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Someone Else's Gender? Locating the Transsexual Narrative in the Gendered Landscape

by Denise J. Bates

2001

Abstract

This thesis draws on 64 published life-stories of transsexuals to explore the structure and performance of gender in Western society. The concepts of "normal", "natural", or "ordinary", gender are based on a set of largely unarticulated assumptions about the structure of gender, and how it is legitimated and maintained within a social context. The existence of transsexuals, *as agents*, challenges the "innocent" terms of occupation of the non-transsexed, and has given rise to a series of gatekeeping exercises to not only control and pathologise the transsexuals' demands for re-embodiment, but also to control and constrain the transsexuals' legitimacy as occupiers of gendered space. Transsexuals cause unease to the "normally" gendered, not so much because of the intrinsic pathology of their "condition", but because of the structural and linguistic limitations of the existing model of engenderment.

I have gained insights into "gender-in-the-ordinary" by studying how a frequently marginalised group, transsexuals, negotiate the existing gendered landscape, and how the non-transsexed occupiers of "the ordinary" police the borders of legitimacy. This study shows that the transsexual discourse has both led, and reacted to, existing understandings of engenderment. Having identified some of the limitations of these "understandings", I re-mapped the gendered landscape with an aim of accommodating the transsexual narrative without resorting to pathologisation. My revised model of gender contains four distinct and quasi-independent states; an organically-based conviction of being gendered, an internal understanding of one's legitimate place on the gender binary, a socially-validated state of engenderment, and a set of socially-sanctioned roles to affirm that legitimacy. While all four states are concordant in non-transsexuals, an inconsistency of these layers forms the substance of the transsexual condition. This thesis situates the transsexual narrative *within* other Western discourses on gender, by recognising a common goal of genderal legitimacy within a multi-layered gender landscape.

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Foreword

Five years in the making! It almost feels like a lifetime: Given that being gendered *is* a lifetime experience, that feeling is probably justified.... I came to this topic after abandoning a PhD proposal which was about as far from this one as I can imagine. I think that it was on a Friday, a little over five years ago now, when I accepted that my original proposal was not going to work, at least not at that particular university, at that particular time. I postponed clearing out my desk and moving on until the following Monday. Over that weekend, an all-too rare flash of inspiration penetrated my gloom.... Transsexual Autobiographies! Yes! That's my new topic! On Monday, my hastily drafted new proposal met with a level of enthusiasm amongst my prospective supervisors which rivalled my own. I expected that I would simply mine the biographic texts for sufficient fragments to shoe-horn into one of the existing theories of gender. I also expected that there would be about 20 published texts, a handy and manageable number, all from similarly damaged people on the periphery of gender, all adding incrementally to a tidy discourse on gender-deviance. Little did I know what the outcome would be.

With my background in the Physical Sciences, I was intimidated by the prospect of obtaining Ethics Approval for a round of interviews, and not entirely confident of my capacity for behaving ethically in any case, so I limited my study to published autobiographies. Almost as an afterthought, I made contact with the transsexual community, first through the Internet and then face to

face. As I came to know many members of "the community", and my collection of (auto)biographies swelled to 64, the simple task outlined in my PhD proposal slipped from my grasp. I realised that transsexuals, however one attempts to measure or describe personal traits, are as varied a collection of individuals as society at large. From quite mad, to witty and insightful; suicidal to rock-solid; generous to grasping; I've cried on more than one transsexual shoulder, as quite a few have done on mine. I grew to loathe a small minority of them, and respect most of them; I can even claim to have fallen in love with them on occasion. I must correct myself here: "Them" is a generalisation which does people who happen to be transsexual as great a disservice as the term "them" would, if applied to any other group within the wider society. My proposed exercise of shoe-horning these "victims" of gender into an off-the-shelf body of theory seemed impossible when I realised that we are *all* claiming the same gendered space. "Gender" itself seemed to be the problem: It appeared, more and more, to be a murky collection of social artefacts, redundancies and unchallenged assumptions. Shoe-horning anything, anywhere, is impossible when the ground on which one hopes to exert force from is as vapid and unstable as the existing gender edifice.

