinking. When she returned to California later that year, she began talking with friends about starting a free national AIDS information bulletin board.

"There are plenty out there, but most of them are expensive. They can run anywhere from \$45 to \$500 dollars an hour, and there's no way that your average person with AIDS can access that information at that cost. There are people out there who want to make money off this terrible disease. Something had to be done."

In late 1990, Sister Mary Elizabeth, a long-time computer afficianado, officially went on-line with an 80-megabyte IBM compatible and quickly ran out of space. She had more than 500 files of AIDS-related information, but there was much, much more. She knew she had to go to more than one phone line; she needed high-speed modems.

In June, 1991, a Japanese businessman made this possible. He donated \$21,000 to the HIV/AIDS Info BBS, which allowed Sister Mary Elizabeth to invest in a more powerful IBM-compatible with a 660-megabyte hard drive, eSoft TBBS software, two high-speed U.S. Robotics modems, and two incoming phone lines. With the expanded capacity, the database mushroomed to more than 1500 files.

The range of information is so vast, its quality so dependable, that national and international organizations such as AmFar and the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Disease have started logging on to the electronic bulletin board on a daily basis. So far this year, it has served close to 20,000 callers, some from as far afield as Australia, Spain, and the Netherlands. And the demand is growing. Sister Mary Elizabeth, her eyesight slowly failing, regularly works 11 hours a day keeping the files up to date, adding new data culled from 19 professional journals and scores of other sources.

"I don't understand," she says, "how we, as individuals created in the image of a loving God, could simply stand by in the face of this epidemic and do nothing. God loved us so much that he sent His son to die—not just for one person, but for all of us. Because of that love, we have a responsibility to others. Because of that love I can't see how we could oppress others or allow others to be oppressed."

HIV/AIDS BBS (714) 248-2836
8-N-1 24 hours

reassignment meets with this committee to seek its support. The therapist takes the role of an advocate for the client's self-interest. If sufficient information is available to determine that sex reassignment is potentially constructive for the client, the committee is able to assume professional responsibility for recommending reassignment. Our model is very much criterion-based, as opposed to exclusionary. If the committee is not able to support the client's decision to undergo sex reassignment at the time of review, the rationale for this is explained and the client and therapist are given directions to further progress toward meeting the criteria. If agreement cannot be achieved, referrals to other specialized providers are facilitated. We remind clients repeatedly of the freedom to choose other providers.

Contrary to the statement in your article, the Program in Human Sexuality's Gender Dysphoria Program has not and does not require a period of cross-living before hormones are prescribed. We do, however, suggest some experimentation with the desired gender role before hormone therapy, which involves taking calculated risks with socializing in public situations.

Hormone therapy and surgical sex reassignment are very much considered separately. We have definitely moved away from subscribing to a bipolar view of gender. We respect and even encourage clients to explore options along the gender spectrum, and support a variety of transgender identities. For example, our research into homosexual identity development in female-to-male transsexualism has challenged the genital criterion as the most salient and defining characteristic of gender. These studies demonstrated that without a phalloplasty, the female-to-male transsexuals we interviewed were perceived as men and were able to have satisfying sexual relationships with other gay men.

In conclusion, I am pleased to find that changes in our program corre-

spond with most of the needs expressed in your article. I look forward to a continued ongoing dialogue between the transgender community and service providers, and to working together to enhance the quality of care. The mission of our academically based program is to provide quality services; to educate the transgender community and service providers, as well as the general public, about transgender issues; and to conduct research that directly benefits transgendered people and their communities. We appreciate the community's input and support in continuing to enhance the quality of our services.

—Walter O. Bockting, Drs., L.P.
Gender Dysphoria Program
Program in Human Sexuality
University MN Medical School

Dr. Bockting is correct in his statement that the Minnesota program has never had a blanket requirement for real-life test before hormonal therapy. We were, quite simply, misinformed. Other clinics, however, still have this requirement, including the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry in Toronto, Canada and the Rosenberg Clinic in Galveston, Texas.

We applaud Dr. Bockting for his efforts to improve the Minnesota program. However, there has been a great deal of recent controversy about the Program in Human Sexuality, and it is unlikely that the changes would have occurred without pressure from consumers, some of whom claim that the changes Dr. Bockting reports are merely window dressing. In the next issue of CQ, we will look in depth at the controversy in Minnesota —Ed.

In the letters column of the last issue of CQ, we printed a letter from Robyn Ellis of the Ingersoll Gender Center in Seattle, Washington; she took us to task for our use of the words "The Brussels Experience" and "The Trinidad Experience," which were subtitles of articles in CQ #4. We duly apologized.

Recently, one of our subscribers sent us a letter to the Ingersoll Center which was printed in issue #25 of The Canadian Crossdresser. The author is Michelle Hunt, RN, who discovered Dr. Michel Seghers in Brussels, Belgium as a resource for male-to-female sex reassignment surgery for Americans. Michelle has an excellent reputation, and we must take her allegations seriously. We reprint her letter in part below, and Ingersoll's initial reaction on page 56—Ed.

Although I have been told before that your brochure closely resembled the one I wrote in 1985 and provided FOR FREE to those planning the trip to Brussels, I didn't realize HOW close to my original information package your brochure really WAS. Perhaps I should have investigated these charges before, but I was satisfied to think the information I had so thoughtfully written some years ago was still being disseminated... While your circular "The Brussels Experience" proposes to be a composite of the experience of 10 people who had their surgery in Brussels in 1988 and 1989, an alarming amount of the information appears to have been taken DIRECTLY and WITHOUT CHANGE from my original work. To compound matters, you have not AT ANY POINT given me credit for WRITING YOUR BROCHURE, and to make matters worse, you have then copyrighted MY MATERIAL as being your own. If yours was a commercial venture, I think there is little doubt as to what my actions against you would be.

... your brochure has been, and still is, causing needless suffering by those who use it. The changes are so great between what YOU say the conditions are and what is ACTUALLY being done, that anyone who is attempting to use it for a guide is being set up for a bad experience.

—Michelle Hunt, RN
Pensacola, FL

A Virginal

by Ezra Pound

No, no! Go from me. I have left her lately.
I will not spoil my sheath with lesser brightness,
For my surrounding air bath a new lightness;
Slight are her arms, yet they have bound me straitly
And left me cloaked as with a gauze of aether;
As with sweet leaves; as with subtle clearness.
Oh, I have picked up magic in her nearness
To sheathe me half in half the things that sheathe her.
No, no! Go from me. I have still the flavour,
Soft as spring wind that's come from birchen bowers.
Green come the shoots, aye April in the branches,
As winter's wound with her slight hand she staunches,
Hath of the trees a likeness of the savour:
As white their bark, so white this lady's hours.

Turquoise Matrix

by Alison Laing

(Dedicated to Rena Swifthawk)

To He who soars like a Hawk,
To She who runs Swift as a Deer,
To One who embodies the strength of them both,
Your Message of Peace and Love abides in Us all.

To He who showed Eagle Humility,
To She who taught Coyote Truth,
To One who gives Love and Peace to Us all,
Your Lessons will last forever.

To He who hunts on the Bountiful Grounds,
To She who dances in the Sacred Circle,
To One who has brought Us all to the Earth,
The Spirit of Your Love will endure.

To He who is the Fair Blue of Father Sky,
To She who is the Rich Red-brown of Mother Earth,
To One who Brings all things Together,
Your Dream of Harmony and Peace Shall be Our Creed.

A man wooing: a woman

by Holly Boswell

Escaping stale breath of talk to reach
the gladed mossy mouth of a spring,
where a goddess, wavering in silks,
barely lilts in humble, ancient elegance,
rustles from audible seas the creekbed lullaby:
"Will you with me sleep? as tenderly we might,
if thirst were slowed to sip the nectar of this night."
Lyrical. Liquid. Slobbered—ah, what
logic lost when tongues wag out of touch!

"Wrenched from your... idyllic drift,
enbazed aloft my... dizzying wake,
my veiled speech, my muted figure,
my lightest touch, cloaking you entire,
the lattice hung in your skull
blooming in wafts from my irises—"
I choke down the drench.

"Even hymns intoned invoke enfolded selves."
There are ringings of your words in mine.
—are "words", you are not... rooted in my mouth.
"They're out wringing of our words from mind."

Don't sound like me. Not my voice...
"Come, bring me some blossoms,
sing in to me, the night,"
too flowing, too... flowery—
"some ring of sun-blossoms,
sing me into the night."
Soft! I was about to breathe your name.

"Singing, through each other,
becoming, the softest voice we hear.."
The ear sings. The voice refrains.
"Closure wooing, our wont is whole.
Let us wear this beauty everywhere."

Rachel Pollack is a prolific writer of science fiction and one of the most gentle people I have ever known. She is author of DC Comics' groundbreaking Doom Patrol, and she designed and drew the Shining Woman Tarot deck. The Shining Woman images derive from prehistoric and tribal art from around the world—Ed.

For Christine

A Ritual in Denmark, 40 Years After

by Rachel Pollack

Learning to Speak

*We are the names we name ourselves
We are the bodies grown out of hope
We are learning to speak*

*Daughters of Artemis
Run through the streets
Shouting and singing
The birth of a life
Opening tunnels
With knives and old prayers
With sterilized scalpels
And slow rising dreams
We are learning to speak
We are learning to speak*

*We are the countries
Of rain and bright noise
We are the branches
Of long buried roots
We are the secrets
In hidden compartments
We are the dead
Who come back forever
We are learning to speak*

*Aphrodite's daughters
Rise from the sea
Born on the foam
Skimming waves of desire
Remember our stories
Remember our past
We are learning to speak
We are learning to speak*

—Rachel Pollack

Near the end of 1952, Christine Jorgensen returned from Copenhagen, Denmark to announce to the world that she had undergone surgery to transform her physically from a man into a woman. Since hearing of this anniversary at the New Woman Conference in September, 1992, I had been thinking of the importance of Christine in all our lives, and of the need somehow to commemorate her. I thought of a woman I knew who told me of her discovery that sex reassignment surgery was possible. She had been in the Korean War, struggling to suppress her feelings of femaleness, to live life “properly” as a man, and had returned to civilian life as miserable and desperate as before. She was walking on Broadway in the Upper West Side of New York City, when she glanced at the newspapers lying in a kiosk. “Ex-GI turned into woman” the headline read. When she bought the paper, she was shaking so hard she could read it only by bracing herself against a lamppost. For the first time in her life, she discovered that what she wanted most in the world was possible.

I wanted to mark this event with a party, or even a public reading or speakout. At the same time, I was arranging to visit an old friend in Denmark over Thanksgiving weekend. It was only a few days before my trip that I realized the perfect match of these two circumstances. When I arrived in Copenhagen, and my friend asked what I wanted to do during my visit, I told her I wanted to go to the sea and perform a ritual in honor of Christine Jorgensen.

On Sunday, November 29, Helle Agathe Beierholm and I traveled to a beach at the bottom of a 300-foot chalk cliff on the south coast of Denmark. The day was cold, with a hard wind, and bright sun shining through the forest on the top of the cliffs. In Denmark, the forest service culls trees as a way of harvesting wood without cutting down whole sections of forest. Walking through the woods, one sees every tree individually, as in a dream. Often, the oldest trees are left. We saw branches and roots suggesting strange forms, including one where the roots resembled a human couple about to make love. The constant damp encourages moss on the trees, giving them a green coating which glows almost golden in the sun.

The day before the ritual, we had asked the Shining Woman Tarot to give us images of what we might do. The first card that came up was the High Priestess, an endorsement of the very idea of performing such a ceremony. The second card was even more significant. Called the Three of Rivers, it symbolizes the idea of women menstruating together as a sharing of their lives. One year before, this card had come up in a similar situation. Janis Walworth had asked me to take part in a workshop for transsexual and non-transsexual lesbians, and when we asked, in a reading of the night before,

"What can we make together?" we received the Three of Rivers. At that time I felt this image signified something very deep, and that I would not know what it meant for some time. For several months, I continued to receive it in virtually every reading. When it returned, a year later, it seemed to come as a fulfillment of its promise.

The Three of Rivers had in fact appeared again, two months before, when I asked about another ritual, the "welcoming" ceremony at the second New Woman's Conference. In this ceremony, the women who have had surgery at least 12 months earlier welcome the women who have made this passage in the previous year. To fulfill the idea of "menstrual synchrony," we borrowed a practice from contemporary womens' rituals for a girl's first period. We took a long cord of red silk and wound it around each of our wrists to bind us together in the blood rite of surgery.

Now, in Denmark, I asked my friend if she had a red cord or ribbon in the house. Significantly, she found a sash made from braiding two red cords together, a symbol of our two experiences of womanhood joined as one.

Three more cards from the Tarot reading deserve mention. The first was the Star, which in Shining Woman Tarot shows the Greek Goddess Persephone, who returns each year from the Land of the Dead to restore life to the Earth. Persephone has special meaning for me. The festival held in Her honor was called the Eleusinian Mysteries. Two years ago, when I visited Greece, I and another woman celebrated these mysteries at Persephone's sacred place, Eleusis, arriving there, without plan, on the first day. Exactly one year later, I found myself leading the first welcoming at the first New Woman's Conference.

In the myth of Persephone, the young goddess is kidnapped into the Land of the Dead. According to some accounts, she marries Dionysus, the God of ecstasy. When she returns to the living, she comes back as a queen, powerful in Her own truth.

Persephone seems to me to be a true model for New Women. To go through transition, we must allow our old selves to die. We must descend to a darkness of confusion, of joy, but also fear. There we "marry" the ecstasy of our new lives. Indeed, Dionysus was the God of transgendered people, who

crossed the rigid lines of identity in a wild leap. And for many of us, we do not return fully to the world of the living until we pass through the ritual of surgery, which occurs in the darkness of anesthesia.

To honor Persephone, Helle Agathe and I brought biscuits and fruit, for, according to myth, the Goddess's return marked the beginnings of agriculture. For other tools, we simply collected stones as we walked, finding some that resembled the carved stone Goddesses found in prehistoric caves, and others whose markings suggested human faces or eyes. I chose five stones, for another card in the reading, the Five of Stones, which speaks of deep inner truth.

The final card to mention is the Lovers, which in the Shining Woman Tarot shows a human and an angel in a wild kiss. To me, this card reminded me that SRS is an act of passion, and that for many of us it liberates our sexuality. It reminded me as well that surgery, as Dallas Denny has said, is a "religious experience," touching something very spiritual within us and uniting it to our needs and lives as ordinary women. Finally, the Lovers invoked Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love, whose myth links us to the practices of "transsexuals" in the prehistoric and ancient worlds. According to the story, Aphrodite was created when the God Kronos severed the genitals of the oppressive Sky God, Ouranos, and threw his male members into the sea. The action stirred up a foam on the waves, and from this foam rose Aphrodite, the perfect female. Now, we know that in Canaan, Turkey, and other places, anatomical males would sever their male organs and take on female identities in the service of the Goddess. And around the world, shamans cross gender lines as part of their initiations. The story of Aphrodite suggests a link to these archaic traditions.

We began our journey of initiation with a walk through the woods to the top of the cliffs, and then a steep climb down flights of stairs to the beach. After walking by the water for about fifteen minutes, we came to a place where several fallen branches formed a semicircle opening out to the waves. We decided that this Moon shape offered the perfect site for our ceremony. I laid down the five stones in the form of a star. Earlier, on the train, I had written the names of five friends whom I had told about the ritual: "Ann,

Rachel, Dallas, Denise, Angela." I realized that the first initials spelled ARDDA, one of the names of the Northern European Earth Goddess. So as well as the five stones for the community of New Women, I set down a large stone suggestive of the Goddess. Helle Agathe then put down a stone whose form resembled an elegant sculpture of the lower part of a woman's body. With each stone, we called on Ardda to give the strength of the Earth to the individual women and to all women.

We then wound the cord around our wrists, letting the ends hang loose so that all women, past and present, transsexual and non-transsexual, might join us in celebrating the Goddess and Her daughters. Joining hands, we raised our arms to the ocean—in Helle Agathe's words, "To praise the Sea from whence we came." I offered a short prayer to Aphrodite.

*Mother of Passion, Mother of Change,
Golden with the light of desire.
Rising and falling in the sea blood of
women.*

We asked Her to bless our ritual and the path of New Women everywhere. I spoke of Christine Jorgensen, of what she had meant to all her "daughters," and Helle Agathe said how Christine had made it possible for so many to become the women they were always meant to be, and that this had added to the lives of all women.

We then asked the Goddess for gifts—not for ourselves, but for others. We asked for such things as joy, healing, and fulfillment for each other, for lovers, and for friends. Finally, we asked the Goddess to bless the spirit of Christine Jorgensen.

The idea of gifts led us to Persephone, who returned to the world of light with gifts of food and new life. As we shared the food we'd brought, we thanked Persephone for showing women the way of courage and transformation. Finally, we stood once more before the sea and offered a final prayer before ceremonially opening our circle. Leaving the stones behind as witnesses, we walked back along the beach and climbed the stairs to the top of the cliff. As we followed the path, Helle Agathe commented to me that the Goddess was never remote or distant, but always present, always accessible, in the many sides of nature and in our own lives. ☽

*A woman now, I
have been man,
youth, and boy.*

—*Catallus* (ca 84-54 b.c.e.)

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The Gallae of the Magna Mater

by Margaret Dierdre O'Hartigan

Imagine, if you can, what it might be like to live in a culture that worships the Eternal Feminine. Imagine an entire religion based upon that worship. Imagine that the highest honor is to serve the Goddess as her priestess and that those who do so are held in awe and respect because they who once were men have changed their sex and forever after live as women to serve the Mother of the Gods. Imagine, if you can, that the greatest act of devotion is a sex-change operation.

What you've just imagined is no fantasy, but history—our history and an integral part of the history of Western civilization.

Surprised? You should be. Perhaps what is most surprising about all of this is that the knowledge of the Magna Mater and her transsexual priestesses is the result of neither recent archaeological discovery nor the application of space-age technology to the shattered remnants of ancient civilizations. This knowledge is part of the legacy of Western culture bequeathed us from the glory that was Rome. All of this has been known for centuries. Indeed, most of it has never been lost.

The worship of the Great Mother and her priestesses is the most completely known of all the ancient mystery religions—and we have the priestesses of the Mother themselves to thank for this. Their rite of self-castration and subsequent change of sex was so fascinating to the Roman mind that some of the most famous of the Classical writers saw fit to leave accounts of it, among them Livy in his *History of Rome*, Lucretius, and the most renowned of Roman poets, Catallus. Even the early Christian church could not refrain from commenting on the gallae, as the priestesses were called, and their Goddess.

The Goddess in question is Cybele; in Greek, she is called Kybeleia or Kybele. Her worship began back in the Neolithic era in Anatolia (part of Ancient-day Turkey), where the Phrygians called her Matar Kubleya. The Romans called her Mater Magna Deum Idaea, but she is more commonly known as Magna Mater—the Great Mother.

Her arrival in Rome was credited with the salvation of the Eternal City. Near the end of the third century before the present era, the fortunes of Rome were at their lowest. Hannibal had invaded Italy in 217 b.c.e., and controlled much of southeast Italy; if he chose to march on Rome, he would

undoubtedly take the city. In desperation, the Sibylline Books were consulted and, according to Livy, promised that the invader "could be driven from Italy and conquered if the Idaean mother were carried to Rome." As a result, the small black stone which represented the deity was brought from the Phrygian city of Pessinus, and with Her, the first gallae to serve in Rome.

Under protection of the Magna Mater, Rome flourished. The harvest that year in Her presence in Rome was phenomenal, while in the very next year, Hannibal was driven from the peninsula.

Over the centuries, Her standing within first the Republic and subsequently the Empire grew greater—yet despite the increasing inroads of the religion, Rome forbade its citizens the sex-changing role of the gallae, requiring the importation of priestesses from Asia, until the Emperor Claudius removed all restrictions on participation. However, many other Eastern religions were also making their way to Rome, among them, Christianity.

The amount of information that has come to us from that time is truly amazing. The very words spoken during various rituals of the Mother's honor are preserved for us: *I have eaten from the drum/ I have drunk from the cymbal/ I have carried the sacred dish/ I have stolen into the inner chamber.*

There exist detailed accounts of the seven-day festival held at the vernal equinox in honor of the Goddess. Extensive archaeological evidence has come from many parts of the ancient world; there even exist contemporary portraits of the gallae themselves.

So why haven't you heard any of this before, you ask? Well, for one thing, although priestesses of the Magna Mater still walked the streets of ancient cities as late as Augustine's time, the increasingly powerful Christian church did not appreciate the competition. Worship of the Mother, along with other beliefs, was under constant attack by the Church.

After a protracted period of Christian rule, no less a personage than the Emperor Julian restored the Mother to Her place of honor; fascinated by the

priestesses, Julian wrote theological tracts on the meaning their transformation held for non-gallae. But Christianity was a rising tide, and the last public performance of the Mother's rites was held in the last decade of the fourth century—over 600 years after Her arrival in Rome. The Christians interpreted the sacred meal of bread and wine served from Her sacred tympanum and cymbal to be but a demonic parody of the Christian Eucharist. The site of Her main sanctuary in Rome bears the weight of the Basilica of Saint Peter today.

Probably the greatest blow of the Christians to the worship of Cybele, however, was their prohibition against Her priestesses. Without them, there could be no celebration of the rites of Attis at the vernal equinox; without them, there could be no individual worship of the Mother at Her shrines.

The suppression of one religion by another is not the only explanation why the gallae have been invisible to us for so long. At the base of their invisibility lies a case of mistaken identity.

Writers such as Catallus had no problem with the concept of a change of sex and made a point of referring to Mother's chosen in the feminine form *gallae*, rather than the masculine *galli*. "He cut off his testicles with a sharp flint. She, then, aware of her limbs without the man..." Writers critical of the gallae, however, from Church fathers to modern-day historians, make a point of labeling these priests "eunuchs" and persist in the use of the masculine *galli*.

This tendency to denigrate who and what the Mater's priestesses really were should come as no surprise. Like the temple of Diana at Ephesus or of Astarte at Heirapolis, many near-Eastern and Mediterranean fertility goddesses were served by priestesses for whom one criteria of holding office was that they undergo a change of sex. It is for this reason that those religions implacably opposed to the existence of a goddess, Judaism and Christianity, prohibited any actions related to the creations of these priestesses. Deuteronomy's vehement proscription, "A woman shall not wear that which

pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment; for whosoever doeth these things is an abomination unto the Lord thy God" was as a direct result of such religious practices going on around the Jews and subsequently the Christians.

There are people even today—rude people to be sure—who insist I am nothing more than a eunuch myself, and make a point of referring to people like me as "he." So it is with the gallae of the Magna Mater. There are too many examples of eunuchs in the pages of history for us not to recognize them when we see them, from the court of the Chinese emperors to the Seraglio of the Ottoman Empire and the castrati of the Catholic Church choirs and Italian opera. Eunuchs are men who have been castrated. Nonetheless, they remain men. Above all, eunuchs are victims, for they are invariably altered against their will for the purposes of someone else. That is a far cry from the likes of the gallae, who chose to change sex to honor and serve their Goddess.

The usual rationale given for the self-castration of the gallae is that they were impersonating Attis' self-castration under the pine tree sacred to the Mother; then again, the explanation is sometimes offered that they were so ordered by their Goddess to spread awe among men. The explanations given by historians as to who was so chosen is that individuals within the crowd of onlookers at the public rites were, in the words of sir James Frazer, writing in *The Golden Bough*, so moved that "many a one did that which he little thought to do when he came as a holiday spectator." Lucian says, "Men who have come simply to watch subsequently perform this act." Frazer explains, "When the tumult of emotion had subsided and the man had come to himself again, the irrevocable sacrifice must often have been followed by passionate sorrow and lifelong regret."

Frazer has no grounds for such supposition, for there exist no records of what the gallae themselves thought of their transformations. Nor does his conclusion explain why a man filled

with regret would nonetheless continue the transformation by taking up womens' clothes and habits. It is quite apparent that Frazer and the other historians are resistant to the notion that there could be people who, far from mourning castration, would welcome it and the ensuring feminization it would engender. I suspect there was just as much self-selection amongst the gallae as is the case with both modern-day transsexuals and the hijra in India. There would still be every reason for working oneself into a fever pitch of excitement in order to go through with a self-castration already decided upon. How much easier to have had the benefit of a supportive environment complete with music, chanting, and the presence of others who had already undergone the process! What contemporary observers of the incipient gallae took for sudden impulse could very well simply reflect the observers' lack of knowledge of both the procedure and the participants' prior intent, while still accurately describing the necessity for quick action.

After the surgery, the neophyte was fed a diet consisting solely of milk, symbolizing the new-born babe. This is similar to the hijra of India, who traditionally undergo castration in their transformation from men into vehicles of the divine power of the Mata, the Mother Goddess. The term for the Indian surgery, "nirvan," translates to "rebirth." The recipient is fed the diet given women after childbirth—sugared tea only for three days, and then the gradual reintroduction of solid foods.

It is a mistake to attempt to rationalize the priestesses' changing as but an imitation of Attis; this ignores that fact that Attis, who was merely human, did not survive his own castration, let alone go on to become a woman. It is the Magna Mater Herself who changed sex, becoming Agdistis in order to impregnate Attis' mother and so "sire" Attis.

Changing sex is the prerogative of the supernatural; any number of gods and goddesses from all times and places have changed sex when it suited their purposes. It is the act of sex-changing itself, and not the fact of

being female, which qualified the gallae to serve the Mother. The gallae represented the divine aspect because they had become, in a sense, supernatural themselves, accomplishing that which most mortals cannot do: transforming themselves from one form of humanity to another.

Time and again, in various cultures and times around the globe, it is the places where worlds meet—twilight, the strand, the new year, the inter-sexed—which are believed to be in touch with the body. Sadly, the concept of the gallae is one aspect of ancient religion against which prejudice and misinformation have been allowed to run rampant and often even encouraged in the mistaken belief that to be anti-gallae and anti-sex change is to be pro-feminist. Nothing could be further from the truth. Despite feminist writers such as Merlin Stone portraying the gallae as an example of men usurping functions and positions traditionally held by women in the course of the rise of patriarchy, there is no archaeological or historical evidence that a usurpation of this priestly role occurred. The role of the gallae extends back into the shadow of pre-history; far from being the precursor to a patriarchal religion, or the remnant of a matriarchal one, the worship of Cybele and her son Attis was egalitarian in nature, initiating both men and women into the mysteries, whereas those faiths with a masculine god and priesthood, such as Mithraism, Judaism, and Christianity are also those most indisposed towards both women and the possibility of changing sex.

Mainstream historians are dedicated to the status quo, and one method of supporting that status quo is to perpetrate the myth that those of us the state disapproves of have no history or traditions of our own. Especially, it is to be kept from common knowledge that what today's society disapproves of could have ever been looked upon with approval and appreciation.

Sex changing is erroneously believed to have begun in this century, in large part because of a medical establishment eager to discover new

"disorders" to diagnose. One reason the Native American concept of the berdache has found such favor with transsexual and transvestic people of European descent is that we imagine ourselves bereft of a tradition of our own beyond the medical model of transsexualism. As I hope I have shown here, such is not the case. This is not to say we need to longer identify with people like us from other cultures, but we need to do so aware of our own birthright; as equals, not as beggars.

The same forces within the Church and academia that have denied the historical evidence of our existence have also worked to destroy the indigenous people like us in other lands. Perhaps now we can let them know who we are and stand in solidarity with them in their own struggle without feeling the need to appropriate their past or speak for them. The past we need to appropriate is our own, and the people we need to speak for are our own, for if there is one thing that being both male and then female has taught me, it is that no one who has not gone through a similar transformation can be trusted to explain or speak for us. Our experience of the human condition encompasses and extends so far beyond most people's lives that surely the ancients were correct in ascribing to us the highest honor of serving the Great Mother.

When I look upon the image of a galla carved in stone and taken from the Appian Way, I'm gazing upon the image of a woman in whose features I recognize my own and whose life more closely resembled mine than do either of ours to the majority of our contemporaries. In that instant I sense that although 1700 years may separate us, she is my sister and I am hers, and in that sense we are both priestesses of the Great Mother, for we have both been male and become female, servants of the Eternal Feminine. Although her voice has long been still, I know what she would say and I will say it for her, for I, too, have the right to say: *I have stolen into the inner chamber.*

And so have you.
Imagine that. ♀♂

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Interview with Anne Bolin, Ph.D.

by Dallas Denny

Dr. Anne Bolin is an anthropologist who teaches at North Carolina's Elon College and does research in women's bodybuilding, which she categorizes as a frontier in which women are redefining what it means to be a woman. In the spirit of participant-observation, Anne herself is a bodybuilder.

Anne's doctoral research was also a participant-observation study. She attended meetings of the "Berdache Society," a fictional name for a male-to-female transsexual support group in an undisclosed Midwestern city. Her dissertation was published by Bergin and Garvey in 1988 with the title *In Search of Eve: Transsexual Rites of Passage*.

Anne brought a new and important perspective to transsexualism. Because she is not a clinician, her interactions with transsexual people took place in the real world rather than in the artificial and highly structured treatment setting which had previously generated the majority of the literature of transsexualism. She discovered that many of the clinical "truisms" of transsexualism were not supported by her observations. For instance, just as in any other diverse group of women, the members of the Berdache Society had a wide variety of personal styles, modes of dress, and feminine presentations ranging from ingenue to matron to seductress to business executive to earth mother. She did not find the exaggerated feminine characteristics and stereotyped modes of dress so often reported in the clinical literature.

In fact, when Anne looked at the interactions between caregivers and transsexual persons, she discovered that each party had objectives which affected the relationship. Caregivers served as "gatekeepers," and transsexual persons had to convince the caregivers to open the gates. For this, they used a variety of tactics, including the stereotyped feminine presentations which have been so often written up in medical journals and which their caregivers expected. The caregivers seemed to have "clinical blinders" which kept them from seeing what was actually happening. In fact, transsexual persons themselves often looked through the same blinders.

The importance of *In Search of Eve* is that it reframed gender dysphoria, enabling those who bothered to look to see that transsexualism is much more than a phenomenon of patients sitting in waiting rooms in doctors' offices. Transsexual persons come in all shapes and sizes and they need not conform to the expectations placed on them by psychologists and physicians.

We interviewed Anne in the summer of 1991 at her home in Burlington, North Carolina. We began by asking a question which had been on our mind for some time.

CQ: Anne Bolyn was one of the wives of Henry the Eighth. Are people always remarking on the similarities of your names?

Bolin: Yes they are, and there is an interesting story behind my name. My mother gave it to me on purpose. She's Italian. During World War II, she emigrated to England, where she worked for the BBC. She met my father there, and must have been impressed with his name, which was George, the same as Anne Bolyn's brother, with whom Anne was accused of having incest. So she named me Anne on purpose. I have a picture of Anne Bolyn on my office door.

CQ: Who were your biggest influences in the field of anthropology?

Bolin: Oh, strong women figures! Ruth Benedict, who was truly a pioneer. She never really fit in with her culture or her society. And her very close friend, who also is a very famous woman anthropologist, Margaret Mead. Both have influenced me a great deal, and they've influenced the field as well. They stood outside their time. Margaret Mead went off in 1928 to Samoa, when women just did not do things like that. Benedict and Mead are truly pioneering women—lineage elders. They had the kind of perspective that comes from being able to stand outside your own culture.

CQ: As you did when you were working on your doctoral dissertation, which later became your book, *In Search of Eve*. You did a participant-observation study with male-to-female

transsexual people. You studied another culture without having to leave the country. I know you talk about it in your book, but tell us again: how did you get interested in working with transgendered people?

Bolin: In the early '70s, I wrote my master's thesis, which was entitled *God Save the Queen: A Study of a Homosexual Community*. In 1972, it was not particularly popular to write about this subject. But it was the most incredible of times. I had the opportunity to be the token heterosexual in the gay liberation front. I was, I think, the only heterosexual in the front. It was the result of having a friend in anthropology. He would take me out on weekends. We would go to the gay bars. He assured me that he was not gay, but he had gay friends he was sure I would like; maybe I could do one of my anthropology papers on them. Later, he revealed to me that he was gay.

So I ended up doing my honors paper in anthropology on the gay community as I came to know it through participant observation. It was his friendship which led me to pursue it for a master's thesis.

By that time, I was getting interested in gender in anthropology, and I noticed that there was not a lot of information available. It turned out that one of my mentors, the late Dr. Omar Stewart, who was the expert on peyotism in the United States, had written an article on homosexuality. He had looked at the cross-cultural record on the expression of homosexuality. I also ran across a little book called *Mother Camp* by Esther Newton, who reported on the phenomenon of transgendered people in the gay community—gay male crossdressers. It was a fascinating account, and it started me thinking about gender identity.

I got into the literature, and found that there were some real definitional problems. Our labels emerge from psychiatric traditions, which are firmly rooted in bipolar Western notions of gender. There are two genders—male and female—and those are the only two choices. In other cultures, there are other, supernumary

genders—alternative genders. There were gender options out there in the world besides just two.

I began to think that it would be a good dissertation topic to study those who were expressed their gender in alternative ways in the gay community. I was originally going to go to Hawaii to study ethnic variations through a gender clinic there. There is a native indigenous role, the Mahu, in which a person, usually a male, takes on the characteristics of another sex. I thought I might find the Hawaiian tradition of the Mahu overlaid with Western conceptions of homosexuality and transsexualism. And in Hawaii, there are other cultural traditions as well—for instance, a large Asian population, and a Caucasian population. I thought Hawaii had fascinating research populations. I still think so. I think one of the things missing in this field is cross-cultural data. In terms of those who get sex reassignment surgery, there seems to be a definite white, middle-class bias—the people who can afford to get it, get it. What about our Hispanic population, the Native American population, the Black population? Where do they fit in?

The Native Americans are particularly interesting, because they have a berdache tradition, in which a person can become the other sex, when there are two, or a third or fourth sex, depending upon how many categories the culture has. How do our psychiatric categories work in such a situation? We need to consider cultural variations.

CQ: Do you think transsexualism is becoming a cultural institution in the Western world?

Bolin: How are you defining cultural institution? Are you asking if transsexualism might becoming a third gender category for humans?

CQ: Yes. Certainly, the term is of relatively recent origin, but most Americans have by now at least seen transgendered persons on television. Many have had some personal contact with one or more transsexual persons. Do we now have a new category, with a new set of social expectations?

Bolin: That is an absolutely fascinating question! It even relates to the

issue of our stereotyped conceptualization of gays and lesbians. Are they also considered transgendered populations? Because the stereotypes—and the stereotypes are not dead—are associated with gendered kinds of behaviors: how people look. On the other hand, peoples' histories, and how we perceive them, are important. So—do we have another gender category, or are transsexual people and homosexuals perceived to be “sick” people of their gender? Is there becoming an alternative gender category, or are these people continuing to be stigmatized members of the two categories we acknowledge?

If there was another category out there, that would be a very interesting kind of thing. We have only two categories. It makes absolute sense that there be a surgical option for someone who feels conflicted enough to want sex reassignment surgery in order to have the full experience as we define it in the American culture, to be a woman—which is to be a person with a vagina, or a man, which is to be a person with a penis. I'm just saying that people with vaginas are considered women, and the surgery sustains our two category system. But could we in fact have a new category, or categories? We could have a third gender, or two alternative genders—another way of being a man, so that people would not necessarily go so far as to have the surgery. They could be social men with clitorises and vaginas. And could we not have another category of social women with penises? Could that be a possibility in our culture? I think not at this point, because we are so biocentric—that is, permeated with our belief in biology and genitalia as the sine quo non of gender. But I do see murmurings of this in the transgender approach and in androgyny.

CQ: Here's a related question: Women's roles in American society have changed. If you were to take today's woman in her manner of expression and dress and compare her to a woman of 1920's America, she would seem highly transgendered. Largely, the change in female gender role has been attributed to economics—the Rosie the

Riveter phenomenon of World War II, when American women first entered the work force in large numbers. Do you see this kind of slippage occurring for men, and could it be done outside an economic context? In other words, with a sufficient number of gender pioneers and gender activists, do you think a change could be brought to the perception of what men are like in America?

Is the feminist movement a threat? You'd better believe it. It's a big threat. When my male students get concerned in my classes on gender and sex, I tell them. "You bet it's a threat. It's going to change everything."

Bolin: The Changing Men movement is a very interesting movement. The men's movement is not really a political movement. It is very different from the feminist movement. It is not concerned with dominance and power. These are men who are working from the inside. Their primary focus seems to be on the kind of emotional crippling that has occurred as a result of the more rigid stereotypes about expressing themselves emotionally. From my perspective, men and women have the same sets of emotions, but we learn to express them differently. What the men's movement seems to be addressing is in fact this very issue of the denial of expression of men's nurturing qualities. I think that a political statement needs to be made here. Right now, from what I understand, this incipient movement is composed of small groups of men who are learning to express themselves, exploring their relationships with women, getting in touch with the “natural” pasts.

Have we made headway? I think things are changing. We are seeing paternity leave. But are men taking advantage of it? We've made some steps forward, but it does seem that we have also taken steps back. There is a lot of regional variation in the United

States, so far as men's roles are concerned. I don't want to engage in regional stereotypes here, but I do think we need to be aware of local climates, where we find pockets with less sex role disparity between males and females, and areas where there is greater sex role disparity. We have to look at these differences according to class and status.

I do see it is very difficult on a personal level. It is a constant struggle to have an egalitarian relationship and not slip into sex role stereotypes. An example is the Cinderella complex, where one waits for one's knight to come and rescue one—no matter how professional one is as a woman. Those are things that many in the baby boomer population have grown up with. I think that for male persons, no matter how egalitarian they are trying to be, it is easy to slip into traditional male roles as well. Males have more to lose, in terms of power, and women have a whole lot more to gain as they proceed.

Is the feminist movement a threat? You'd better believe it. It's a big threat. When my male students get concerned in my classes on gender and sex, I tell them. “You bet it's a threat. It's going to change everything.” But what do you get from it? You get partnerships in life. You're both on equal footing. You can work it out with your partner according to your different likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses. But to break roles down just because of some gender script is not the way to achieve egalitarian status. I do think that ultimately, for women to achieve equal status, we're going to have to get equal pay. And in a capitalist society like ours, when women have achieved economic equality, then we will be a long way towards achieving equality in other areas. I think we're in the process of achieving economic parity. We're a long way from achieving political parity, but we're making inroads. And as far as our somatic selves, that is the last area. It's where my present research is going. It's the ultimate area for change. We are denied what physical efficacy. We are on our way to achieving some economic, and hopefully political equality, but

we're still denied our physical selves, our bodies, and our ability to feel ourselves in the universe.

CQ: Much of your current research has to do with women bodybuilders, and you're a bodybuilder yourself. How did you get interested in that? Why women bodybuilders? How did you get interested in that, and what is the significance of bodybuilding for the expression of gender?

Bolin: My experience working on *In Search of Eve* was the most wonderful experience in any endeavor. I have never learned so much in my life. I stopped taking gender for granted. I mean, you can talk all you want in theory about gender as a learned and constructed process, about gender as cultural, but nothing brings it home like living it. The people who helped me understand it the way they did created a whole new set of questions for me, about gender, and about the limits of gender, and about taking it in the direction of the physical self, and the relationship of the biological to the cultural. About how we construct the biological in our society, and the meaning we give to biology, and the meaning we give to bodies. So when I saw this movie called *Pumping Iron II: The Women*, I found it very interesting, because in it was a woman bodybuilder, Bev Francis, who is the strongest woman in the world. They zoom in on her, and when you look at her physique, the first response—and I've shown this to numerous students—their first response to her is horror. She has the muscles of a man. In fact, my students will say, "She looks like a man." She looks like a man as we in our society picture men with large muscles to look. She was a former power lifter, so she has very big muscles. So she seriously challenges our notion of femininity in this movie.

At first you're horrified by her, because she looks like a quote "freak". And of course the issue of steroids always comes up. Some of my students said, "She certainly looks like she did steroids. She's a female taking male hormones."

I thought, "Well, I know a little bit about that."

I don't know if Bev took male hormones, but her physique was definitely the kind of physique that a pre-operative female-to-male might think would be one way to be a man, would definitely be desirable. And yet, as I listened to this woman talk, she was talking about just seeing how much she could subject her body to. And I thought, "This is very alien. I'm a woman, and I've always been taught to stop when it hurts. I've always been taught not to push myself physically. To get out of physical education class. To use my period as an excuse." I had always been taught this, and here I was listening to these words. And rather than alienate me, Bev Francis really intrigued me. And I know she alienates my students at first, but as they listen to her story, they begin to develop an empathy for her. She is truly challenged by pushing herself to the limit. That's where she has really excelled. And she was punished for being a freaky-looking bodybuilder. In fact, in the show in the movie, she came in last place. We are also presented with several other archetype women, one of whom is Rachel McLish, who has muscles, but is very quote "feminine." If you see the movie, you will really see some gender stereotypes being enacted here. I thought, "That's anthropology."

I had never in my life been in a gym. But I thought, "This is a very intriguing idea. Here we have women who want to get muscles. Some of them want to get muscles as long as they are 'feminine' muscles. But what are feminine muscles? What does that say? How far is too far? We have these two archetypes. Bev Francis has gone 'too far.' Rachel McLish hasn't." I decided I would like to explore this.

CQ: But back when you were a graduate student, you didn't go to Hawaii. You stayed where you were and studied transsexual people.

Bolin: Yes, I stayed in the United States, in a large midwestern city.

CQ: Because transsexual people were there?

Bolin: Yes. Because I found them. It was wonderful. I was still working on my Ph.D. I was teaching sex and gender

courses at a university, and I called up the gay community one day, and I put in my order. You'll like this. I said, "Well, I would like some speakers. I would like a lesbian woman, a gay male. Can you help? I would like an S&M person. And do you happen to have a transsexual?" And they said, "Oh, yes, we have all of those. And we have a therapist who works with transsexuals. And we have some transvestites. We'll send some people over to you." And sure enough, in the course of two lectures, I had gays and lesbians, I had an S&M practitioner, and they sent me over—I'll never forget that day. I describe it in the book. They sent me over a therapist, and a pre-operative transsexual, and a transvestite, and I had no idea who was who. I had never ever met a transsexual before in my life. In fact, I kind of pictured the therapist as one of the cultural women, even though she was the one who had been born and raised as a female.

I told them I was interested in doing my dissertation research on transsexual people. So they invited me to their group. It was incredible. I was terrified. I had no idea what to expect. I was sitting out in my little Volkswagen. It was freezing cold. I had on my bold slingback high heels, had to walk in them in the snow. Everything was so vivid that night. I hadn't known what to expect, whether or not to look like an anthropologist nerd. I expected something quiet, subdued, and I walked into this Christmas party. And there they were. A whole group of people who identified themselves as transsexuals and transvestites, and they were warm to me, and invited me in. I told them I was an anthropologist, and I said, "I'd really like to know what this is all about. Who are you?" I mean, the basic anthropological question: "Who are you? What are you up to? What is this all about?"