I think that both my thesis and I took a great leap into maturity when I moved from my original voyeuristic dissection of gender-deviance, to an examination of gender itself. Gender, far from being a "commonsense" given, is slippery, obscure, and simultaneously both complex and crushingly simple. This thesis attempts to explore gender by the shadow it casts: Pondering the obscure core of "gender" by considering how the model deals with the exceptions. "Gender", or "Being Gendered" will never have the same "innocent" connotations for me again. I am forever altered by this exercise, and I am confident that I am the better for it. Perhaps some readers may think that my study is an opening effort in re-writing our understandings about gender. Perhaps they will interpret it quite

differently.

It took me some time to appreciate that the *propriety* required of gender-theorists is of a different order to that of the notions that I had previously explored when studying the physical environment. Within the limits of human subjectivity, I have tried to be as respectful of the declarations of engenderment in this study as I am of my own. Looking back on it all, I realise that I *had* to write this thesis, in this way. With my relatively recently acquired respect of transsexuals and other people out on the periphery of what most of us understand as "normal gender", it would be an impertinence to do otherwise.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Autobiographies and other published stories of the lives of transsexuals first appeared in the 1930s, and have continued to be published until the present. They provide a rare insight into the phenomenology of sex/gender, sometimes lived at crisis point, because the authors recount their personal experience of aspects of sexual embodiment and of engenderment from a quite different standpoint to that of non-transsexuals. Although their narratives describe a movement *within* the same gendered landscape as claimed by non-transsexuals, the authors' terms of occupation, both before, and after their transformation, has little of the untroubled, naive "naturalness" of those unaffected by the condition. The content and style of the stories have evolved historically, in response to changing societal perceptions of sex and gender. At the same time, the autobiographies may have inadvertently subverted some of the "natural" assumptions which underpin this sex/gender regime, and indicate that the authors may have been agents, as much as consumers, in its evolution. Nevertheless, the agency allowed to transsexuals, as critical observers of the gendered landscape, is as contested as is their drive to seek sexual re-embodiment within that space.

1.1 My Argument

My argument, which I develop in this thesis, is as follows:

> The concepts of "normal", "natural", or "ordinary", gender are based on a set of largely unarticulated assumptions about the structure of gender, and how it is legitimated and maintained within a social context. The existence of transsexuals, *as agents,* challenges the "innocent" terms of occupation of the non-transsexed, and has given rise to a series of gatekeeping exercises to not only control and pathologise the transsexuals' demands for re-embodiment, but also to control and constrain the transsexuals' legitimacy as occupiers of gendered space. Transsexuals cause unease to the "normally" gendered, not because of the intrinsic pathology of their "condition", but because of the structural and linguistic limitations of the existing model of engenderment.

1.2 The Aims of My Research

My aim in this thesis is to explore the structure of gender, as a social process. My exploration is largely indirect, as it is based on an examination of how society handles some of the "exceptions" to the "normal" model of engenderment. The central focus of my study is, therefore, the autobiographies (or biographies which adopt some of the structure of the autobiographical stories) of either male-to-female (MtoF) and female-to-male (FtoM) transsexuals where surgical intervention has taken place to move (within the existing sex/gender dichotomy) from the sexual phenotype of birth (body) to that of the other gender (mind)[1]. I limited the study to

[1]Gatens' (1996) critique of the sex/gender distinction contests the claims of "neutrality" of sexual embodiment that appears in much of the feminist and

literature published in English[2] in modern Western societies[3] (post 1932, and USA, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Germany and France).

To come to terms with their condition, transsexuals have been compelled to consider the interaction of *notional* "sex" and "gender" to a greater depth than would have been the case if they were not gender-dysphoric. I anticipated that the autobiographies would illustrate how each author perceived the boundaries and location of their sex and gender through a period where the wider discourse on sex and gender has changed significantly. This study, which is based on transsexual narratives, should provide an insight into the historical construction of sex / gender, and the naive assumptions which underpin it, which I will argue is equally relevant to the broader community.