They took a vote to see whether they accepted me to come into the group to study with them.

In this group, there were two identity options—transsexual and crossdresser. In this culture, we have transvestites and transsexuals. Harry Benjamin's model of a continuum I think is a good concept, despite its Western psychiatric bias. When you

study other cultures, you see that there are many kinds of options out there. In fact, different cultures don't even define the self in the same way. In many cultures, genitals will serve as your original designation as a male or female, but in terms of whether you are going to be a man or woman, the work you choose to do may be far more

My experience working on In Search of Eve was the most wonderful experience in my life. I have never learned so much in my life. I stopped taking gender for granted. I mean, you can talk all you want in theory about gender as a learned and constructed process, about gender as cultural, but nothing brings it home like living it.

important a determiner of gender than what genitals you have. For example, there is a wonderful tradition called woman marriage—and I like to use terms like wonderful liberally, because I'm so absolutely impressed with human diversity that I like to celebrate it all the time. There's a great capacity for variation by human beings. Woman marriage is well-known in African cultures like the Nuer. It serves as a recruitment strategy. A barren woman—and don't forget the name of the evolution game is of course reproduction and kinship and lineage—so a barren Nuer woman who cannot have children may take a woman for her wife, and she will become a social male and husband. The woman husband will make arrangements for her wife to have children, and she will become the social father of those children. So what we have is an opportunity for a woman to become not just a social male, but a father as well. How does an option such as woman marriage affect an individual? These women husbands are considered very good husbands. There needs to be more research in terms of what the relationships are like in the marriage. In terms of gender identity—what does it mean to be a social male? I mean, it's very nice that our researchers say, "So this is an opportunity for a Nuer woman to be a social male." But what does that mean? How do the Nuer construct gender as a category and how is sexuality expressed within these kinds of mar-

riages? Those questions are still not answered.

And there are some other options as well. They show us the multiplicity and complexity of gender and how cultures provide social identities. Into such options are squeezed a pantheon. Serena Nanda gives a fascinating account of the hijras of India. The

hijras show us these multiple layers of social identity and personal identity, of nature being shaped by culture.

The hijra caste originated from the hermaphroditic status of its members. For us in the West, a hermaphrodite is someone who is born with physical characteristics of both sexes. The genitalia are very ambiguous. The hijra are a caste of people born with ambiguous genitalia. However, there is an alternate route so that non-hermaphrodites may have surgery to become like hijras. These people are not born hijras, but they too can achieve a hermaphrodite-type status. Other avenues allow for hijra pretenders.

The Navajo nadle also challenge our bipolar gender paradigm. They have a hermaphroditic status that is valued by the culture. The Navajo people have a recessive gene in which some people are born with ambiguous genitalia. These people become nadle. But both biological males and biological females can also assume the status of nadle without modifying their genitalia. If you are born into the category, it's on the basis of what the genitalia look like. However, one can become a nadle, even though the genitalia are not hermaphroditic. Biological males and females can become nadle pretenders

CQ: How do they become nadle?

Bolin: Nadle is a very special role that has certain behaviors and tasks associated with it.

CQ: So it's not a physical process, like it is for the hijras, who undergo surgery of the genitals?

Bolin: Absolutely not. It's a cultural process of behaving in ways in which nadle behave. Nadle are considered to be really good at babysitting, very good at economic tasks that traditionally are associated with females. They're allowed to do some tasks, but denied others. They're not allowed to go to war, as I recall. So it isn't a role where nadle take on the behaviors of the other sex, but rather a blended status. It has some characteristics from the male gender repertoire, and some from the female repertoire, and some unique to nadle. But it isn't based solely on genitalia.

Now what's really interesting is that nadle can marry and have relationships with either males or females, but they cannot have relationships with other nadle.

So what have we here? Five categories of people. We've got nadle, which is your hermaphrodite. Male nadle pretenders, female nadle pretenders, females, and males. But the nadle and nadle pretenders are really one category of personhood. They have the option of intimate relations with anyone but another nadle. The Navajo culture does not allow homosexuality. That is, they do not allow women to have sex with women, or men to have sex with men. But nadle are not considered women or men. Nadle are nadle. Thus a physically male nadle who has a sexual relationship with a non-nadle male is not in a homosexual relationship. So I hope this begins to show us that our concept of homosexuality as we know it is really inappropriate cross-culturally. When we begin to think, "Well, what do you mean, the same sex?" I'm sorry; nadle are not the same sex. Nadle are something else. They are nadle. And some of them may have the same genitalia as you, but they're not the same sex.

I think that should give us all a little bit more relativistic perspective on the world, to not be judgmental in our terms. So when you go to other cultures, you can't even use the term

homosexual in the same way. It's a completely different kind of thing. So Gilbert Herdt goes up to New Guinea—and these highland New Guinea types are known for hypermasculinity. We are talking about machismo culture par excellence.

CQ: With penis sheaths—

Bolin: —and institutionalized homosexuality. Where, in fact, every male in that society will go through a fairly long process at some stage in his life, where at one point he will become a fellator, and then later a fellatee, or the fellated upon. Are these men homosexual? We can't assume that. It is such a different experience for them. It is what all men do. Sperm is an important substance, and boys must acquire it from other men, since they aren't born with it. Therefore, young boys must ingest it, so that they can continue to have it. They believe that later in life, women diminish the sperm. Sounds like football coaches, doesn't it?

So here again, we have the ethnographic spectrum showing us that we have to really be careful with our assumptions. Even though our clinical terms are really meant to help us be scientific and impartial, they are bound up in our own Euro-American gender paradigm and don't apply cross-culturally because other cultures define sexuality and self differently.

CQ: Speaking of Euro-American notions of gender, what did you think when you started discovering things that weren't reported in the clinical literature? You found that a lot of these things in the clinical literature just weren't holding for your subject population. What were your reactions then?

Bolin: What I thought was going on was that clinicians are in a very special kind of relationship with the quote "treatment community." As an anthropologist, I'm not in a relationship with the treatment community. I was in a relationship with people who became my friends, or I wouldn't have been given the kind of information I put in my book. Although I maintained my scientific objectivity, I myself was transformed.

I necessarily had a very different type of relationship with transsexual persons than did clinicians. My field is anthropology. It's a very critical and self-aware discipline. We are critical of ourselves as anthropologists and cautious about other peoples' stories. We don't want to create exotic others. We want the diversity of voices to be heard in our accounts. But clinicians can also take the position of being self-aware and self-critical and stepping outside their own professions to analyze themselves and their discourses. That's the only way we're really going to begin to get a real feel and a real understanding for the humanistic attributes of science.

How do we tell other peoples' stories? Is it better for me to take somebody's narrative, translate it totally into my own scientific anthropology jargon, or is it better for me to intersperse throughout my story peoples' own words so that the reader has their vision and can hear their words? Is that better, or shall I just translate scientifically? Well, a little bit of both is what I have chosen. Caregivers could begin to be self-aware of their own circumstances—and I'm not being critical—but it would be interesting for therapists, who are incredibly self-aware people, to begin to look at themselves as part of the culture of the interaction patterns that occur between caregiver and patient. I think it would be really revealing. And this is occurring in the clinical literature. The reason I took such a different perspective is that I was an anthropologist. No one had to prove their gender identity to me. I simply accepted the group members for what they were. They were not my clients looking to me for guidance or a recommendation for surgery. It's not my position to decide to what degree someone is conflicted or whether the surgery is warranted. If you tell me you're a woman, I accept you for who you are, just as you accept me for who I am.

The transgendered people I worked with gave me my Ph.D. That's how I see it. So what can I give them? Well, hopefully, I can give them a book that will help other people who are in

a similar position by telling their stories in a way that is meaningful to the reader. I wanted their voices to be heard. When they were transsexual, their transsexual words are there, and as they become women, then their womens' words were there, too. They gave me so much. What could I do in return? I helped them with a history they hadn't experienced. I was happy to tell them what it was like from my perspective as a woman and an anthropologist.

CQ: When you got into the literature of transgender, what was your first impression? And as you continued to get into it, what was your evaluation of this literature?

Bolin: As I got into it, I thought that there was going to be some sort of model in which Mommies did it. A Mommy model, as it were. For example, the literature of homosexuality claimed that mothers smothered their little boys and made them homosexuals.

I discovered that transsexualism also had this theory attached to its etiology. Mother blame theories are based on traditional notions of parenting, including absentee fathers and over-protective mothers who violated their respective roles. The mothers are blamed for smothering and overprotecting their little boys, turning them into transsexuals with nurturance and love. And so I looked at those models. I saw a lot of them in the literature. And then I ran across Richard Green's work, and I was really impressed with his approach, because what he did was to look at behavioral patterns that went beyond the immediate family dynamics. He incorporated a contextual approach which included culture and society.

I finally centered on a social learning model—and you have to understand—I arrived at this from my examination of the literature. I had never met any transsexual persons at that point. I hypothesized that some are born with physically feminine characteristics which made them appear effeminate. I just didn't realize how much variability there was. I still think people get channeled into certain social careers. For example, if a male

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Gender Diversity

in the Wiccan Community

by Winterhawk (Da'nelle)

The Wiccan community in general understands that we, as humans, are made up of diverse qualities both male and female, and that there are endless combinations of these quantities manifest in the human condition. Wiccans also see these qualities as being reflected throughout the Universe from the Godhead down to the smallest particle. Starhawk, in the 10th Anniversary edition of *The Spiral Dance*, writes that in the original text she considered people to have a male self and a female self. Now she considers the self to be a blending of both male and female qualities.

In the sense of the Cabalist, those who are considered transgendered are traveling the Path of the Middle Pillar; that is to say they are traveling the road between male and female. The creation myths of Wicca state that She was first and everything came forth from Her and returns to Her. Taking this further, we can extrapolate that since we start out female in the womb, it is a direct link to Her—hence the saying, “As above, so below” (see sidebar on page 22—Ed.).

Across the U.S., there are covens that are strictly for women, gay men, gay women, or even transsexual people, but when the circles convene at a large gathering, all are welcomed with open arms. Several of the larger Wiccan gatherings have lately made a point of including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and “others” in addition to heterosexual participants.

There are some who contend that true “majikal” work in a circle cannot take place without the balance of one person being female and another being male. I personally would have to argue with that, seeing that we are all a blending of both male and female. I believe, as do many other Wiccans, that one can pull the God or the Goddess down on to a person regardless of his or her physical sex.

If you are transgendered and looking for a coven or group that will allow you to crossdress at a Sabbath, don't get your hopes up. Wiccan people, although very accepting of individual rights (“And it harm none, do as thou wilt”) are quite closed about the private workings of their individual circles and covens.

When I first came to Denver, it took the better part of a year to gain entry into the Wiccan community, much less to be accepted as a woman. The coven I am now associated with knows that I am transsexual. The coven does its rites "sky clad," and all who have sampled my energy say that it really is female. Telling the coven my story and the coven's acceptance of me goes along with one of the Wiccan Reads: "Thou shalt not enter the Circle without perfect love and perfect trust." So by this read, I had to tell them that I am a "New Woman."

The first two people who had to know were the High Priestess and Priest. They suggested that I not tell the other coveners until they found out from the others if I would be accepted on an individual basis. As it turned out, there was not a problem.

Some of the covens and groups that do not go sky clad may be easier for the transgendered person, but the Perfect Love and Perfect Trust thing comes into play. You'd have to tell them, even if you were post-operative. If you didn't tell, it would greatly affect the majik being produced.

Finding a particular group that will accept the transgendered person may take time. One may have to start his or her own tradition with regard to the crossdresser. The New Woman or New Man will have a better time of it simply because of the many physical changes which have taken place. This isn't to say that a man cannot experience the Goddess for himself. As Starhawk says, "It will invoke a very powerful change." ☸

Invoking the Goddess

Try some majik for yourself. I have developed a ritual that will bring down the Goddess on any person performing it. The ritual is as follows;

Preparation: Put on nice perfume and, if you do not want to do this sky clad, a nightgown or something that makes you feel feminine.

You will need:

One small bowl one-third filled with salt
One small bowl one-third filled with water
One 6" white taper candle in a candleholder
Something heat-proof in which to burn incense
One dram of Moon Oil, and Moon incense

(If you haven't got a good Wicca shop near you, you can get it from the shop listed below).

This ritual is to be done on a full moon.

Take the salt and, sticking the first two fingers of your right hand into the salt, say, "Creature of Earth, awaken ye into life. I banish all negativity from you so that it may harm none. As I Do Say So Mote it Be!" Then take three pinches of salt and drop them into the water, saying, "Creature of water, awaken ye unto life. I banish all negativity from you so that it may harm none. As I Do Say So Mote It Be!"

Take whatever you are using for a candleholder in your left hand and, using the fingers of the right hand, dip them into the water and touch the top of the candle, saying, "Creature of Light, awaken ye unto life. I banish all negativity from you so that it may harm none. As I Do Say So Mote It Be!" Do the same with whatever you are using for an incense burner, substituting the words "Creature of Fire" for "Creature of Light." (*For the beginner:* We now have Earth, Water, and Fire. The Air elemental is the Moon Oil you will use on the candle.)

Hold the candle in the middle. Dab some of the Moon Oil on your finger and touch the top of the candle, saying, "As Above." Then touch the bottom, saying, "So Below." Still holding the candle in the middle, dab some more Moon Oil on your finger and, in one movement from the middle, stroke the candle toward the tip. (Do not rub back and forth!) Do this three times. Then, from the middle to the base, the same way three times: once for each Goddess' name you will be calling out. Place the candle in the holder.

Set your candle and the incense burner facing north. (If you are not a beginner, a self-blessing ritual would help).

Light the incense and candle, and, holding the fullness of the moon in your thoughts, say:

Oh Goddess of Bright Shining Light,
My deepest wish on this Your night,
Is to fill me with Your deep desire,
That I may light the feminine fire.

Aphrodite, Isis, Arianrhod,
Take me down the path You trod.
Let me see the shining light
That is the woman's sacred rite.
By all the powers of land and sea,
As I do say, so mote it be.

Let the candle burn all the way down. You should feel the power of the Goddess and have a dream or vision of the feminine. Blessed be!

Moon Oil and Moon Incense can be purchased for \$8.00 total cost from Adriell's Alchemy, 3140 S. Parker Rd., Aurora, CO 80014 (Phone 303-369-9451).

Hermaphrodite's Love

by Jessa Bryan

The term hermaphrodite doesn't have much popularity amongst those outside our community. Usually, it has been used to ridicule us or to associate us with carnival freak shows. Sometimes, the word smacks of scientific labeling, as if for a butterfly pinned inside a display case. In early accounts of contact with Native American tribes, berdaches, in an attempt to describe their social role of "man-woman," were called hermaphrodites by anthropologists. Now the term has been appropriated by the medical profession to describe someone with the genitalia of both sexes. Unfortunately, the marvelous origin in Greek mythology of Hermaphrodite, a tale of merging of the sexes and a rebirth into a new way of being, goes unsung.

In searching out the tale of Hermaphrodite, the primary literary source is *The Metamorphoses*, written in 8 A.D. by Ovid, a poet of Augustan Rome. His narrative relates how the son of Hermes and Aphrodite was joined, against his will, with the nymph Salmacis after bathing in her pool. Yet Ovid only rendered his version from a much older oral tradition connected to a variety of ritual practices that still existed throughout the Mediterranean. In many instances, Hermaphrodite was seen as a result of a birth between Hermes (the Guide of Souls and the Trickster) and Aphrodite (The Goddess of Passion and Mother of Love). Ovid turns it into a tale of transformation. Perhaps he realized that one cannot be born in union, that there must be a process of joining, a *coming together* of male and female. Hermaphrodite starts out male, but merges with a female to become one being.

The archaic world visualized Hermaphrodite as a transgendered essence, as a woman who is also male. Various statues show Hermaphrodite as full-breasted and womanly, but with male genitalia. Artists portrayed her unique beauty, but within the spectrum of their spiritual imaginations. Many households at that time kept a small statue of Hermaphrodite inside the home, garlanded with flowers, as a blessing of sexual harmony (Delcourt, 1961).

The story of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis contains a myth told and retold from different perspectives for thousands of years, yet its core material remains potent even today. Those who tell the story shape it in their own way, sometimes with distortions, and sometimes with insightful enhancements. Ovid makes of it a personal tragedy of lost virility and woeful weirdness. For all of Ovid's charm and literary grace, he reduces the myth to an ironic fable.

Female energy overwhelms a resistant male, and he bemoans the change. In this version, merging is seen as weakening, and Hermaphroditus becomes less than a man. Ovid's story reflects his patriarchal biases. I love his book, but I believe the original tradition reflects a mutual desire and calling toward fulfillment, rather than Ovid's disapproving attitude.

James Hillman has said that for the Greeks, the Gods and Goddesses were not merely images inside the mind, but rather "living patterns" or "modes of being" which existed out in the world. Stories about their exploits were poetic dramas that contained meanings which penetrated the souls of those who, by necessity, were ready to receive the message. Even today, the patterns of the gods and goddesses enter us and shape our lives; a greater dynamic is at work. These patterns were active for our ancestors thousands of years ago, and will continue to be active generations hence.

Myths are not merely artifacts of personal psychology, but products of humanity at a more general and impersonal level. They are "a teaching concerning gods which is also a teaching concerning human beings" (Kerenyi, 1951). A myth is a traditional story which elucidates life experiences, and reflects both historical and metaphysical truths (Debrida, 1982). Myths are tellings and retellings, which contain seed images—*archetypes*—that provide revelations about the sources of who we two-leggeds are. *Arche* comes from the Greek root for origin and *type* means the making of a model. Archetype thus means the primary pattern from which those like it first originated (Downing, 1982).

This shouldn't be taken as something lost in the past. Archetypes exist as part of a "living system of interactions" where the potentials in Nature meet our personal experience. This is a belief in the *anima mundi*, the soul of the world, in which we exist and which lives in us. To know this soul we must engage the imagination and recover our sense of beauty. In this case, beauty refers to seeing particular things or processes in their essential

reality, as integral manifestations of Creation. As Hillman writes, "Beauty is the manifest *anima mundi*—it is neither transcendent to the manifest or hiddenly immanent within, but refers to appearances as such, created as they are, in the forms with which they are given, sense data, bare facts, Venus Nudata. Aphrodite's beauty refers to the luster of each particular event; its clarity, its particular brightness, that particular things appear at all and in the form in which they appear" (Hillman, 1981).

The Greek cosmos found meaning in an ordered arrangement of the universe, an aesthetic sensibility where everything fits in its own way. The passions that move the soul have their reason, and sensitize each of us to an intimacy with our particular place in the world. Archetypes put us in touch with a sense of self-identity beyond our own singularity. "We enact many myths in the course of our lives. We feel deeply the configurations of many stories. We are the playground of a veritable theater full of Gods and Goddesses. What do the Gods and Goddesses want with us? Our task is to incarnate them, become aware of their presence, acknowledge and celebrate their forms" (Miller, 1981).

From our transgendered community, one of the most profoundly healing moments is always that simple and newfound awareness that others like ourselves exist, and not just a few—but many, all across the globe. We never suspected this as we were growing up and thought we were merely failures, unable to conform to the social norm. As we have come to know of our collective situation, we have felt the deeper bond which connects us all. We share a way of life that is archetypal; our lives give form to a unique aspect of Gods and Goddesses. I feel we are pioneers in renewing this particular transgendered experience. Perhaps our era has modern tastes, but the experience is ancient and enduring.

We are learning how to value our lives, find wholeness, and remove the stigma of entrenched social prejudices. As a community we are looking

for clues to a heritage, to the beginnings of an honored tradition—our mode of being. As we work together, a sense of purpose inspires our community to shift the perspective from feeling "cursed" to feeling "blessed." Our healing will continue as we inquire into the particular beauty and celebrate our aspect in Nature's diverse spectrum.

The root-myth of Hermaphrodite conveys an experience of fusion where male and female join in unity, without losing either energy, and the spark of their union produces a sense of delight (Danielou, 1992). In its poetic drama, fundamental energies interact and ultimately transform into a new wholeness. A possibility is born where male and female enter each other and exist mutually in the soul, yet as one consciousness. Hermaphrodite incarnates our common fate, to be a union of sexes. We know the male, but we love the female—so much so that we don't just venerate—we try to embody femaleness. Our lives become *tuned into* the essence of femaleness, not merely an abstracted state of "femininity." The passion in our soul directs us toward the female world with all of its many experiences. This differs from talking about gender as a sex role inventory of masculine and feminine attributes. I believe that being transgendered is a soul process distinct from current cultural behaviors.

We dedicate ourselves to living in the female world as much as possible, in order to *be who we are*. Fulfillment resides in this quest which reveals our true character. This is the hero-heroine's journey that releases inborn potential and shapes the content of each life (Campbell, 1988). Our adventurer leaves the male world and travels into the female experience. No one does this unless they possess a particular character, and we happen to be the ones compelled to take this journey. If we resist its calling, we suffer or get twisted by our avoidance. Perhaps our Grail is a femininity which shines from the soul's happiness. By surrendering to that which we love, we grow to find our true story and its own real beauty.