In this thesis, I will argue that there is no accommodation of transsexuals (or their narratives) within the existing model(s) of gender which does not involve *some* degree of pathologisation. My study explores whether transsexuals' troubled interface with a gendered landscape which has no *legitimate* place for them may be due to shortcomings of the "everyday" discourses surrounding "gender" itself. I have considered how well the stories of transsexuals (and, indirectly, the non-transsexed) fit into a model where many of our "natural" assumptions about gender and sexual embodiment are undermined, or even inverted by the notions of "gender dysphoria" or "sex-change". In Chapter 8, I have proposed a re-reading of our understandings of what "gender" is (and how we relate to it) and I offer a revised model for mapping the gendered landscape which accounts for a variety of gender-expression without resorting to

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psychological literature. For some of the early autobiographers, the separation between sex and gender is sometimes confused.

[2]Two works are *translations* (Hoyer's biography of Lili Elbe was originally published in German (1932), and Costa's biography of Coccinelle is translated from French (1982))

[3]Autobiographies by Carmen Rupe (1988) and Georgina Beyer (1999) provide brief accounts of growing up transsexual in a Maori culture.

"pathologisation".

1.2.1 What is a Transsexual?

A transsexual is, according to Stoller, "The conviction in a biologically normal person of being a member of the opposite sex"; He goes on to say, as part of this definition: "In adults, this belief is these days accompanied by requests for surgical and endocrinological procedures that change the anatomical appearance to that of the opposite sex" (1968, 89-90). The latter part of this definition is significant because the re-worked body of the modern transsexual is made possible by the availability of hormonal and surgical techniques, and the "problem" driving that transformation can only be articulated within modern western understandings of the sex/gender distinction. That is not to say that in other cultures, or at other times, people have not felt a profound unease with *their* understanding of sex/gender, but that their perception of the problem and the solution, if any, could be quite different from the paradigm of the modern, Western transsexual.

A simpler definition of transsexual is the rather hackneyed expression: "A woman/man trapped in a man's/woman's body". This expression contains within it the assumptions that:

- The mental self has primacy over the physical body, and
- That a body can be a site or container in which it is possible to be "trapped".

The expression has been attributed to Christian Hamburger around the time of the publicity surrounding Christine Jorgensen's sex-change (MacKenzie, 1994, 58).

My own definition, which I will substantiate and defend in this thesis would be: *"A person with a healthy conviction of being gendered either male or female, whose sexual embodiment and presentation runs counter to the social expectations of that gender identity."*

This definition has several advantages in exploring both the transsexual condition and the wider construction of gender:

- The notion of a "healthy" conviction of gender gives primacy to engenderment over embodiment (the sexed body becomes "inappropriate", rather than the sense of engenderment),
- The requirement for a "healthy" conviction of gender eliminates paraphillias and other mental disorders which may also include a delusion about one's sexual/genderal identity,
- The acknowledgement that expectations generated by notions of gender identity and legitimacy are socially constructed and contextual,
- The definition also allows for the sort of *closure* of the transsexual "condition" which so many of the transsexual autobiographers express; that after transforming surgery, one moves out of the category "transsexual" into the "ordinary", as a woman or man (the former transsexual's sexual embodiment and presentation no longer runs counter to the social expectations of that gender identity).

The *type* of definition used in respect of the transsexual condition is important, not only because it circumscribes the types of people who are included under the label, but it determines the amount of agency accorded both to the transsexuals themselves, and the psycho-medical professionals charged with managing their condition.

1.3 Coding for Gender

The use of the word "gender" is problematic when it is applied to the transsexual condition. I will argue in Chapter 8 that what is understood as "gender" in common parlance needs to be separated into at

least four categories, which need not be congruently coded as "female" or "male". It is the conflation of these components of gender which both add to a transsexual's gender-anguish, and make *some sort* of pathologisation almost inevitable[4]. While I *could* invent new words for each of these sub-sets of "gender", I am reluctant to do so, for several reasons:

- If I created new words, regardless of how descriptive or apt they might be, they would not be those of the transsexual narrators,
- The transsexual "project" is to stake a claim on gendered space "in-the-ordinary" and any newly-constructed labels could be construed as another vehicle for alienating them from that part of the landscape,
- The newly-constructed terms would circumscribe whatever meanings I attached to them,
- The clarity, and readability of my text may be compromised by the use of these constructed words.