The Story of Hermaphrodite & Salmacis

(With a curtsy to Ovid)

It has been said that a son was born of Hermes, Guide of Souls, and Aphrodite, Mistress of Passion. In his qualities shone the light of both his parents, and so he was called Hermaphroditus. He was raised on Crete by the nymphs of Mt. Ida, and grew to love mountains and places of water.

Though happy, Hermaphroditus sensed there to be a special calling for his life. When he turned fifteen, he decided to leave his native land and find his destiny.

In his travels throughout Asia Minor, a very ancient land, Hermaphroditus' enthusiasm took him to many shrines and sanctuaries by hidden streams and rivers. He never tired of honoring these beautiful places. He loved the company of their nymphs, and they loved his playful spirit.

After exploring Lycia, Hermaphroditus' adventures brought him to the southern coast of Caria, near Halicarnossos, where he learned about the beauty of the nymph Salmacis.

The pool of Salmacis was a most luxurious place. No swamp weeds or unkempt marshlands grew there. Instead, a lush garden and sweet grass thrived around its soothing waters. Salmacis loved to bathe in leisure and comb her hair with a boxwood comb; she loved to make herself pretty. Often, she would put on her silk gown, stretch her limbs, and look into her pool's mirror-like depths. She was not vain, but she enjoyed her voluptuous body.

All the other nymphs loved Salmacis and the enchanting beauty of her garden. Often, they would ask her to take up her arrows and painted quiver and go running in the hills. They said Artemis missed her kindly company. Salmacis loved the Maiden Huntress, but preferred to stay by her spring and weave garlands of flowers for her companions. She loved to make beautiful things for those she loved.

Then one day Salmacis saw Hermaphroditus walking toward her, full of grace and cheerful vigor. She sensed his profound appreciation of her beautiful waters and she wanted him to know her own spirit and to become her companion.

When he saw the beauty of the waters of Salmacis, Hermaphroditus instantly felt he had found the place of his heart's desire. Her garden seemed like home. He fell in love with the place and with her spirit.

And so they spent time together, delighting in their mutual friendship. They spent many a day tending to the flowers and exploring nearby mountains. As they swam in the beautiful waters, they saw themselves sparkling in each others' reflection. Oh, how they loved each other!

They were so moved by their happiness that they asked the powers of Heaven and Earth to allow that they might never be separated—that they might live together as one. They embraced, and the wish was granted; like vines entwining completely into one strong branch, they united their male and female spirits: no longer two, not one nor the other, but both as one. The garden surrounding them quickened from the joining of their souls, as if music flowed within the fiber of every plant. New life grew out of the old, a gift of love.

Artemis blessed the transformation. She asked that the waters be a magical place where the gift of "coming into life" would find its spirit. She gave to the spirit of the waters the power to call forth and guide.

But men cannot remain in Artemis' realm, except by living like Salmacis, a sister to one's companions and a daughter of the Great Mother. One must come to Artemis as She is. In Her realm all share the same love for Her wonders. Males who felt such love and sought this beauty would find fulfillment only as they lived as women. They, too, could become sisters to the Earth. Spring would be the time of their celebration. The Great Mother's love would be a garland of flowers around their hearts.

When the male and female came together out of love, then delight was born. The beauty of their delight would be felt everywhere, for delight was their purpose.

And this is how the pool of the nymph Hermaphrodite came to have its enchantment. ☽

The archetype of Hermaphrodite reveals a love so strong that it yearns to be one with what is loved. The lover joins with the beloved as the beloved also joins the lover. This simultaneous act is motivated by irresistible attraction which transforms the lovers naturally. The joining of male and female gives both entities happiness. As males we move into a femaleness, while at the same time, a female spirit lovingly enters us.

In its earliest oral forms, this narrative was told around campfires, kitchen tables, temple steps, or sacred groves. I would like to see many new versions, loaded with details from our own revelations. We are reinventing our tradition from our own visions. It is our turn now to reclaim the mystery. I believe we need to connect to a spiritual story rather than merely arguing with psychotherapists. How can we talk about ourselves adequately unless we have historical precedents? Can we speak confidently of our origins? I happen to think we've been around for a very long time, seeking the pleasure that comes from affiliation with female experience. I have written several possible accounts of Hermaphrodite and Salmacis in order to see how it might look from a subjective perspective (*see sidebar on page 25 for one such version—Ed.*).

The story of Hermaphrodite tells us not merely of a magic change, but that two spirits become one soul in an embrace of mutual attraction. This isn't about stealing power from one sex or the other, but an enhancement *from* both, an interaction of equal desires. A transgendered mode of being is to feel this meeting at a crossroads of the male world and the female world, a center place where we can see many directions as possible and viable. Our beauty shines as a particular possibility made manifest. Duality disappears within this merging. In fact, our archetype may well be the process of change itself. Whether or not we achieve our dreams, don't most of us feel irrevocably drawn toward shaping our lives in a new way?

Hermaphrodite's love speaks to transformation in Nature—the genera-

tive processes of Spring's blossoming, of seed growing to fruit, of root emerging as flower, and the consequent joy in this becoming.

In archaic celebrations, the Maybough symbolized Hermaphrodite's power as a symbol of vegetative life. Objects of abundance, such as cakes, wine, and honey, were offered at shrines. Hermaphrodite was not seen as a deity of the harvest, but of that moment of "coming into life," the spirit of new growth in the world (Delcourt, 1961). Knowing intimately of change, Hermaphrodite represents rebirth as a beneficial power.

We transform our bodies and we change our lives. Our phenomenon, whose truth we can only begin to explain, proves that many possibilities do exist while mainstream culture still argues to maintain a strict dichotomy of difference. Being transgendered exemplifies a way of bridging differences and removing boundaries, enabling shared understandings between the sexes. Ours is a path of singularity moving into a plural, and then on into a unified congruency. As we have begun to examine and describe our own lives, we simply prove that some males love to live as women. This would not be considered wrong unless women are seen as a lesser value in the first place. Much of our dialogue has been about overcoming the stigma of shame imposed on us by a world where our identification with females is seen as a weakness and defined as perversity. Transgendered people have to overcome not just stigma, but must awaken a consciousness that has been denied existence in society. Hopefully, we can begin to define our own virtues based on personal insight. We are at the point of working through old judgments, ready to reclaim a natural sensibility. But it will be we who define, out of our heartfelt knowledge, what feels natural.

Our common fate seems to be that of a change agent in a society of rigidly defined roles. Unfortunately, an asymmetry of power still governs the relationship between males and females and maintains a privileged sta-

tus for men. An entrenched male view still sees the world only on its own terms, and this male centrality creates a dominant-subordinate order throughout society. Women's reality doesn't figure equally in society, and female experience is seen as irrelevant to the goals of the power structure. A male who desires to live a female experience is seen as traitorous, as a betrayal of an idea, a social order, a collective identification (Carlin, 1992).

Ridicule and sensationalism are used to maintain the status quo. Hermaphrodite becomes another talk show oddity instead of an accepted life choice. We struggle to get a positive image out to the general public. Perhaps, unwanted as we are, we are really harbingers of a new vision toward a complimentary human experience. Perhaps our being male but identifying with the female is part of a greater purpose to break through long-standing cultural barriers. Perhaps our passion inspires us to help revitalize an awareness of both equality and diversity within Creation's interdependence. Somehow we help bring back the balance, to offer an honorable model of possible being. The flesh and blood lives we are leading will be the guideposts for those not yet born. Our speculations and solutions can help remove the obstacles from their own journeys.

The story of Hermaphrodite reveals the archetype of male love for a female spirit, and a merging with that spirit. We must also see that Salmacis indeed wishes to merge with Hermaphrodite. Salmacis is she who offers the Goddess to a male. She wishes to integrate with someone receptive to her, someone who desires her presence in him. Ovid depicted Salmacis as the one, crazy in love, who makes the transformation happen. In our own lives, doesn't it seem as if a female energy beckons us to join her—what is "out there" wishes to come inside. We love what is female, and I believe there is a female energy, the Goddess, who loves us in return. We are special. She urges us to reflect her, yet express our own unique femininity, our own beauty.

Concluded on page 47

Phaedra spends much time and energy traveling to the far corners of the earth, seeking out transgendered persons. Here, she relates her discovery of a Turkish Goddess legend.

The Goddess in Turkey

by Phaedra Kelly

The history of Islam, spread across the East, Africa, and Asia, is reflected in the history of the Christian crusades. The two faiths parallel in their violence against each other, and toward other faiths in their respective paths which both labeled animist, but which are properly called Shamanic and tribal.

When Islam could not evangelize, it took and held by the sword, as has Christendom. From their earliest history to the present, both religions have been equal in their genocide and massacre of other peoples, faiths, and philosophies which they deem competitive or obstructive to their own.

The Turkish Goddess was first identified in an interim period when Islam and native Turkish Shamanism were coexisting, their myths and demons overlaying, in the area now defined as Asian Turkey. A tribe of woman warriors, kindred in description to the legendary Amazons of ancient Greece, are said to have existed there, and their monarch was a woman of extraordinary beauty. A warrior king took her captive in battle and fell in love with her, and she, apparently, with him. They pledged their devotion and arranged their marriage.

But because she was still a captive, he had built for her a high tower in his castle, exclusive prison quarters fit for a queen. It was a royal house arrest. Towards the time of the planned marriage, the Amazon queen, yearning to be free and with her tribe, plunged from the top of the tower into the river below. She presumably drowned or died from the fall, although no body was found.

Before she leapt, she pledged her love for the king, and vowed that whenever his armies found themselves against the odds in battle, her spirit would return to protect them and guide them to victory.

Her vow was proven, in that when his forces next saw battle, they were indeed against the odds, and the queen did return to fight for them, but vanished again as quickly once the victory was won.

So profound is this legend that throughout Turkish military history, there have been actual reports of a vision of this warrior queen/Goddess of the Hunt, running with a deer at her side and carrying a bow. Her left breast is missing, sacrificed to her own Goddess, or removed to better aim with a

bow. The motif can be found in some of the most extraordinary places. I found it in a mural in a modern Istanbul fish restaurant. One night in the Yeşil Bizans, the story was told to me by a Turkish archaeologist and historian.

Where Diana of Greece was used as a Goddess in her own right, the Turkish version was clearly based on a Goddess which came before her. The Greek Diana became entangled by Greco-Roman movement and history of invasion, and cults emerged based on her. One such was the Sybil, in which there was an annual orgy or trance, and women would cut away their breast as devotion (in statuary, the Goddess has row upon row of these grisly tokens). Men would run wildly, entranced, and would emasculate themselves and hurl their genitals through the nearest window, which obliged the woman of that house to provide them the female raiment which they would ever after wear.

Such cults can be found at the base origin of the Christian cult throughout Russia and the Skoptsi, in which protest is shown by men disrobing in public and emasculating themselves—not for Diana, but for the Christian God. In ancient Rome, it became an embarrassment when military leaders joined the cult of the Sybil. Likewise, Skoptsi in Russia was frowned upon because it seemed to convert a lot of young military officers to its cause.

It may offend purists of Greco-Roman history, but the Turkish Goddess defied history of invasion and movement, and was not diluted by cultist branches, thus suggesting that it was and is the origin of Diana. It also promotes all the more, in its raw state, the theory that the queen was not a woman or a man, but an androgyne, able to captivate the mind and soul of a king with love of her ambiguous beauty and certain bravery, but unable to sacrifice her asexuality to make any human union with him, preferring instead to state her love through a power of the soul in another life beyond the earthly.

Parallels seem obvious with the

later history of the Russian woman Roxilana, who became a Sultana on the demise of her husband, Suliaman the Magnificent, who had married her monogamously. She reverted to her Shamanic roots with his funeral, having him cremated and drinking his ashes in her wine in ceremonial cannibalism. Such was her love. But her rule returned too much of Turkey's captured land to her original Russian people for them to accept her kindly. Her mausoleum is kept locked to this day.

Androgyny in Turkey has ancient roots. The Sultans kept harem boys who were considered to be and were treated as women from an early age. Murals of them in the famous Topkapi Palace are off limits to tourists. The Goddess does exist, but has been denied to the modern day Turkish Travesty (*transvestites—or, more properly, transgenderists—Ed.*), who have chosen instead to become agnostic, and adopt a needful involvement with the Green Party and all other minority groups.

The word Genius is derived from Genie, or properly, Djinn, who, like Satan, disdained to bow to God, and were thus set aside, placed between Man and Angel. Djinn are popular myths throughout Islam, but more so in Turkey, whereas in the legend of Christian Angels and their fallen counterpart, the Djinn are androgynous.

Our Travesty sisters are today treated more like Djinn, who play tricks on humans, than the Goddess of their Shamanic roots. In Pakistan, and within recent years in the Asian community in the United Kingdom, holy religious Moslem leaders have appointed exorcists to households to rid families of the Djinn within. These Djinn, in human form, have been starved, beaten, and tortured to death by the exorcist and their own families, who believe that the punishment is directed not at their suffering loved one, but at the spirit of the Djinn within, which is the one feeling the pain. Authorities have a hard time in the West in combating this menace, but several cases have come to court in England alone.

The Travesty situation, more than the transsexuals, who are accept-

ed post-operatively as women in Turkey, is a bone of contention with Moslem fundamentalism, but perhaps more so, because Travesty, as agnostics, represent a threat to the spread of Islamic faith. As they have no obvious cultural identities beyond their being Travesty, they are lost in a nether world of illegal vice. Islam cannot live with them as what they are, or without them as what it wants them to be, so instead it continues to attack them.

Had they a faith which was defined as a culture, philosophy, and way of being that involved what they are as a working part of itself—such as Shamanism—then they would assimilate into the myriad other cultures. Adoption by a Shamanic world temple might make one major change easier: the legal employ of Travesty in any kind of legitimate work. That, in turn, would elevate them out of the rut of their present vulgar proletarian suffering.

I have suggested in the past that transgendered people should form a religion. If Travesty were registered as a religious group, then their torture would become religious and racial persecution, since to be Travesty/TV/TG would then be a part of a minority identity of a nation among other nations. But our community is only now teetering on the brink of its own awareness, playing with word associations in seminars, without once considering practical application.

If, as the legend dictates, there was an Amazonian tribe in existence in Asian Turkey, then they must have an approximate location to which archaeologists could go to find what evidence there might be for their existence. Social anthropologists record how the legend has been passed from one to another, down through the ages. We might, in proving that the Amazons existed, also prove them to have been androgynes in the sense of the original Greek word: man/woman.

Thus might our sisters in Turkey enjoy inheriting their own God/ess, and a possibly better future from it, instead of suffering the torture of the curse of the Djinn. ☞☞



Author's Note

Actually, there are very few facts that form the basis of "The Legend of Saint Ursula and her 11,000 Virgins": we know only that a group of young women (probably eleven) were martyred at Cologne in about the 3rd century AD. We know this from a Latin inscription carved in stone (c. 400 AD) in the church of St. Ursula, which was rebuilt at that time by a man of consular rank named Clematius, in consequence of visions, at a ruined basilica on the site of their tomb in Cologne. The name Ursula was later found to have been taken by mistake from the adjacent tomb of an 8-year-old girl. Further elements of the story were strictly conjecture and elaboration which reached such incredible proportions that Pope Benedict XIV tried to delete Ursula from the Roman Martyrology altogether. Her celebration was removed from the Catholic calendar in the Roman reform of 1969.

What is important, however, is how compelling this legend became as it grew through the ages, how persistent the adherents of her cult still are, and how great was the need of so many people to create such a myth to reveal inherent truths that deserve remembrance. The story I have reconstructed is a composite of previous versions with my own embellishments, but corresponds with historical context and delivers a timeless feminist message that transcends the distortions of the medieval Christian church.

Holly is founder of Asheville, NC's Phoenix Transgender Support Group, one of the oldest open groups in the U.S. She developed the track of transgender programs for the Southern Comfort Conference, and recently hosted a mountain retreat for "new berdache."

The Eleven Hundred Maidens of Brittica

by Holly Boswell

It was a British warrior Queen, Boadicea, who led the bloody revolt in 61 AD, shortly after the Emperor Claudius annexed southern Britain. After defeat, she poisoned herself rather than suffer the inevitable domination of Rome. When Julius Caesar had invaded, a hundred years before that, he found Iron Age Celts in power, with chariots and round houses, and Druids who superseded the many warring chieftains. Almost 2000 years before that, Boadicea's ancestors had built Stonehenge and shared seafaring commerce with Mediterranean cultures, including the last of the egalitarian Goddess-worshipping civilizations—Minoan Crete—at its zenith. And up until a thousand more years before that, when the Pyramids of Egypt were built, Britain herself was a truly civilized Goddess-worshipping island, yet to be barbarized by the last Kurgan wave from Asia. Now once again, the threat of a savage onslaught of Saxons, with the Asian Huns behind them, would mean the biggest set-back to British civilization since the Kurgans 3000 years before. But of course, oldest ways die hardest.

In the beginning of the 3rd century after Christ, there was a noble British family who had but one child—a beautiful daughter they named Brittica. After 200 years of Roman rule, Britain had achieved a new level of civilization. Mingled with the mixed blessings of Roman occupation had come the subversive and still fresh Christian message of unconditional love and spiritual rebirth. The deep spirituality of the British people began to embrace these teachings, which transcended not only the gross materialism of Rome, but the last three millennia of warrior domination. Brittica and her most intimate circle of ten female companions were members of this new faith, and had pledged their lives to chaste purity and saintliness.

The most recent Saxon threat, however, came in a cruel and unexpected form. Pagano, the son of a fierce Saxon chieftain, having glimpsed Brittica while on a scouting mission, convinced his father to suspend their plan to attack if she would submit to marry him. So in order to save her country from barbarous conquest, she consented to sacrifice herself and her holy vows to the brute prince, but with two conditions: she and her ten "sisters" would be augmented one hundredfold with the finest, most beautiful virgin maids from

both their countries, and he must wait three years for the marriage. He was understandably suspicious, but after all, they were only girls—what harm could they do?

For three years, Brittica and her sisters trained their maidens into an army of amazons, reviving their ancient heritage of women being equal with men in war as well as peace. Admiring their courage and cunning, their countrymen cheered them on. Even the Saxon maids were quickly converted, realizing that, as women, they would never have been so inspired or empowered by their own people. They were becoming more than bodyguards—this was to be the first Crusade. In the year 238, eleven hundred maidens set sail on a pilgrimage across the sea and all the way up the Rhine to Basel.

It was only a matter of time before word of their impressive armada, however peaceful it might appear, would reach hostile ears. After stashing their boats in steep woodland thickets, they began their trek over the Alps, which were luxuriant with early summer foliage. As they met more and more travelers on the excellent roads that led south, they could divulge little about their mission except to reassert their allegiance to the Roman Empire.

Brittica had brought her maidens to Rome to seek military support to defend Britain against the barbarians. Surely it would be in Rome's territorial interest to do so. How could the mighty Emperor and his generals allow themselves to be shamed by refusing the petition of mere girls, who were prepared to fight alone if they must? What Brittica encountered, however, was in stark contrast to the flourishing of an empire at its peak. Rome was rotten at the core—fraught with delusional posturing and the onset of spinelessness and hysterical disarray. In fact, there was more than one Emperor—all of them generals, usually off in the field quelling uprisings. Just two years before, the Lower-Rhine had been overrun by the same hordes which now threatened Britain. Brittica's petition was futile.

But Brittica and her maidens were to find a different sort of salvation in Rome. As they were gathering provisions in the marketplace for their journey home, the sight of Brittica and a goodly number of her maidens was too exotic to go unnoticed. And while

their presence in the city had attracted many kinds of attention, none was to mean so much as the gentle gaze of a slave woman on a shopping errand for her mistress. The slave couldn't help but marvel at the freedom of Brittica and her companions, and felt compelled to speak with her. Brittica confessed, "My people are not truly free under Rome, either, and may soon lose everything to the Saxon hordes. How do you bear your slavery, yet seem to be so at peace?" The woman hesitated. "Some friends are meeting tonight, in secret, down by the tombs. Why don't you join us, and see for yourself?"

Brittica and her ten sisters had their suspicions confirmed that night. They of course knew that the underground Christian movement was steadily subverting the Empire, but nowhere was the repression of this conversion more acute than in the capital. Ever since St. Paul had been killed in Nero's Rome after teaching there—ironically coincident with Boadicea's defeat—the persecutions had increased until now, when they were officially sanctioned by the Emperor Decius.

For Brittica, being married to Christ was already the main reason she could never submit to marrying a mortal man—much less a Saxon heathen. But if she was truly liberated by Christian love, as the soft-spoken slaves huddled between these tombs seemed to be, why could she not accept the Saxon intrusion? If she was truly at peace, why was she so intent on preserving her earthly kingdom? She wondered if she had ever really been a Christian—or if she would ever want to be.

What were Brittica's options, now that Rome had failed her? As a true Christian, she would keep her word and marry the prince. While probably only postponing a war, she might at least have time to convert him and start pacifying his tribes. But more than likely, submitting herself to God's will in this way would only lead to a living hell for herself and her country. Was she even capable of being one of the flock—incomplete without a partnership with Christ? Or was she more Christ-like: a whole being, here and now—trying to bring heaven into earthly existence?

Suddenly she felt flushed with a resurgence of the Goddess. Her spirit saw beyond an unquestioning obedience to God the Father, coming full cir-

cle through the nurturing wisdom of the Goddess, to reaffirm her instinctual purpose. Her first response to the Saxon threat had been to magnify herself and her circle 100 times, and now, more than ever, she believed in herself, and in what she had to do.

As Brittica and her sisters took their leave of this primitive Christian prayer meeting, they thanked the congregation for their open-hearted sharing. "We will pray for you," the slave woman said in farewell.

Brittica gathered her maidens the next day, and spoke: "We face great risk without Rome's help. The prince expects his marriage demand met by the harvest moon, so we don't have time to return home and rally our forces there. We must sail back down the Rhine and give him his answer. What say you—will there be a wedding, or a war?" Of course, she didn't have to ask.

As they marched north into the Alps, they devised hopeful strategies of slipping past their enemies unnoticed. Maybe they could reach Britain before the prince retaliated. But still they sensed the inevitability of confrontation, and practiced their battle skills. Descending the Alps into Basel, where the forest was glorious in its autumn surrender, they retrieved their boats and started back down the Rhine. They knew the enemy would be more vigilant and prepared this time—prepared, possibly to take on Brittica's Roman allies as well as her own force.

They had sailed as far as Cologne when they were met by a rain of spears. News of their earlier voyage had indeed reached Pagano, followed by reports of their destination and intent. Outraged, he and his father's armies had camped near Cologne, anticipating Brittica's return. The ambush was valiantly met, but overwhelmingly brutal, and total. On October 21, all eleven hundred were massacred.

The news spread and grew into legend. The Christian church eventually canonized Brittica (under the mistaken name of Ursula), interpreting her martyrdom as an early defense of Christendom. Christopher Columbus later named the Virgin Islands after her and her warriors. But clearly, Brittica and her maidens also died defending their civilization and preserving the ancient values of the Goddess, who ever seeks to reassert her balance with the Lord God of domination. ☪☪

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The Lesson of the Ladyslipper

by Merissa Sherrill Lynn

My childhood was a very confusing time for me. I was four, perhaps three, when I first became aware that my soul did not match my body.

Was there a reason for me being the way I was? All I knew was that people around me had little tolerance for my attempts to express myself. "Why" became a dominating question. I had a loving soul with a profound desire to share that love, but anger, hatred, and an overwhelming fear of rejection dominated my life. Why? I wanted to help people, but all I did was reject everyone and everything, even myself? Why? I wanted to live, but I looked for ways to die. Why?

My favorite way of tempting death was to go on what I later came to know as a vision quest. I would wander into New Hampshire's mountain wilderness, with no food or shelter, and walk until I could walk no more. Then I would sit and meditate, trying to feel myself into the life that surrounded me. If I died instead, at least I would have died in a place that did not judge me on the basis of my apparent gender. Peaceful oblivion would have given me an escape from my unhappiness, and the earth would have my body to provide food for new life. Most importantly, I would have died in an acceptable way, which meant the world would never have had a reason to reject my memory. I feared rejection more than I feared death. It was on just such an excursion that I learned the lesson of the ladyslipper.

The Pemigewasset Wilderness is a magnificent valley blanketed with a gothic northern forest, laced with clean cold rivers and surrounded by ancient mountains. There was no more perfect place for me to wander, to think, to listen, and to see. The southern entrance to the Pemi welcomed me like a womb, a place to enter and be reborn. As I entered, the birds and the swollen river sang to me. The hardwood trees, the beech, the maple, and the white birch were alive and proud with brand new cloaks of leaves, and oh, they smelled sweet! No man-made perfume could hope to compete with such a beautiful smell. I walked for a few hours, then stopped to watch the ravens float on the updrafts over Mount Bond.

"Teach me, ravens," I said. "You are so beautiful flying there, as though you were part of the wind itself. Here I sit, shackled. Teach me how to free my spirit and to soar." As always, there was no answer, and I continued my journey.

Deeper into the wilderness I went, until the trees became so thick that I could barely see the sky. As I looked at the leafy canopy above me, I said, "Teach me, trees. I see your trunks, rugged and strong, masculine, like my body. I see your roots, secure in the earth, bringing life and stability to your body. I envy you your security. I see your branches swaying in the wind, graceful and feminine, like the arms of a ballerina, like the wings of an angel. I see birds and squirrels making their homes in your loving and protective arms. Tell me trees, how is it you can be so masculine, and so feminine, and so in harmony with yourself? I long to know." There was no answer. I continued my journey.

Mile after mile I walked, seeking answers, or at least one answer that would give my soul peace. I walked by the river, its thundering water pounding rock into sand, then changing maelstroms to quiet pools and eddies alive with fish and wildlife. I walked by the mountains, carved by glaciers and millions of years of erosion, yet still strong and tall, defiant against the elements. Finally, too tired to continue, I sat on an uninviting damp rock that jutted out of a moss-covered bank by the trail.

"This journey has been no different from all the rest," I thought to myself. "I am still a female in a male body, and I still don't know why." I looked to the clouds and pleaded, "God, talk to me. Teach me what I need to learn."

I sat there all night, hungry but not hungry, too tired to move. Perhaps I slept; I don't remember. The next day the sun was in mid-sky, occasionally peeking through grayish puffy clouds. My energy and my will were gone. Why was I drawn to this place? I didn't know, and it didn't matter, for it was a good place.

I was in a small grove of black mountain spruce, gnarled and weather-beaten, struggling for survival. To my back was a steep slope that disappeared into the trees. It shaded me from the morning sun. To my right, just out of sight, I could hear the thunder of Thoreau Falls, swollen with fresh

melt from the high snow pack. The power of the falls shook the ground beneath me, and the moisture from its spray filled the air. To my front, the river exploded against its banks as though it intended to scour the entire valley clean. Beyond the river, the mountains rose 3,000 feet above the valley floor, blanking out the horizon.

Beyond the mountains, there was nothing. It was as though I had found the womb of mother earth, the heart of the universe, the place where I could find my answers. Here I would stay until either I learned what I needed to know, or I found my peace.

The place was beautiful, spectacular in both its beauty and its isolation. Except for the trail I had hiked in on, there was no trace of mankind. There was no other human being to judge me or to interrupt me. I was completely alone with nature and with God. It was what I wanted, yet something was missing. The place seemed to have no soul, no real life. Then something began to happen. The sun peeked out from behind a cloud. A ray of sunlight gleamed through the mist from the forest, creating a beautiful rainbow which bathed the river and forest in soft pastels. It seemed to make things feminine and soft and comfortable for me, like a harbinger of something good to come. Then another ray of sunlight broke through the black spruce, and there, at my feet, balanced precariously between the trees and the river, was a small pink ladyslipper.

It was tired, very tired, yet this sight startled me, as though it was meant to wake me up and get my attention. There it was, a delicate woodland orchid, a tiny touch of pink embraced by the hardness and the coldness and the thunder, bathed in the light of God's own spotlight. Suddenly, this beautiful but soulless place had a soul; it had life.

How could such a delicate vulnerable thing exist in such a place? The trees that were themselves broken and stripped of their branches by killing winds and winter snows protected it from harm. The river whose power ground rock into sand watered it with a gentle spray. The sun

touched it with a finger of its life-giving light. The birds did not harm it. The animals did not harm it. I did not harm it. It was as though nothing in the universe was more important. Then it occurred to me that there really was nothing more important, for that little flower gave the entire valley life and balance. It brought beauty and joy to a joyless place. It gave the trees something to cherish and to protect, and gave the river something to nourish. If that wonderful little orchid ceased to exist, the wilderness would feel the loss. I would feel the loss.

The ladyslipper touched me like nothing had ever touched me before, as though it reached through me and touched my soul. I opened my heart to it, and suddenly it was as though God were right there in front of me, speaking to me through that flower.

"Why have you not answered my prayers?" I asked.

"Because you were not praying to me," it answered. "You were praying to someone else's concept of me." That was true. Everyone else told me what God was without ever giving me the tools I needed to find God for myself. "Learn what I have to teach you," it said. "Do not listen to me with your mind. You will not hear. Do not pray to me with your mind. I will not answer. Listen to me with your soul, and you will understand, for I am spirit, I am life. Your soul is my soul, and my soul is in all things. This ladyslipper is a reflection of your soul. Feel it with your heart. Set your spirit free, for your spirit is more real than your body." My hands began to shake. My body began to rock back and forth. Tears flowed and my throat knotted up. Squeals came from somewhere, as though 32 years of pain and self-hatred and spiritual denial had found a way to escape.

"But why did you make me this way, and why did you make me suffer?"

"I made you special to give the world balance. I gave you a male body so you might know what it feels like to be treated as a male. I gave you a female spirit so you might know the longing for children, to bear new life, and to cherish and nurture. I made

Concluded on page 34

"Art" is our ability as humans to creatively make things and to "display form, beauty, and unusual perception." "Art" is also known as a "skill" or "style." Art as a skill is our ability to creatively work within our own natural talents to manifest that which our mind, will, or spirit directs.

Our life is a form of our art. We visually create our life through our thoughts and desires. As humans, even if we never pick up a paintbrush, we are artists. We have our own style and our own skills.

The female energy in society is the ultimate form of creation. It is within the female that humanity is able to procreate and manifest a duplication of self in order to survive. The art of being feminine is both a skill to be learned and a form to manifest.

Through your desires to explore your inner self you will begin to express your inner beauty. This will then manifest as your own personal style into an outward beauty for the world to enjoy and see. You are an artist expressing your spiritual beauty.

—Sophia & J. Urania

Practice this meditation one hour each day:

Picture your inner male or your inner female. Become in balance and harmony with your feminine and masculine energy. Channel the energy which is different from your physical being. When you program yourself to hold this aura within and not without, you can heal yourself

The following is excerpted from "The Art of Exploring Your Feminine Nature" by Sophia and J. Urania.

Using Your Universal Spirit Energy in Healing

by Sophia and J. Urania

Within the community of Universal Spirits, there is research being conducted on a disorder known as multiple personality disorder. In fact, what is being discovered is that some of the individuals previously classified as having multiple personalities are really exhibiting cross-gender characteristics. Some individuals who have been abused or hurt when they were children sometimes develop another personality to protect the persona which has been injured. This switch of personalities is not controllable. These individuals do in fact contain multiple personalities.

Some individuals previously thought to have multiple personality syndrome are in fact cross-gendered because of their ability to control their switch of energies at will. A cross-gendered individual is one who can switch his or her aura energy (energy surrounding the body) and thereby take on the energy characteristics which society has labeled masculine and feminine. A cross-gendered individual does not develop this ability to change energy based upon injury to the personality at a young age; a cross-gendered individual is able to transform his or her energy based upon their spiritual nature.

A cross-gendered individual can learn to use the ability at switching energies to heal the body. What has been studied is that when the subject is the 'normal' self, there are physical ailments such as heart problems, tumors, and warts. When the cross-gendered individual brings forward the other energy or 'personality', the alpha waves change and there is a physical change within that individual. The color of the eyes, skin, and shape of the face can change.

This change in physical shape is a natural defense mechanism within the human body to heal itself. It has been discovered that learning to control this energy and being able to switch from the masculine to feminine or feminine to masculine can allow the body to heal itself. There is evidence that tumors have disappeared and other types of healings have occurred. There are people who have been diagnosed as HIV-positive who have practiced the exercise in the sidebar, and when they have been tested while channeling their 'other' energy, have been diagnosed as HIV-negative.

In the past, individuals might go to psychic healers. These healers would extend their auras to help heal their clients. This allowed individuals who needed healing to have their auras meshed and repaired. By learning how to work with your aura and the energy within, you can accomplish this same type of healing. Faith and belief in your own ability to help yourself is critical. It must be one hundred percent. ☞

you barren so you might use your nurturing spirit to give life to others. I gave you pain so you could know the pain of others. I gave you fear so you could know the fear of others. I gave you desire so you might know the power of that desire in others. I gave you these gifts so you may help others in a good and healing way."

I learned that my female spirit is what gave me life, and the thing that gave my life purpose and balance. It was the thing that made me what I was and who I was. It was the thing that connected me to all things, to the ravens, the trees, the mountains, the river, the ladyslipper, and God.

"You made the tree masculine and feminine," I continued. "You made me masculine and feminine. The tree is in harmony, and I am not. Why?"

"The words masculine and feminine are not my words. They are your words. I gave the tree the qualities it needed to live and you called those qualities masculine and feminine. I created the ladyslipper to give the forest life and balance, and you called the ladyslipper feminine. I gave you your soul to give you life and balance so you could be a healer, and you called it feminine. I did not. The tree is in harmony because it knows only that it is, and I created it. You will be in harmony when you learn that you are, and I created you."

The ladyslipper had taught me to see with the eyes of my heart, and to ask and to listen with the voice and the ears of my soul. It had taught me the nature of God, and that balance was the natural state of the universe. It had taught me not to fear, but to cherish, my female spirit, and it had taught me that masculinity and femininity were not God's words. It taught me to understand and appreciate the truly extraordinary gifts God had given me, and that I could use these gifts in a good and healing way. It taught me what I needed to know, and showed me the path I needed to follow.

God truly does work in mysterious ways. ♁

Editor's note: Various myths about Lilith originated in Sumeria and persisted into the Middle Ages. Lilith was the first woman until the story of Eve replaced her.

Inheritance

by Kali Johnson

"I will not."

And She spoke ITs name aloud

IT heard her

and pulling ITSELF up

allowed lichen and dolphins to jump from ITs back

wiggled ITs germinating toes on the mountaintop

and said

"What?"

"I will not be unto Him

as no natural thing is to another.

Am I an autumn leaf that I

should be dust beneath Him?"

Idam was a March day refusing the coming of spring

"It is a game. Just a game."

IT shifted ITs weight from one butterfly to another as She spoke again

"To me it is not Just a game."

IT blinked impatient feathers of ITs eyes

"And?"

Lilith unbreathed and breathed, once each

"I will leave,

I will be alone,

rather than bow or break."

IT flicked the grass out of ITs face

"Okay."

I am filled with loam and peat

with droll thunder-lit skies

reckless amaryllis and ludicrous fish

To know

I am

a descendant of Her

of Lilith

and not of Eve

Restoring the Ties

Between Transgenderism & Mainstream Society

by Anthony James Roberti

Crossdressers and transsexual people are not connected with the mainstream culture. We in the transgender community often hide this important side of ourselves from our loved ones, friends, and co-workers. We sometimes feel as if we are living a lie, and wonder if something is seriously wrong with us. We live with guilt, and many of us believe that our desire to cross gender lines is sinful. Those of us who are heterosexual worry that we are gay and constantly strive to prove we are not.

This worry and guilt exists because we were raised within a culture that is dysfunctional, especially in regard to sex roles. In this society, all men must behave one way, and all women another. Such a system is not realistic. There is a wide spectrum of personality traits, yet we must suppress most of them in order to "fit in". As the women's movement has taught us, the female sex roles in our society are restricting and demeaning. Within the last few years, we have also seen the rise of a men's movement, which makes the same complaints of our male sex roles. Clearly, something is wrong, and a sense of disconnectness becomes more apparent.

Transgenderism does not conform to the behavior or attitudes that are expected of women and men. Like all sorts of socially unacceptable behaviors, society relegates it to marginal status with preposterous explanations as to why such "abnormal" things should exist at all.

In recent years, many compelling arguments have been made against the order of things that determines what we accept as normal or natural. Our concept of "normal, natural behavior" has become more and more obviously the product of biased social fiction rather than any "ultimate truth." A clear pattern of martyr fixation exists in our society: in our religion, in widespread violence, and in child and spouse abuse. In yet another manifestation of the martyr pattern, we accept sex roles that restrict us to the point of spiritual agony.

This fixation did not always dominate human society. A number of sources (Riane Eisler, Erich Neumann, Ken Wilber) date its emergence from 3000 BC. Before then, human societies had relatively little bias, and records of many different civilizations the world over show a great variety in the sorts of personalities and sex roles that were acceptable.

Anthropologists have uncovered evidence which asserts that transgenderism was within the mainstream culture before the martyr bias. Ancient

cultures regarded transgenderism with awe, because its existence was a mystery. Transgendered people were therefore believed to have spiritual, healing, and visionary powers. Many mystic traditions involve the element of transgenderism.

Much of this evidence comes from the legacy of myths and legends. By studying myths, we can trace the development of beliefs and biases throughout human history. They reveal that in the past, a variety of human personality types was valued because each "current" of human experience had something unique to offer. Ancient societies were a complex weave of such currents. Each culture had a collection of deities and heroes that embodied these different personality types.

The characters of these myths, the gods and goddesses, each represent an aspect of humanity, or a force of nature personified. Each deity was a "role-image" outlining a character type or viewpoint. The great variety of deities from ancient times testifies to the widespread acceptance of many personality types, including transgendered people.

The mythological reflection of the bias which began 5000 years ago was the emergence of heroic myth. In heroic myth, a single man plays the "starring role," performing feats of strength, courage, and self-sacrifice. A large emphasis is placed on conflict and warfare. While these no doubt existed before heroic myth, never had they been a central motif. The "superiority" of men was also clearly demonstrated in the heroic myth. The variety of deities was replaced by a single role-image for each sex: men were to be heroes or martyrs, and women were to be damsels-in-distress. The hero-martyr and damsel were the ancestors of our current sex roles.

A growing number of psychologists and self-help authors are making it clear that many of our psychological and social problems can be attributed directly to our restrictive sex roles. When we take this assertion alongside the idea that our concept of "normal, natural behavior" is not entirely root-

ed in reality but in fiction, the solution seems obvious: we must change what we consider "normal, natural behavior" to fit what actually exists rather than what we think it should be.

The search for things to replace our dysfunctional concept of normal, natural behavior has turned in many quarters to ancient myths and legends. Widespread interest in Wicca, Goddess worship, partnership (as portrayed by Riane Eisler), Eastern religions, and the men's mythopoetic movement may indicate that patriarchal society is on the way out.

The use of crossdressing and transgenderism in ritual was widespread throughout ancient cultures. In early Goddess cults, priests dressed as women, or even castrated themselves to become as female as possible.

Many of the role-images being revived have strong elements of androgyny and transgenderism. This is our cue to begin making a contribution to the renewal of a healthy, balanced, and diverse mainstream society. Every transgenderist willing to take an active part must have a clear understanding of what these images are, what roles they play in the new mainstream, and how their re-emergence will help reconnect the transgender community to the mainstream.

Role-Images Allied to Transgenderism and Androgyny

It is important to clarify which images are truly androgynous and which are not. There is a class of images which could be called "pseudo-androgynous" because they run counter to our normal conception of masculinity and femininity, but are not directly related to the current of transgenderism. Two currents central to modern sex roles are the Solar current (hard, goal-oriented, and hierarchical), and the Lunar current (irrational, exotic, and sexy). Only men have been Solar, and only women have been Lunar, since the onset of

patriarchal/martyr bias 5000 years ago. Western mystics even equate the Solar with masculinity and the Lunar with femininity. The fact is that the Solar and Lunar currents have no inherent gender bias. It is only because of our mythical amnesia that we have forgotten the Solar feminine (Amaterasu, the warlike Japanese sun-goddess), and the Lunar masculine (the passionate Orpheus, who expresses his feelings through song, yet is "manly" enough to brave the depths of hell to rescue the woman he loves).

These forgotten permutations of the familiar Solar and Lunar currents can be called pseudo-androgynous because we see them as counter to our present notions of masculinity and femininity. "True" androgyny is a unique current, totally different in essence from the Solar or the Lunar. Its nature is purely transformational. Spiritual and erotic power resides within transgenderism and androgyny.

The use of crossdressing and transgenderism in ritual was widespread throughout ancient cultures. In early Goddess cults, priests dressed as women, or even castrated themselves to become as female as possible. In many cultures, a boy could choose to grow up as a woman rather than a man. One well-known example of this is the Native American berdache tradition. Crossdressing in the worship of Dionysus was so widespread and long-lasting that the Church, as late as the seventh century AD issued a decree against the use of crossdressing in religious rites. Most ancient cultures sensed that transgenderists have mystical powers, and often granted them positions of religious accord in their society.

From among fifty or so identifiable role-images and currents, several specific ones have a high level of androgynous content and deserve attention. These include the Trickster, the Crone, and the Shaman, as well as the currents of Tantra and Ecstatic Androgyny.

The Trickster is a transformer who uses mental double-play, rather than brute force, to change the world. Tricksters in myth are almost always

male. As such, the Trickster was suggested by men's movement author Aaron Kipnis as a good role-model for men wishing to learn ways to become assertive without being violent. He reminds men to let loose and laugh once in a while. The Trickster has the ability to blend gender when needed. For instance, the primary Trickster of our culture, Bugs Bunny, has dressed as a woman countless times to flirt his way out of danger. The men of Monty Python dressed as women even more often.

The Crone is the Trickster's counterpart, but this is not immediately evident. The Crone, after all, is not a transgendered image. It is, perhaps, an asexual image. However, both Trickster and Crone have aspects that are wise, magical, or visionary. Thus, the Crone might be a combination of the wise woman and the witch. Also, our media, especially in TV commercials and cartoons, often portrays old women as mischievous, clever, fun-loving Trickster types. Recall, for example, the recent Sylvester Stallone movie, "Stop or My Mom Will Shoot!" The wise-woman aspect of this image has been revived by feminist Mary Daly, whose books are "hag-ographies" which employ "Crone-logical" thinking. The word play which permeates her writing is quite insightful.

The Shaman is Lunar, bound in ritual and antiquity, practicing rituals which are forever constant. Shamanism is the everpresent past. Most of what we call magic—ritual-based disciplines such as Wicca, for instance—is Shamanistic. The Shaman typically "journeys on the spirit plane" for the benefit of society, performing tasks by dealing with beings too powerful for ordinary people. Shamans must be able to transcend duality. They must have power over the forces of good and evil, because there are tasks which require the aid of both. Sexual duality must be mastered as well, for the Shaman must have access to both masculine and feminine energy.

Most healing in non-European cultures is performed by "witch doctors" or Shamans who have transgender characteristics. Patriarchal society

has done what it can to remove the androgynous element of healing and turn it into a masculine ability. Several feminists contend that many women burned as witches during the Middle Ages were midwives. Medicine today is not a holistic healing process, but is sterile, scientific, and Solar. This has had its advantages, but now we heal only the body and largely overlook the needs of the mind.

Transcendence of gender does not mean transcendence of sex. The Eastern discipline of Tantra is a method of gender transcendence and blending through ritual sex. Any type of intimacy and friendship with the opposite sex, romantic or platonic, leads inevitably to a better understanding of the human condition. It prevents the sexes from thinking of each other only in terms of stereotypes. Thus, a concept of spirituality that includes sex encourages gender partnership. Any spirituality that loathes sex or inflicts guilt on those who enjoy sex, as do the prominent patriarchal religions, encourages sexual inequality because it maintains a rift between the sexes and promotes sexual stereotypes. Thus, as long as our concept of spirituality does not include sex, patriarchy will continue.

Tantra pursues the very active, erotic union of the genders. It is a manifestation of passive sexual union as well. Often, Tantric methods encourage sexual union that is slow or completely still and which ideally should last for hours, or days if possible. The ultimate tantric image is the eternal union of the Hindu deities Shiva and Parvati, who have transcended the boundaries between them and become one.

"Ecstatic Androgyny" means the embodiment of both sexes in a single body, an image at once sexually charged and full of mystery; is it the femininity of an "erotic sorcerer" that attracts us or the masculinity? Role-images of Ecstatic Androgyny have been well-hidden. Few of us have been exposed to the true myths of Dionysus or have even heard of Mohini, who, according to Hindu myths, was the most beautiful woman who ever

lived, but was actually an incarnation of the male Vishnu. Oscar Wilde gave us an interpretation of the legend of Salome (the daughter of Herodias, who entranced Herod with her dancing) which asserted that Salome was actually a man disguised as a woman.

To get a full picture of the erotic power within Ecstatic Androgyny, consider the erotic power unleashed when a woman wears men's clothing. A recent commercial for a popular men's cologne shows a woman putting on her husband/boyfriend's hat, shirt, and tie. This ad shows that the woman in men's clothing is not as shocking to us as the drag queen, maybe because women are allowed—rather, expected—to be erotic in everything they do. It is no less erotic for a man to dress in women's clothing, but in our patriarchal society, it is taboo for men to assume erotic power. Perhaps this helps ensure that they resort to violent power.

In our culture, the drag queen or female impersonator is the most popularized manifestation of Ecstatic Androgyny. Because of our culture's strong denial of this role-image, there is bound to be controversy within the transgender community about supporting it. Many supporters of androgyny and transgenderism, such as June Singer, have repressed this image to emphasize the more obviously spiritual Tantra. This erotic aspect, though, is an important one that many of us would miss if it were not allowed to express itself.

Two more currents, represented by Orpheus and Hermes, contain elements which are androgynous. The artistic Orpheus was connected with Dionysus and was occasionally portrayed as a woman, perhaps by patriarchs who were confused by his highly Lunar nature. Creative art, by definition, is androgynous, because artists must have access to all forms of human experience. Hermes, when he was not shown as effete, was portrayed as a slight, wiry man, not muscle-bound like the other Olympian gods. His symbol, the caduceus, represented for alchemists the power to unite opposites, especially gender polarity. Hermes was powerful, and his

influence was widespread. He was a Trickster, the god of thieves, yet was also the psychopomp who led souls of the deceased to the underworld.

Conclusion

Everywhere that transgenderism was accepted, it was recognized as having power and strength. Transgenderists were thought to have spiritual and erotic power beyond "normal" polarized people. Patriarchs, who despise every type of power not masculine, are particularly rueful of transgender power and have taken pains to eliminate it from our culture.

Archetypal images associated with transgenderism, such as those briefly discussed here, need to be reintegrated with the newly-emerging transgender community. Many of these images are being revived in attempts to discover a realistic model of "normal, natural behavior", to replace the modern idea of "normality" that stifles us into spiritual anguish and often leads us to actions that hurt others.

These role-images are powerful tools which can help us return to the sphere of mainstream society. The revival of these long-suppressed aspects of human society will perhaps inevitably give greater social power to transgenderists, who are innately connected to them. Transgenderism thus represents a major aspect of the movement which would replace patriarchy, which also involves the reempowering of women, homosexuals, and ethnic minorities—all of whom have suffered so that the martyr fixation could persist. Men, too, will benefit, if we replace our life-negating vision of heroism with ancient images of masculinity that affirm life and yet are inherently masculine.

It is important for the transgender community to reclaim its association with these images. As part of them, they cannot be complete without us, nor we without them. The more visible we become, the more we will belong. The transgendered person need not be an outcast, as the patriarchal ranks would have us believe, but must rather be an important, contributing member of society. ☪

Just Another 'Relationship' Poem

by Billie Jean Jones

"This is a relationship poem,"
The very young man said.

Picture these poetry readings
where dew-cheeked apprentices in
armour impart wisdom to the heavily
scarred.

Ah, youth,
don't bore us with a lesson you
believe
Eternal; Worthy—
just tell us
those juicy details
of your affairs.

Amuse us, fill us with
surprise and delight;
because,
my self rebels at these
attempts and feels
compelled to reel contempt—

Relationships?
Don't give me that shit.

One Tomato
two Tomato
three or more
falling in Love
then
kicked out the door

Over and over
I tried and I tried.
Then,
bought into one ride;
spent twenty years inside:
we soared and we dived
we lived and we sighed
we tried and we tried
we cried and we cried
we died and we died

And then I
really
died,
Clyde.

Only to Live again.
Love again.
Die again.

Orwellian Image:
If you want a picture
of the human race for the future—
Imagine a boot stomping
on a human face—forever...

Ah, the prize of Love—
You see everything
so clearly
like: Purpose;
Destiny...

And, over and over
and over again
Imagine
the boot
stomping
Your Heart,
Your Love—
over and over...

See Your Heart
splattering?
The Elixir:
Your Passion!
Passion So Pure,
now leaking,
now sparkling,
now darkening—
coagulating...

Oh, the price of Love—
Your Spirit will undress,
run off in the night.

You will awaken knowing,
tiny teeth gnawing
at Your bones
brittle cold.
You will send Your
Soul searching,
searching down
that rusty river
of time, blowing
those jazzy blue
notes—calling...
Calling.

Imagine that boot
over and over and
over again.
Until,
Your Soul
is hard,
shriveled,
desiccated
and ready:

for the soul grinder.

Imagine:
This is just
the beginning
of
Wisdom.

Portions of this article have appeared in IFGE's TV-TS Tapestry Journal.

Transsexualism at Forty

Some Uncommonly Discussed Aspects of an Increasingly Common Phenomenon

by Dallas Denny

Forty years ago, Christine Jorgensen was in Copenhagen, Denmark, and not just to see the sights. She was undergoing the final stages of a series of hormonal and surgical treatments that would enable her to live the rest of her life as a woman, even though she had been raised as a boy, had duly grown into a man, and had even served a hitch in the U.S. Army. Her "sex change," as it came to be called, was hardly the first, but when the story was leaked to the newspapers, the headlines shocked the world, creating a media circus which has lasted for forty years.

Christine was the first indication most Americans, even those Americans with the same problem, had that such a thing as a change of gender was possible, or even conceivable; indeed, there was not even a commonly accepted label to assign to her. Now there is a word, of course, but the media circus has had its effect: to this day, the notion of transsexualism seems bizarre to most Americans, and transsexual people are commonly viewed in a stereotypic, one-dimensional fashion, rather than as the highly individualistic and talented people that they are. Even serious magazines look at transsexualism in a myopic way, either dwelling upon transsexual people as sex objects or focusing upon their pain or the miracle of their transition, missing the point that here is a phenomenon of great social and scientific significance. So now here I come to deconstruct this fascinating phenomenon for you, to point out a little of what so many have missed. Why, of all people, me? I've asked myself that question many times. What moves me to write on a subject which most people find simultaneously intriguing and disgusting? Why do I not take my assigned place in the ranks of manhood or womanhood (as the case may be) and take gender for granted like everyone else?

The reason is that for many years it was impossible for me to take gender for granted. I had one; I wanted another. It was not something I chose for myself, but something which arose unbidden and could not be made to go away. The story of my personal quest is another story for another article, but its significance is that I have looked at transsexualism and its developing treatment system from both sides now, from up and down, from the bloody underside, as a transsexual person, as well as from above, as a social scientist. I have seen the wisdom and the follies of both perspectives, and, like a holograph, a vision has risen up, incorporating elements of both, and yet transcending them. This vision is one of transsexualism stripped of its newsworthiness, its sensationalism. It is Transsexualism, with a capital T, and it is an awesome and powerful entity, with multiple arms like a Hindu deity.

I offer twelve observations about transsexualism:

Observation 1: Transsexualism is a Religious/Spiritual Experience

Transsexualism is a burden, but in overcoming that burden, there can be great spiritual growth. Despite the pain that their gender conflict causes in their lives, transsexual persons will tell you that they feel a power, a specialness, because of the way they are, and most will tell you that they would not change, even if they could. Their transsexualism gives them a sense of connectedness, of place, of unity, a sense of the Goddess—of a nurturing feminine deity, rather than a jealous and destructive masculine one.

In many non-western cultures, transgendered persons have special status as mystics and healers, as shamans. They are revered, even if they are sometimes scorned as well. They are people to listen to, for they are the balance between the masculine and the feminine, the chosen ones. Rena Swifhawk, who has had to resurrect the lost tradition of berdache in her own Ute tribe, says that transgendered persons are the ones who will

save the planet, who will put the masculine and feminine energies in balance, for we are in touch with those same energies. Perhaps, and perhaps not—but I do know that I have always had a deep sense of the need for balance in nature, and have been repelled and appalled at the way our Western technology is ravaging and hurting the planet. I have a deep sense of what Rena calls Grandmother Earth, and I feel Grandmother's pain—and so do most other transgendered individuals I have come in contact with.

Observation 2: Transsexualism Gives Western Culture a Mental Template for a Third Gender

In many tribal and Eastern cultures, there were and are institutionalized roles for transgendered people. For instance, many American Indian tribes had berdache, genetic males who functioned as women in the tribe. Some societies had three genders, and some more than three. Those who did not fit into "traditional" male and female roles had a choice of (or were sometimes assigned to) one of the other genders.

With the possible exception of the castrati of medieval Europe, such social roles have been lacking in Western society. In keeping with our tradition of Aristotelian thought by way of Descartes' dualism, individuals are classified as either male or female. Although people with gender dysphoria (unhappiness in their assigned gender) have always been present—as the Maid of Orleans might attest, if she were alive today—there was no third gender, no alternative to maleness or femaleness in Western society. Before the mid-twentieth century, the hormonal and surgical procedures necessary to enable an individual to live productively in the gender of choice were simply not available. Only those lucky enough to look sufficiently like the other gender—or brave enough to not give a damn—could manage to live as a woman, if born male, or as a man, if born female. And most did not even realize it was possible. People with gender dysphoria had no idea that

such a thing as sex reassignment was possible, and lived their entire life in their gender of original assignment, often with profound unhappiness. They had no label for themselves, and neither did caregivers. Physicians and psychologists, when confronted with someone with gender dysphoria, labeled them delusional, homosexual, perverted, or schizophrenic.

It was Christine Jorgensen, stepping off that airplane and into history, who provided the template that we now know as transsexualism. Her case catapulted the idea of sex change into Western consciousness. Transsexual people now had a name for themselves, as well as a process (sex change), and began to come forward, galvanizing the medical and psychological communities into action and forming a new category of human beings who would increasingly demand place.

Observation 3: Transsexualism is Evolving into an Established Social Role in Western Society

Anyone who has not been hiding under a barrel for forty years knows what a "sex change" is. Most Americans have heard of at least one of the celebrity transsexual people like Christine Jorgensen, Renée Richards, Jan Morris, Canary Conn, Wendy Carlos, or Caroline (Tula) Cossey; many, and perhaps even most Americans have either become acquainted with a transsexual person (sometimes unknowingly) or are related to one. The subject of transsexualism has been addressed and readdressed on television and radio, in popular magazines, in books, in college courses, in scholarly journals, and in homes and businesses throughout the nation. Although much of the exposure has been sensationalistic and shallow, the fact is that transsexual people now constitute a distinct and identifiable segment of the population. They are, where they were not before. Large corporations have formulated policies for dealing with transsexual workers, psychologists and physicians have developed procedures for counseling their trans-

sexual clients, and drivers license examiners have become used to changing male names to female names, and vice-versa. Openly transsexual people have become established in successful careers, entered into happy marriages, adopted children, written books and plays, and appeared on television and in movies. A new genre of transsexual exploitation films and magazines ("Chicks with Dicks") has arisen, and transsexual prostitution is highly visible in large cities. Laws have been written to protect transsexual people or to exclude them from protection. Diagnostic categories and treatment policies have been created by caregivers, and a scientific literature of transsexualism has arisen. The word transsexualism is appearing in dictionaries, encyclopedias, and medical textbooks.

Transsexual people, like other minorities, have defined themselves and created a societal niche for themselves, merely by virtue of their existence. Every transsexual man or woman, in his or her process, impacts hundreds of others—family, friends, coworkers, the clerk at the corner store. And so a phenomenon which was unheard of (if nevertheless common) forty years ago, has become an established social category. Transsexualism has become integrated into Western thought and society, and there is every indication that it is here to stay. It has become a commonly accepted diagnostic category and condition of human existence.

Observation 4: Transsexualism Has Had a Significant Impact on Medical Ethics

The idea of operating on healthy tissue is a strange one to most physicians. The conceptually profound nature of genital reassignment surgery caused considerable self-examination by a profession which was already struggling to decide whether cosmetic surgery was ethical. In the 50s and 60s, transsexualism was called "collusion with delusion", "collaboration with psychosis," and "unjustifiable mutilation." Physicians treating transsexual

persons were accused by other physicians of mayhem (the intentional mutilation of the body to avoid military service) and of violating the First Rule of Medicine ("First, do no harm."). Those doing sex reassignment surgery were chastised in the pages of medical journals and on the golf courses of the nation.

Ultimately, outcome studies convinced the medical community that the operation was usually successful and often lifesaving, and that psychotherapy, aversion therapy, and other techniques were ineffective and could even be harmful. The eventual position of the American Medical Association and other organizations was one of acceptance of the hormonal and surgical treatment of transsexualism.

Inverting the penile skin and using it to line a neovagina or constructing a phallus from the skin of the forearm are not the most technically difficult surgeries in existence (I walked four miles on Day 6 following my own reassignment surgery), but they are without parallel, for they challenge our most basic notions of the human experience. The acceptance of such concept-shattering surgeries means that any lesser operation (i.e., rhinoplasty, facelift, breast augmentation) is unlikely to be challenged on ethical grounds. By moving the issue ahead a light-year, from bobbing a nose to bobbing a penis, the ethical issues of cosmetic surgery were taken to the extreme position. Resolving the issue of genital surgery necessarily resolved the issue of conceptually less profound surgeries.

Observation 5: Transsexualism Has Had an Important Role in the Differentiation of Sex and Gender

Traditionally, in Western culture, sex and gender were considered to be the same thing. It was John Money and his co-workers who separated the two, pointing out that one's sex is a combination of physical factors, but that gender is a sense of self, of manhood or womanhood, boyhood or girlhood. Virginia Prince helped to

popularize the notion that it is entirely possible to function socially as a woman, although anatomically and gonadally a male, and vice-versa (in fact, many persons do just that, with no desire for sex reassignment surgery; they are called transgenderists). Although Money had been working for some years with intersexed (hermaphroditic) individuals, it is not coincidental that the separation was not made official until 1955, only three few years after Christine Jorgensen's return from Denmark.

In the four decades since Money's epiphany, this separation of sex and gender has gradually permeated scientific and popular thought. Many Westerners—indeed many published authors in the literature of gender dysphoria—still have trouble distinguishing the two, but the trend is evident—and transsexual people are the torchbearers, living proof that sex and gender are two very different and distinct phenomena.

Observation 6: The Early Treatment of Transsexual People by Caregivers Was a Case Study in Prejudice and Bias

Even after Christine Jorgensen's debut, sex reassignment was difficult to obtain, for there was great societal prejudice, which was reflected by many helping professionals, and great societal ignorance, to which helping professionals were not immune. Those who changed their gender did so in the face of nearly unsurmountable odds, often placing themselves in the unenviable position of being medical guinea pigs in order to get the treatment they needed—and most could not get help, even under those terms. Although the technology for surgical and hormonal sex reassignment has been in place for most of this century, there simply was not a treatment and support system which could deal with the large numbers of transsexual people who came forward, seeking sex reassignment.

The system which arose was research-based, experimental, and needlessly restrictive. The university-

affiliated gender clinics which arose in the late 60s and early 70s treated transsexual people by triage, but they did so in an unusual and ultimately harmful manner. They separated people into the traditional three groups (those who were terminal, and would probably not survive, even with treatment; those who would probably survive with treatment; and those who would probably survive, even without treatment). Unfortunately, rather than treating the middle group, the gender clinics, which considered themselves to be experimental, selected the first group—those who would have a poor prognosis, even with maximum care. Their treatment populations consisted of a very high percentage of prostitutes, drug addicts, alcoholics, schizophrenics, and suicidal and self-mutilating depressives—a very unrepresentative cross-section of the universe of transsexual people. The clinics then compounded their error by publishing papers about these people; in their naivete and arrogance, they were defining all transsexual people based on their very biased samples. Consequently, the literature came to be filled with very pejorative descriptions of transsexual men and women, who were characterized as having stereotyped notions of masculinity and femininity, of having a high incidence of prostitution and criminal arrests, of having character and personality disorders, of being manipulative and demanding. This literature was then applied and continues to be applied to all transsexual people, despite the clear findings of anthropologist Anne Bolin, who studied male-to-female-transsexual people outside the treatment setting, that the common clinical conceptions of transsexual people are just not true.

Transsexual people are often desperate for treatment, but until recently, they had no alternative to the university-based gender clinics. Their desperation was to the advantage of researchers, who all-too-frequently used promises of hormonal therapy and reassignment surgery as the proverbial carrot-on-a-stick. The clients of many of the clinics were verbally abused, forced to participate in

research studies, and made to conform to the often-sexist notions of masculinity and femininity of the researchers. This extended into areas ordinarily considered sacrosanct, the sole business of the individual—dress, sexual preference, choice of partner, name, occupation, and lifestyle. Transsexual people were forced into sexual liaisons to “prove” their earnestness, into jobs they did not want, into divorces, into clothing they did not want to wear, into being Barbie and Ken. They could not refuse, for refusal meant withdrawal of medical treatment.

Surprisingly, many clinicians were unaware of and continue to be unaware of their own prejudices and behavior, just as researchers of earlier times were blind to their own biases. Stephen Jay Gould has pointed out in *The Mismeasure of Man* the horrible excesses and injustices in the history of mental measurement— notions that blacks were inferior to whites, that women were inferior to men, and that persons with big brains were more intelligent than persons with smaller brains. These biases colored not only the findings of research; the very questions asked were dependent upon the preconceived notions of the researchers. This sort of thing has happened with transsexualism, but it is not generally recognized, and may not be until sufficient time has passed to allow us to see our prejudices and biases for what they are—as we can now see in Gould’s book how Goddard colored in the eyes of the members of the Kallikak family in photographs to make them look depraved and sadistic.

Ultimately, the university-based treatment system self-destructed. A grassroots movement arose, making sex reassignment accessible to practically anyone who wants it. And many people want it. Although the present treatment system is far from perfect, it is self-regulating, for there are finally alternatives. Transsexual people are no longer depending upon the whims of a single individual or clinic; they can practice consumerism, shopping for services as if they were buying a house or a car. And caregivers have become aware of transsexual people as human

beings, with individual needs; for the first time, they are beginning to see transsexual people as they are, and not forcing them to conform to notions of transsexualism garnered from textbooks or medical journals.

Observation 7: Transsexualism is an Industry

Since the 465 men and women who wrote desperate letters to Christian Hamburger following the public revelation of Christine Jorgensen’s surgery in Denmark, increasing numbers have applied for surgical and hormonal sex reassignment. Because it is not a condition which exactly inspires the individual to come forward, the exact numbers of transsexual people are unknown, but the latest edition of *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM III-R) places the incidence at 1 in 30,000 for males and 1 in 100,000 for females. Prevalence rates have regularly been revised upward (for instance, many in the treatment community are now acknowledging equal numbers of female-to-male and male-to-female persons). In my opinion, the DSM III-R’s estimates are on the low side. Why? Because for every identified transsexual person, there are probably between 10 and 100 people who would really like to change their gender. Incidence rates tend to reflect only those who are known to the treatment community (which sees only those who seek help, and which has traditionally considered as transsexual only those who actively seek genital surgery). Many men and women never come to terms with their transsexual feelings, living and dying in the gender of their birth, revealing themselves to no one, including the authors of books like DSM III-R.

The system which arose to replace the university-based gender clinics is based on free enterprise. Physicians are not constrained by the experimental model; this allows them to treat their transsexual clientele as patients, rather than as subjects. An army of caregivers—psychologists, psychiatrists, endocrinologists, surgeons, electrologists, aestheticians, and others—has

arisen to meet the needs of those seeking treatment, and organizations such as the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, Inc. (HBIGDA) have formed to regulate treatment practices. But perhaps more importantly, transsexual persons and other transgendered persons (cross-dressers and transgenderists) have formed a community—a loose system of support groups, information clearinghouses, advocacy organizations, political action committees, publishers, telephone help lines, and computer bulletin boards—through which information flows and action is initiated. This community sponsors regional and national meetings, influences legislation, and helps novice transsexual persons learn the amazing game of gender. Although many organizations are run on a nonprofit basis, cottage industries have arisen—boutiques with hard-to-find sizes and literature, manufacturers of penile prostheses and breast forms, makeover services, therapists, electrologists, and aestheticians who specialize in persons with gender dysphoria, publishers of magazines, sponsors of conventions and other events. Transsexualism has become an industry. A three-day convention of 200 gender-conflicted persons (and there are literally dozens held annually throughout the continental U.S.) can generate hundreds of thousands of dollars of revenue for restaurateurs, hoteliers, convention sponsors, and vendors, as Merissa Sherrill Lynn has pointed out in *Tapestry* magazine. And the financial impact extends outside the transgender community, for transgendered persons must buy clothing and cosmetics which are appropriate for their gender of choice and avail themselves of medical care which can run into the tens of thousands of dollars per person. Hospitals, clothing manufacturers, automobile companies, grocery stores, pharmaceutical firms, utility companies, airlines, the phone company, manufacturers of breast implants, Avon, and Lane Bryant—all benefit from transsexual dollars, and must compete for them—and this ensures better services.

Observation 8: Transsexual People are BioPsychoSocial Engineers

With the help of medical and other professionals, transsexual persons physically deconstruct and reconstruct their bodies, their behavioral patterns, and their social roles in order to bring them into consonance with their gender identities. This makes them biological, psychological, and social engineers; never before in history has there been such profound self-engineering.

Christine Jorgensen is a case in point. Her presentation as a woman was quite convincing. Slim and stylish, and reasonably pretty, there was nothing about her to suggest that she had not always been a woman. This made her transformation at the hands of her medical team all the more astonishing in an age in which refrigerators were white, telephones were black, boys were boys and girls were girls, and there were no shades of gray in between.

Articles about Christine, usually accompanied with “before” and “after” photos, were everywhere. She was in newspapers, magazines, newsreels, on the radio, and on that enfant terrible, television. Although the treatment was sensationalistic and carnival-like, the message was clear: here was a miracle of science, a man who had been turned into a woman by a series of surgical procedures. In an age of hydramatic transmissions and atom bombs, the average American believed that scientists could do virtually anything, that all of life’s little problems could be fixed by a simple application of technology.

In terms of the medical treatments she had received, Christine’s sex reassignment (a term not yet coined) had consisted of hormonal therapy and two surgical procedures: castration (removal of the testicles) and penectomy (removal of the penis). Later, after her return to the US, she was to quietly have yet a third procedure, vaginoplasty, in which a vaginal cavity was created in the Barbie-Doll-like groin her Danish surgeon had given her. But if her operations were what constitut-

ed her “sex change” in the popular imagination, it was the feminization caused by female hormones and electrolysis which shouted “woman” to the American public. Her surgery sites were invisible, but that smooth face, those blonde curls, those slim hands were right out there for everyone to see. If she was any less than a woman, it was not because of her appearance or demeanor, but only because of the particulars of a past which been laid open by journalists as deftly as Christian Hamburger had once laid her male parts open with a scalpel. Christine was a new sort of person, a woman who had not always been a woman, a human being who had not been content with her biology and had by damn done something about it.

It was not physicians who had actually accomplished Christine’s sex reassignment. No lancet, no hormone tablet can make a woman of a man. Christine herself was the driving force in her own sex reassignment. Certainly the medical procedures helped by making her outside congruent with her social presentation, but it was the sheer force of her will which set the process in motion, persuading reluctant physicians to undertake such a novel set of procedures. Although she did not wield the knife, Christine did her own sex change, moving into the female role with confidence and aplomb.

Jorgensen was a prime example of the intersection of the human condition and modern technology. Pills made from the urine of pregnant farm animals, plastic surgery techniques developed to correct deformities and repair disfigurements, doctors from Denmark—these were merely tools she used in orchestrating the metamorphosis she sought. She managed to conceive of the possibility of changing her sex, figure out that she would need medical help in order to do so, and recruit physicians do give her that help. She was the project manager for a bold social experiment which lasted until 1991, when she died of cancer.

Christine was not only a medical pioneer, but a social pioneer and a role model for an emerging class of

people. With no socialization or training at womanhood, she put on her high heels and went out into the world to slay dragons. She lived with dignity, and died with dignity, a spokeswoman for transsexualism, a pioneer, a woman.

Transsexual people redesign their bodies in the same way that some future bioengineer might redesign the human body for optimal functioning on a heavy gravity planet, or for underwater living. They monitor the cutting edge of medical and other knowledge and apply it to themselves, usually without the help and often without the permission of family, friends, clergy, teachers, governments, and helping professionals. They use hormones, plastic surgery, and electrolysis to fashion their bodies into a form that they find more acceptable than the ones their genes designed for them, and then they wear those bodies, venturing into society and creating place for themselves. They similarly redesign their mode of dress, grooming, and hairstyles, coming to clothe and accessorize themselves in ways which are characteristic of their gender of choice. They change their careers, relationships, affiliations, and sexual liaisons. They change their names and identifying documents, disguise their paper trail, and in some cases, even concoct Orwellian retro-histories, fabricating past lives as the little boys or little girls that they never were.

Transsexual people must also alter their speech patterns, gestures, major motor patterns, and other aspects of their behavior so that they will be consonant with their new gender roles. This requires the unpacking of a great deal of psychological baggage, for they must unlearn behavior and thinking patterns which are typical of the gender in which they have been forced to live throughout their lives, and which they have been forced to exhibit. These must be deconstructed before the individual can learn to talk, move, and think like any other member of their chosen gender.

This human re-engineering, and not the actual genital surgery which

morbidly fascinates the American populace, is the true significance of transsexual change. What is significant is not that penises and scrotums can be fashioned into vaginas or that phal-luses can be made from the skin of the forearm, but that someone who is easily identifiable as a man can come to be identifiable as a woman, and vice-versa, by sheer will of self-determination (with hormonal assistance). This is exciting stuff, subject matter for science fiction stories, and it happening now, in every city in America and practically every small town in America.

Observation 9: Transsexual People Seek Change in the Face of Adversity

Not only are transsexual people self-designers of their new selves, but they must do their work in the face of the generalized ignorance and in the face of the hostility of society, and despite their own feelings of guilt and self-doubt. They re-engineer themselves without specialized training, usually without assistance of parents, spouses, authorities, and helping professionals, and often in the face of extreme financial adversity. They forge these new frontiers not with federal dollars in spotless laboratories, but under battlefield conditions, trying to change their bodies while simultaneously trying to preserve social relationships, get educations, keep jobs, have their teeth cleaned, and maintain the other trappings of a normal life.

Most transsexual people learn early on to play their gender cards close to their chest, for their attempts to reach out are frequently rebuffed—sometimes violently. Those who would ordinarily be turned to for help—parents, grandparents, siblings, teachers, clergy, lawmakers, friends, and neighbors—are unlikely to understand, and even psychologists, counselors, and physicians are usually distressingly ignorant—sometimes even those who proclaim to specialize in the treatment of gender dysphoria. Those who are sympathetic and knowledgeable can be difficult to find, and resource material, although it exists, is rarely readily

available.

Transsexual people have been maligned in the medical literature for being readers of that selfsame literature, as if their attempts at self-discovery were somehow shameful or presumptuous. Medical writers have seemingly not realized that it is the desire for self-exploration and discovery, the lack of support from the medical and other helping professions, and the general unavailability of self-help books which drives transsexual people to the stacks of the medical libraries. Certainly, these critics have seemed unaware of their bias in making criticisms that they would never make about less stigmatized classes of people like diabetics or heart patients. After all, would a cancer patient be criticized in print in a medical journal for reading a book about cancer? Obviously not.

It is truly amazing that so many transsexual people are able to sort out their feelings, locate the appropriate medical references, diagnose themselves, and begin to seek treatment. It is even more amazing when they supervise their own treatment, for it is a near-impossible task to fill the roles of psychologist, social worker, physician, and vocational rehabilitation counselor. It is an indictment of these professions and of our society as a whole that so many transsexual persons have so often had to face their difficult journeys without help.

Observation 10: The Real Issue in Transsexualism is Freedom of the Body

The history of the treatment of transsexual people is filled with injustice, hatred, ignorance, and occasionally, sympathy. Few minorities have been so discriminated against, and few things are so difficult to contemplate as changing one's gender. Transsexual people have been and continue to be viewed as so bizarre that they are usually not thought of as a minority, even by those who should know better. Like other minority groups before them, they are devalued—and being devalued, there are no safeguards and few

checks to ensure their proper treatment, or even their safety.

Nevertheless, transsexual people have insisted on their right to self-determination, even to the point of civil disobedience. When I was unable to obtain treatment in the late 70s—when I was refused help by one of the university-based gender clinics and told that I was not dysfunctional enough to be a candidate for sex reassignment, that it was their decision that I would remain a man, and that as there was nowhere else to go, I could like it or lump it—I refused to allow them the right to that determination. I promptly found an extramedical and extralegal source for female hormones, and in essence reassigned myself. I was not the only one to do so, either. Not by a long shot. In the face of fear and confusion, thousands and perhaps tens of thousands of transsexual men and women have used every available means—legal or otherwise—to bring about the desired changes to their bodies. And having done so, many of us have become activists to ensure that those who come after us will not have to break the law in order to obtain treatment.

The parallel here to abortion is obvious, even though there is not the complicating issue of whether a speck of fetal tissue is or is not a human being. Both abortion and transsexualism have to do with the right of the individual to the freedom of the his or her own body—and both have come under attack from persons who would restrict that right. The opponents of abortion are the opponents of transsexualism, although they have in general been too busy with the former to give more than lip service to the latter. But the right to choose somehow disappears when genital modification becomes involved; many who support the rights to terminate pregnancy cannot conceive that a mentally healthy human being would want his or her breasts or genitals altered to resemble those of the other sex.

Much more than abortion, transsexualism is the logical gameboard on which to determine the freedom of the individual to his or her own body. No

other individual or potential individual is involved to cloud the issue; there is only one person and his or her desire to change the genitals and secondary sex characteristics.

Observation 11: Transsexualism Does Not Occur in a Vacuum

Transsexual men and women are part of society, with all of the obligations and privileges of membership. They are sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles, cousins. They are best friends, roommates, husbands, wives, lovers. Depending upon their achievements in their attempts to function in their assigned gender, they may be shift supervisors, students, captains of industry, bank presidents, airline pilots, teachers, physicians, waitresses, taxi drivers, army generals. Their social roles demand that they fill those roles in appropriately masculine and feminine ways; gender variation is not tolerated well in our society—especially in males. The discovery of mere crossdressing can shatter marriages, ruin careers, alienate parents from children. The revelation of deep-seated transsexual feelings and a wish to change gender can be devastating to the individual's life. Transition can result in alienation and anomie, loss of job, loss of family, loss of friends, loss of status. And not only the transsexual person is affected. Everyone who knows him or her is affected.

Unfortunately, in our society, the necessity for the individual to maintain a facade of maleness or femaleness often takes precedence over the relationship itself. That is, it is more important that someone be a man or woman than that they be a friend, family member, or lover. Thus, by merely acknowledging that which they are, transsexual people lose families that they love, jobs that they function well in, friends that they would do anything for. Most transsexual people are well aware of the probability of their lives falling apart, and the very fact that many proceed with transition should give some indication of the

unremitting pain that they feel because of their gender dysphoria. But many, despite their pain, remain in their original roles at least partially out of consideration for the others in their lives. Most who do transition do so in a manner calculated to cause minimal disruption to those they love. Transsexual people are faced with an extremely difficult moral choice—they must decide between being their true selves or sacrificing their very selfness for others. They should not be faulted for making either decision.

Observation 12: Transsexual People Will Help Us To Move Toward a Gender-Just Society

Unfortunately, the enemies of transsexualism come from not only from the far right, but from the far left. Transsexual persons are excluded from many lesbian organizations and from woman-only events like the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, in which Nancy Burkholder was expelled in 1991 for being a suspected transsexual. She was, in fact, transsexual (post-op; she had been cavorting naked with the other womyn), but what is important here is that the assumption of transsexualism was sufficient to get her the boot, despite documents identifying her as female. This is gender fascism, or as JoAnn Roberts calls it, gender nazism, for any woman with masculine characteristics—who was too tall, who had facial hair, who had a deep voice—could have just as easily been expelled from the festival.

When it is safe for a known transsexual person to function in society without harassment, without prejudice, and without discrimination, then all varieties of gender expression will be allowable, and we will have a gender-just society. In 1992, we do not have a gender-just society, although we are a lot closer than we were in 1952.

Even if long hair and earrings are now marginally more acceptable for men and masculine clothing and short hair is more acceptable for women, traditional notions of gender still prevail. Many people do not feel comfortable

with these traditional roles. Many conform, forcing themselves into presentations they find distasteful and repulsive. Those who do not conform face a lifetime of ridicule, criticism, and discrimination because of their appearance, dress, and behavior.

Names like sissy, faggot, dyke, and butch, with their implications of inadequacy and deviance, will lose their sting when all expressions of gender are allowable. Feminine men will be allowed to be feminine men, and masculine women will be allowed to be masculine women. When transsexual people are accepted in the neighborhood, the church, the family, schools, and the workplace, then other varieties of gender expression will be allowable, for transsexualism is the extreme case, and lesser manifestations pale by comparison. Men will be allowed to wear long hair, earrings, makeup, or skirts, and women to do

away with those things. Sissies and tomboys will escape harassment at school, and those with expressions of gender which stray from the norm will be free to walk down city streets, dressed however they please, without fear of insult. All sorts of gender alternatives will be acceptable, allowing men and women who might otherwise be forced to the extreme position of transsexualism to find comfort zones far short of surgery.

In a gender-just society, men will be free to cry and to express emotions without being considered unmanly, and women will be able to be strong and independent without being considered unwomanly. People of whichever sex will be free to express their gender in whatever way they see fit, without fear of social sanction. And transsexual people will have once again have been the torchbearers.

It is forty years since the "birth" of transsexualism, forty years since the notion of "sex change" burst upon the American scene like a supernova. Just as television, which is also for all practical purposes forty, transsexualism has begun to mature, to show its true nature, its potentialities. From *I Love Lucy* to *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, from Christine Jorgensen to Caroline Cossey, both television and transsexualism have matured. And as the horizons of television have broadened, giving us larger screens, hundreds of channels, larger viewing screens, stereo sound, home video recording, rental movies, and interactive video, so has transsexualism begun to broaden our notions of sex and gender, of the potentialities of human experience. Our culture is richer for transsexualism. Perhaps in another forty years, we will understand just how much richer. ☞

Preserve it for Posterity!

Books, magazines, newsletters, journal articles, videotapes, films, and newspaper clippings about transsexualism, crossdressing, and transgenderism are wanted for the newly

formed
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Materials can be shipped via U.S. Post Office to AEGIS, P.O. Box 33724, Decatur, GA 30033, or by UPS or other private shippers to AEGIS, 1898 Chisholm Court, Tucker, GA 30084.

Please contact us before shipping large amounts of materials. We can be reached most evenings at (404) 939-0244.

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On 20 February, 1993, Dr. Eugene A. Schrang spoke on male-to-female sex reassignment surgery at an AEGIS workshop in Atlanta.

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Hermaphrodite's Love
Continued from page 26

Concerning the question of "what is the most beautiful thing?" Sappho wrote, "What one loves" (DuBois, 1991). We simply become what we love. I wonder how our transgendered mode of being might develop if we could grow without obstacles and repression. I think we are transgendered because we have a special way of being, a love, and a destiny to match. Among women, a new sense of love is emerging which opens the mind and heart, a moral force which speaks of love of life, love of self and others, love of all forms of life and the Earth. Many women are revisioning love as a powerful force which seeks to create conditions that best promote the economic, social, political, and spiritual well-being of the female experience, in order to heal a troubled world (McKee, 1989). How different the vision when regard is given to a full honoring of womankind. I would pray that a world which could value male and female equally might not stifle boys who wish to be girls or girls who wish to be boys. Without shame and stigma, how would they grow up and openly express their experience? This is incredible to imagine! How wonderful to live our beauty from beginning to end! I believe our duty as a community is to help nurture the chance for those little seeds of the future. I pray that they might find easy balance and harmony with their lives, that they might smile with Hermaphrodite's love and delight. ☪

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CQ's Quotations From the Literature

Garfinkel (1967) makes a distinction between the possession of a penis or a vagina as a biological event and the possession of either genital as a cultural event. The cultural genital is the one which is assumed to exist and which, it is believed, should be there. As evidence of "natural sexuality," the cultural genital is a legitimate possession. Even if the genital is not present in a physical sense, it exists in a cultural sense if the person feels entitled to it and/or is assumed to have it.

— Kessler, Suzanne J., & McKenna, Wendy. (1978). *Gender: An ethnomethodological Approach*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 153-154.

5.1 Prior to the initiation of hormonal sex reassignment:

5.1.2 The patient must demonstrate that the sense of discomfort with the self **and the urge to rid the self of the genitalia** and the wish to live in the genetically other sex role have existed for at least two years.

(emphasis ours)

—Walker, Paul, et al. (1990). *Standards of Care: The Hormonal and Surgical Sex Reassignment of Gender Dysphoric Persons*. Houston, Texas: Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, Inc.

We believe that the upcoming version of the Standards of Care should acknowledge "cultural genitals," thereby removing one of the many external forces which move some transgendered persons toward surgery they neither want nor need. One should not be required to want surgical sex reassignment in order to receive hormonal sex reassignment —Ed.

Rena's Page

Rena is a medicine woman and a Native American berdache. This issue of CQ is dedicated to her. She doesn't often write, so we are honored to have the following.

We Have a Duty to the Earth

by Rena Swifthawk

About a century ago, my people were facing genocide as an entire race of people. At that time, many tribes perished and the tribes that survived lost many of their traditional ways. One of the great areas of loss was that of the "berdache," or what my tribe calls the "Mahoe" tradition. In turn, I want to call you "special ones."

I have been living on the Southern Ute Indian Reservation for some years now. I am Kiowa and Apache. I have many relations who are Utes. This is the place where I chose to go through my transition. I had told my Sundance Chief about my predicament. He had always respected me as a great warrior. He did not know what to say to me, so he suggested I go talk to the elder women of the tribe. Collectively, they put together the pieces of this almost forgotten tradition of the berdache, or mahoe. Through this effort, they and I realized how important people like me are, not only to the tribe, but to the world community.

My grandmother told me how, a long time ago, the world people were out of balance with our Mother Earth and with each other. She also told me how special the berdache people were and that at that time, there were a lot of them cropping up everywhere and helping collectively to restore balance back to the Earth Mother and her people.

Once again, in our time, our Earth Mother needs this balancing that has long been taken away from her. You see, this present-day society is the most unnatural way of life man has ever tried. In other words, as a whole, the people of this society are the furthest removed from the trees, the birds, insects, animals, the growing plants, and the weather. Planet Earth to this day is surrounded by negative energy which has created this imbalance.

As a healer, not only of people, but also of our Earth Mother, I see that it is very important for the world's population to send good, positive, and peaceful energy not only to each other, but also to all other living entities on this planet—for, you see, everything is alive.

We, as mahoes, berdaches, people with gender dysphoria, or whatever term you want to use, are very special people. We have the gift of insight; we can feel the female and male energy from within. This gift was given to us as we began our lives in our mothers' womb. As we formed, so did our gift. Some of us feel it is a curse; some of us take advantage of it; and most of don't even know our potential as very powerful beings in our society.

What I am saying, special ones, is that we all have a specific intended mission in our lives and that is to restore balance to our entire race of people. We must learn that we are true, special people of the planet. Earth Mother does not belong to us; we belong to the Earth. Will we wait until the air is so dirty we cannot breathe? Will we wait until all our water is polluted and we cannot drink of this precious, life-sustaining entity any longer? Will we wait until the last field is paved with

cement and tar? Will we wait until no plants can grow and no four-footed, flying, or crawling people can survive any more? You, special ones, cannot wait. You have power to bring balance about. Let us do it!

Only when our own existence on this Earth Mother is threatened to the point of our own genocide as human life on this planet will we remember our destiny. Special ones, that time is now. I say to you: let's not wait until it gets worse or totally out of control. We must realize the potential we have as special people, and also realize that we all have this potential to be healers and shamans.

This sense of destiny and potential must start within our own community. I see a great need for healing work within ourselves. I have been traveling across the U.S. for the past couple of years and feeling a lot of hate, egotism, ignorance, back-stabbing, and unclean ways of thinking from a lot of people in our community. We must stop wasting our beautiful gifts. I have seen people get mad at one another for leaving one group or organization in order to start their own way of communicating to the world's people. There are enough of us to have several groups and organizations in

each city if only we would give ourselves the chance to stop thinking that our technologic, materialistic, egotistical ways are going to solve anything at all. It is time to realize collectively that we can alter our own reality and destiny on this planet. It is time that we heal ourselves and get out of the closets where we have hidden ourselves for so long and realize that only then can we heal the community and heal our Mother Earth.

This way of thinking may sound too far-fetched— or, it might even sound impossible— but we must remember that only 25 years ago it was illegal to cross-dress publicly in most of the 50 states. About 25 years ago, transsexuals were treated with shock “therapy” as abnormal and deficient people, and hermaphrodites were put into freak shows in circuses. Blacks were not given equal rights as human beings.

It is time that we adopt a new way of thinking. And, strangely, this “new” way of thinking is also a very ancient way of thinking. The ancient way of thinking will lead us to realize that we must work in groups rather than as disconnected individuals. Years ago, I myself would have wound up in a circus because I was born with both sets of genitals.

What a waste that would have been! Remember that weeds don't exist in the Indian culture, and nothing should be wasted, especially people.

In my culture, we feel that there is a right time for every event. I say to you that now is the right time to heal our community. We must learn to live in balance with the forces, cycles, and rhythms of nature, and especially with ourselves. It is precisely how we see that creates the reality we perceive. Change the “how” of it and you change the “what” of it. In other words, change how you see and think about yourself and our community and you change what is actually present in our world— which is a great imbalance. In your culture, you say that ‘seeing is believing.’ In my culture, we say that ‘believing is seeing.’ Think about it, special ones. It is time to believe, and then you will “see.”

Give of yourself actively and unselfishly. Start out by thinking good thoughts. We must remember the most basic principle, which is, “Not harming others.” Try not to control or manipulate others. Every being has a right to live their own life in their own way. Unfortunately, the American/European culture sees life as linear. Native American/Indigenous peoples see life as a circular process. We are taught to see the circle as a whole and to understand its relationship to each part that makes up the whole. And, most importantly, we learn to see how they relate to other parts in creation.

Finally, another great principle to learn is to walk in balance and have a self-realization of what that means. Cultivate the shaman within. It is the birthright of all the transgendered people. ☪☪

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Bits n Pieces

Dr. Michel Seghers is a plastic and reconstructive surgeon who practices in Brussels, Belgium. The following interview was conducted on Sunday, 4 October, 1992, at the Southern Comfort convention in Atlanta, Georgia.

Mini-Interview with Dr. Michel Seghers

Dr. Seghers: April—

CQ: Yes. The woman we wrote about in the first issue of the magazine. She went twice to Belgium. The first time she became ill and had to return to the U.S. without surgery.

Dr. Seghers: Yes. Two times in Belgium. She doesn't regret it. I remember she didn't argue much when she had to go back. Some are becoming a little angry because they are in Brussels and it isn't possible to come back. Even if they accept that they cannot have the surgery, they have special airplane tickets, so they have to wait in Brussels for their return flight. If they return early, I can do a medical attest that they had surgery— I don't say what— and that they should fly home as soon as possible. That would be a medical attest, which is normally accepted by the airlines. (Looking at tape recorder.) So, it's turning?

CQ: It's turning, yes. I was very taken by your work in Zaire (Dr. Seghers had just shown slides of some extraordinary facial reconstruction work he had done in what was then the Belgian Congo in the 1960s).

Dr. Seghers: Yes. I was not sure that it would interest people, because it is a little different, but I think it is helpful— to show not only the work I am doing now, for which I am known, but in the way that I have transitioned in my surgery.

CQ: I saw people who had been shot in the face. You had to do reconstructive work on children with their faces shot off.

Dr. Seghers: You see, it's major reconstruction. It's not delicate cosmetic or elective surgery, which I don't like too much. I don't like to spend too much time for small things. I wanted to

present the work in Zaire because I did it. I'm proud to have done it. I wanted to show that I have done major cases in difficult conditions, because I think that sometimes patients spending time in this type of surgery (SRS) would maybe think the surgeon is not the best at other things, and that he is doing SRS because he is not succeeding at the other type. Don't you think it's possible?

CQ: I think so. And I think that the experience— having to do that kind of work under such conditions obviously built a tremendous amount of skill.

Dr. Seghers: Yes. It's becoming more and more easy.

CQ: Have you published about your work with transsexual people?

Dr. Seghers: No. I have given papers at different meetings, even in the Netherlands, but there is no automatic written report. It was not published in writing.

CQ: I know you're using a perineal flap technique in your male-to-female surgery, and it probably should be published.

Dr. Seghers: Oh, it has been published, because I didn't take that from myself. At the last meeting of the Harry Benjamin Association in Cleveland, I got some reprints. This was working in my mind. I should do something because I am discarding too much skin from the scrotum, and I was convinced that there was some way to use that instead of discarding it. And it was at that meeting that I got a paper, and there was also a presentation by a surgeon from Miami, I think Dr. Small. The idea was good, so I adapted it, and I think now it is improving a lot of things.

And not only from what I saw at the Harry Benjamin Association. I saw some patients coming from Dr. Phillips in London. You know, it is a good center for reassignment surgery since a long time. Dr. Phillips was a urologist. He was well-known, maybe one of the first in Europe to do this work, but now he is retired. I saw a few of his former patients for improvement. During the labiaplasty, I found out that he was very good for the question of depth of the vagina, and I had some-

thing to learn from that. In Europe, I am better known for the cosmetic appearance after the main surgery, immediately.

CQ: Even without the double-Z-plasty?

Dr. Seghers: Even without that. Sometimes it's already good enough.

CQ: I think you're also well-known for this in the United States. In fact, you keep a six-month waiting list, don't you?

Dr. Seghers: Just now, it's about four months. I'm almost completely booked for January. In January, I think I have two or three possible, because a few are not confirmed. When I propose a date, I keep it open while I wait for the confirmation. If the confirmation doesn't come, or if the date is not possible, I re-book it. I don't like late cancellations, but that's okay; it happens, and I accept it. If I propose a date in January, and they say, no, that's not possible, give me two or three months ahead because I have money problems, or I cannot get time off from my job, I will reschedule them. So January is almost fully booked, and I don't think I will accept patients for February. So, March. I have just one patient for March— March second, if I have good memory.

CQ: You began doing this surgery fifteen years ago?

Dr. Seghers: Yes, in the early seventies. But just one case, and then it took two years to have another one. And now! Last year, I was above one hundred.

CQ: You know, Dr. Ratnam in Singapore, in a film, was talking about a woman in Singapore, and she was at his office every day, every day, every day, begging for surgery, and he said that he did her surgery, and then by word of mouth— is that what happened with you? Word of mouth?

Dr. Seghers: In Singapore is closed now, that possibility. I think maybe he retired, and nobody took over. I have heard that the program has been discontinued there. But yes, by word of mouth.

CQ: You have a very good sense of humor. Do you remember what you told my roommate, when she asked

about vegetarian meals? You said not to eat the meat, and then said to me, "I have trouble sometimes with vegetarians and Presbyterians."

Dr. Seghers: Yes. When people ask my religion, I used to say that I am vegetarian, but not practical— is it?

CQ: Practicing.

Dr. Seghers: My religion is vegetarian, but not practicing.

CQ: You have worked with Dr. Lambert, the anesthesiologist, for fifteen years.

Dr. Seghers: Oh, yes, since the beginning. Since the beginning, from hospital to hospital. She cares a lot, and she helps me.

CQ: You started working with American patients about four years ago?

Dr. Seghers: Oh, more than that. It was Michelle Hunt with another girl from California. They came two together. Then she stayed in Brussels and she made some publicity. In fact, I never arranged that with her, but she said, "I want to do something for people." She rented an apartment, and she stayed for one year. She went to the airport, meeting people, and arranging things, and taking them to my office. It made things easier for me at that time, but I understand that she had some-

thing else to do. I just spoke with her on the telephone. I will go to see her now. She's still a little interested because she still comes on different occasions to my home. Maybe I will show her the slides I showed here. She will be interested, and she will pass the word to other people. Not that I will do another meeting there, but I will show the slides.

CQ: There have been many people pigeonholing you out in the hall. Planning their own surgery. I'm sure you'll be seeing many of them in Brussels.

Dr. Seghers: Yes, and I saw several former patients from not too long ago—at least ten— and a few would-be candidates, and this will mean a little more when I see that they are coming from Decatur? This is a difficult word for me. In French, I would say Dehcatour.

CQ: It's actually part of Atlanta, so just say Atlanta.

Dr. Seghers: But it's so far from here to the airport, it's a long way.

CQ: It's all Metropolitan Atlanta. Do you have patients from all over the United States?

Dr. Seghers: More from California. A few from Texas, San Antonio, and Houston, too. And some from Georgia. Like you. ☺

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was effeminate, this has to limit his options. Such men would become stigmatized and their circumstances could lead to self-identification as a transsexual. Their options begin to be limited, they become labeled, and they find themselves in a trajectory. Because I was so naive, I didn't realize how many transsexual persons out there were really good at being men. Darn good at being men, but feeling like women inside.

I came to realize that there are multiple avenues for expressing gender variance. For example, Ariadne Kane's endorsement of androgyny is one option. I think that would be comfortable for many people if our Euro-American gender paradigm wasn't so bipolar. However, it may not be such a comfortable one for other people. But I do think that as a complex society, we are on the way to having a greater complexity of social identities which attributes of physical sex, social gender, and even sexual orientation are rearranged. I really believe that gender identities are experienced on much more of a continuum than I ever expected. For some, the option is definitely going to be surgery, yet other people may not be so firmly committed. And the gender centers and organizations like AEGIS have a vital role in helping these people become actualized—to help them to negotiate society—it's very impor-

tant to do that. Would you see that for AEGIS?

QQ: Oh, I think so. We're always telling people, "Surgery. No one ever sees it. Who knows if you've had it or not? Don't be so worried about it until you get the rest of your life in focus."

Bolin: I know of a person who will probably go back and forth all of his/ her life. And this occurs in other cultures as well. In some other cultures there are options to take on another gender role for certain periods of your life, and then to switch back. For example, the xanith in Oman is a status option for males. Xanith is more like an intermediate and often temporary gender. Males can take on the xanith role, which provides them economic opportunities they wouldn't have as males. When they've become financially sufficient, they can shed their xanith role and become men and husbands.

QQ: Any concluding remarks?

Bolin: There's much more work to be done, particularly in regard to deciphering these alternative genders. So often, we look at the ethnographic record, with its gender variance, and say, "Oh. The exotic other." But what can we learn from other cultures? After all, we're pretty exotic, we Americans, with our bipolar gender paradigm. The transgender community has a very anthropological perspective in this regard, and is way ahead of most Americans in recognizing that gender is very diverse. **QQ**

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The Berdache Spirit by Wendy Susan Parker

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

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

Unlike European Americans, gender or sexual divergence did not threaten the Indians. Berdache males in particular often became healers, surgeons, counselors, therapists, high religious priests, shamans, witch doctors, and medicine men. Berdache males could also become one of the multiple wives of Indian braves and, in rare cases, the wives of genetic females who became "men" by proving themselves as warriors. The term berdache is of course a generic one, as these "soft" men were called by different terms, depending on the tribe. They were "Winktes" to the Lakota Sioux,

"Nadle" to the Navajo, "Shamans" to the Mojave, and "Mahu" to the Polynesian culture of Tahiti.

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

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

Setting up a rigid dichotomy of paired opposites allows little tolerance for cultural and social variance of what is perceived to be masculine or feminine. With these narrow constrictions on all behavior, it is little wonder that we live in such a neurotic and violent society. With little room to express the total spectrum of human emotion from nurturing to assertive behavior, people have to hide or ignore some of the basic emotional outlets ascribed to the other gender. Only recently do we see a social acceptance of men in touch with their feminine side and assertive women who "run with the wolves."

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

values see only two diametrically opposite possibilities— yin or yang— rather than the unifying combination of both in an androgynous mix. One need not have hormonal or surgical modifications of one's body in order to express one's total self.

A culture is really just an accumulation of social and historical habits through a repetition of tradition. The notions of feminine and masculine behavior and being a woman or man are social entities, not biological ones (Sorry Mr. Freud, but anatomy is not destiny).

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

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

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

Flowers and Rot

by Annie Johnson

We live our lives as metaphor. After all, language is metaphor. For those of you who are unfamiliar with metaphor, let me give you an example.

In *The Time Falling Bodies Take to Light*, William Irwin Thompson talks

This is the healing that we have the opportunity—no, the obligation—to do. To make the world whole. What does it mean to make the world whole? It means that we have to work to create a culture where the most basic understanding of the universe is not as a clockwork, but as Goddess, as the creator and the created. Not a universe of things interrelated by force and distance, but of a living, breathing, vibrating, and resonating whole that is and always will be completely beyond our rational comprehension, but which we can know by reconnecting with it, by becoming one with it, by becoming whole.

—Starhawk

about culture. Thompson says that a culture or society is a new seed which germinates, roots, and grows into a beautiful plant. The culture then blossoms and from the blossom, fruits. The fruit ripens and falls to the ground, the plant dies, and the fruit rots. Out of the rotting flesh of the fruit the new seed germinates, using the rotting flesh as fertilizer, and starts the cycle over again.

This is metaphor. The cultural cycle is a biological life cycle. And as the culture is the fruit, language is our reality. When we use language—symbolic thought—then our conscious reality becomes that language. Try to think about anything without using words. Absurd, you say? What is thinking without words? But then what is it that the great apes do? Well, it certainly isn't thought as we understand it, but the great apes certainly are intelligent creatures. They understand a great deal. So why are we so disconnected from that very old and deep understanding?

The point is not to go back to

thinking like the apes. I am not by any means saying that we should throw out our language. But why can't we reconnect with those "primitive" modes of thought, those understandings based on feelings and intuition rather than on rationality which have been lost to us? We should be able to reconnect, to become conscious of these modes of understanding without losing our language. We need to learn to shut the language off at will

and experience what is hiding beneath. This is what meditation, wicca, pantheism, and shamanistic practices are about.

The archaeological record suggests that this connection was lost from Western culture with the overthrow of the Goddess religions that took place about 3000 years before the common era (b.c.e.). The Goddess religions and the consensus cultures that went with these religions were by all indications very much in touch with and connected with the real world, with nature, and with emotion and intuition. The world was literally one living being, of which people were an integral and inseparable part.

Now we come to the idea that men think differently from women. Women are described as thinking non-linearly, in networks or webs. We hear talk of "women's intuition." Ursula K. LeGuin speaks of the Mother Tongue. Traditionally in Western cultures, women's thought and ideas have been at best devalued, and far more often simply ignored. LeGuin talks of women living

in the dark part of the world that is disdained by men—the place where the losers live, where your power has to come from within yourself because no one above you is going to pass it down to you.

This is the place where real power, the power of immanence originates. The power and strength come from within, originating in your connection to the earth and flowing through you. This is the power that creates, the mystery that is creation and is Woman. This is the power that most men and entirely too many women can't or won't comprehend or even acknowledge. This is a reality based on personal power, immanent power from within, rather than power and control over the material world. It is so sad that so many who live in this world cannot connect with the power that exists there. It is because they have been so thoroughly enculturated to believe that power is given to you by the people in charge, and that that is the only place it can come from, that they are unable to let go of that notion.

I find it so painful to watch discussions on what is wrong with our society, our culture. There is not anything wrong with it other than that it is dying. But it isn't dying of a sickness or disease; it is dying of old age. We are living in the rotting fruit, searching desperately for the germinating seed of the new culture.

One of the seeds that is germinating is a seed that will grow into a consensus culture, which is a place where all agree on what is most important, where we can get away from the poison of the hierarchy, which creates winners and losers and makes us hateful and jealous, materialistic, and prideful of possessions.

And what is it that is most important? Very simply, Love and Growth. Love and Growth go together, because to love is to nurture, and nurturing encourages growth. Nurturing comes from the dark part of the world, from working the soil, fertilizing the roots, getting down into the dirt and rot. There are other seeds there, too. Our challenge, our opportunity,

The following is an excerpt from an article which appeared in The Femme Mirror, V. 18, No. 3, Summer, 1993.

On My Crossdressing by Sofronia Anne Strong

Joseph Campbell, speaking with Bill Moyers about the nature and value of mythology, has said that one of the persistent and eternal messages of myth has been to each of us to "go with our bliss." It seems that for human beings to realize their full joy and potential in life, they must discover the nature of their own bliss, accept it, and live with it. Of course, for many of us, especially in a culture so riddled with "shoulds" and other social imperatives, discovering our bliss is very difficult. I am reminded of the episode of "Cheers" in which Norm, the failed accountant, discovers that his bliss is in interior decorating, but lives in terror of the shame that will befall him if his buddies find out that he always knows where to put the ottoman and which color drapes will work with it.

For me, the problem has been to admit that crossdressing is my bliss. Of course, I know that I am always in a state of bliss when bedecked in satin and lace, but one's bliss is spoiled by later self-recrimination begot of one's shame in the bliss. It has been said that a Puritan is a person who can't stand to see anyone else's bliss. I have had to learn to accept mine.

Mythology is a medium used since time immemorial by wise men to teach wisdom, of which finding and going with your bliss is a central teaching. There is also a strong tradition of crossdressing among the enlightened, from the form of Cybele to the myth of the silken robed, distaff bearing Hercules, through Alexander the Great and Aristotle to Caesar. The history of crossdressed priests and wise men is monumental. Can this be, that there is link between spirituality and crossdressing?

Camille Paglia has said that when

women don male attire it is done in an attempt to appropriate for themselves the power which they perceive as inherent in males, but when a man dons female clothing it is always a spiritual act. Obviously, if that is true, a lot of transvestites are unaware of the spirituality inherent in crossdressing.

While I am not churched, nor even Christian, and detest religiosity, I am a spiritual being. I have also been long aware that there is something spiritually ecstatic about my crossdressing. That has been true for a lot of people.

I have a doctorate in divinity, earned painfully and joyously at the feet of my wonderful mentor over nearly a decade of such study and training. I am in fact a Druid, which does not mean I worship trees or burn felons in wicker baskets (as Caesar charged). It means that I adhere to the ancient religion of my Celtic ancestors. This religion, too, teaches me to go with my bliss. I am fortunate to know what my bliss is—emulating women, whom I

adore, admire, and acknowledge as being in charge of things here on Earth. The Goddess, who is our Mother Earth, and whom I worship, is in charge here, and women are Her natural representatives. Men may have the power of God in them, but it is women who rule, even when men try to arrogate that status to themselves, a sad self-deception.

Men who are votaries of the Goddess, by whatever name She goes, have traditionally, the world over, worshipped Her by emulating Her. The votaries of the Goddess could never have been so ordained if they did not emulate and worship Her and the rest of women, who are Her children. Who could serve the Goddess properly who did not worship women?

I love to pose as a woman. I don't want to be one, I just want to love and understand them. They fill me with wonder. Who but a woman could love women as much as I do? That's my bliss, and I am glad of it. It leads me to wisdom, which, after all, is the object of life. ☪

Reprinted from Crossroads Chatter, Sept./Oct., 1993

Berdache

by Abby S.

*They say you have taken many scalps
and stand firm like a mountain*

*You have taken game others could not even see
In that time no warrior would challenge you
Now you redden your lips and wear flowers
You speak with white-bearded wisdom
But your cheek is soft and clean
You are ferocious as a lion
and touch me just as lightly as a newly emerging caddis*

*Now the fish rise and offer themselves to you
Flame follows the motions of your hands
You use lightning to draw faces in the sky
I ask you how or why
And you offer me your breast*

Ingersoll Center's Response
(see page 7)

It has come to Ingersoll's attention that you recently received a copy of a letter from Michelle Hunt, RN. We also received the same letter. She has raised some serious allegations about *The Brussels Experience*. Ingersoll is planning to do a thorough and comprehensive investigation of the facts surrounding her charges. Unfortunately, we do not have enough time before *Chrysalis Quarterly* goes to press to give you the results of our findings. I have, however, talked with several of the people involved with the writing of the original publication, and they assure me that there was no plagiarism of her work. Indeed, Michelle Hunt will need to provide us with a copy of her work and any dated materials so we can do a comparison.

Ingersoll has realized for some time that there is a need to update *The Brussels Experience*. As you know, the process of putting together a quality publication does not always go as smoothly as one would like. In March, I made a trip to Brussels to gather the information necessary to make these changes. As of now, the new version is all but ready to go to print, and by the time *Chrysalis* is out, we should also be shipping.

Thank you for taking the time to give this matter the attention it deserves. Ingersoll will be writing you with the results of our investigation.

—Robyn Ellis
Ingersoll Gender Center

Here at Ashland Oil Company

by Princess

*The coalfields have gone grey
like an aging dame with wispy locks
smoke curling above the towers
here at the Ashland Oil company
I can see the young girl within
her ancient sigh, her rusty tanks wheezing
with a belly laugh from her skeletal frame
grey and naked against the white winter sun*

*Hot pink halters you wore
tanned silk skin against Rustoleum catwalks
cool lips and hot boots
your hair pulled up high
pink and denim naked near the sky*

*That lunch whistle
whew!
woke me so fast I damned near fell off
but you,
your eyes were far away
out past these hills of Kentucky
out past the Atlantic
The Sorbonne
or wherever it was*

*You knew you were going
eating lunch and laughing high above these coalfields
where crankers cranked
and drillers drilled
all the hot afternoon
while your laughter wore us all to dreams*

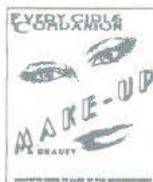
*The old men
the old men digging elbows into ribs
each morning when you passed
the mornings cool and airy before your hair
slipped up into a corona above your neck
the way you pouted
baby cheeks puffed and lips holding pins
deft and slipping grey and metallic into your hair
How those men raped you each morning
trying to expose your veins
near these scandalous fields*

*But the coalfields have gone grey
you and summer gone away
and I'm too young to stay
here at Ashland oil.*

NEWS



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