I therefore intend to add the following letter-codes to my work to clarify what I mean by "gender" in any particular context. They are meant to clarify the usage of the word, "gender", while still acknowledging that, whatever the context, its usage represents a subset of the everyday understanding of engenderment.

EUG: Everyday Understandings of Gender (any *undivided* usage of the word, particularly as applied to non-transsexual's "naive"

[4]The transsexual "condition" cannot be comfortably accommodated within a unitary model of engenderment. In Chapter 8, I will argue that a transsexual's "pathology" lies in the non-congruence of an internal sense of gender identity and their sexual embodiment at birth. As their gender-identity has primacy over their sexual embodiment, it follows that they see themselves as having a "body-problem", not a gender problem. The wider population might have "gender-dysphoria" as a result of the visibility of transsexuals; that is, *non-transsexuals'* naive occupation of gender is challenged.

understandings of being gendered). Where necessary, I divide this coding for an undivided "gender" into the following four component parts,

CGI: Core Gender Identity (A hard-wired, sub-linguistic sense of *being* female or male),

ISG: Internal Sense of Engenderment (An internal conviction of having a *legitimate* place on the gendered landscape as female or male),

SGL: Social Genderal Legitimacy (whatever gender status that society *recognises* a person as legitimately occupying),

GRB: Gender Role Behaviour (whatever gender-coded acts one *performs* which reinforce or undermine one's gender-legitimacy within a social context).

I will elaborate on the distinctions between each state of engenderment in the following chapters.

1.4 The Spatial Aspects of Sex and Gender

In my thesis, I intend to explore the gender boundaries of transsexuals and the cultural space that they occupy in Western society. The recurring theme of the autobiographies is how the "problem", and the solution of gender dysphoria lies at the skin surface. Other discourses on transsexuality are often situated elsewhere: problematising the mind (psycho-medical practitioners), patriarchal society (some radical feminist theorists), or representation of transitory modes of dress and gender-coded appearance (theorists on transgenderism). In doing so, they underrate the critical surficial interface between the public (gender role [GRB, SGL]) and the private (gender identity[CGI, ISG]) aspects of gender, that the autobiographers see as their site of conflict.

1.4.1 Subverting the Spatial?

At its core, the landscape in which gendered transactions take place only allows for two *legitimate* genders, female and male. All "exceptions" are *relegated* to the periphery. Even where "third" gender states are recognised, or even named, they are not accorded the legitimacy of the constituents of the binary. The "third" cannot relegate any other form of engenderment even further out from "the center", unless it has already been relegated to the periphery by "the centre"[5]. As the scholarly discourse on "gender" expands, more and more exceptions may be allowed and described, but are these elaborations substantially different from the everyday understandings of gender (EUG), albeit complicated by having the border-policing mechanism *articulated and transparent* (rather than treated as an unspoken "naturalness")? Not all genderal border-keeping is "academic". Stage transvestites perform a similar function to the post-modern gender theorists by sending messages back from "The Front" that the borders are, indeed, very different places to the centre. "Othering" and parody serve as accounts of border skirmishes located a comfortingly long, long, way from home. More categories are called into being, and the interrelationships are listed. Fluidity is advocated as a solution to the apparently growing and complex *thing* understood as "gender". But what are the implications if the elusiveness of "gender" comes about not because of its complexity, but because of its crushing simplicity?

Gendered space is usually occupied on an "innocent" basis, that is, people do not routinely reflect upon why, or how, they can legitimately claim status of "female" or "male'. If someone has claimed "indigenous" status, then any consideration of how they arrived at

[5]Some of the early transsexual narrators relegated other transsexual contemporaries further out from their own states of contestable genderal legitimacy, by claiming to be "intersexed" (see 4.5 on page 212), or to be, in some way morally superior to their peers (Morris 1974, 158).

their place of occupation can be threatening[6]. Furthermore, any proposition that their occupation is qualified, conditional, of a different quality to other "indigenous" claims, or subject to modification, negotiation, or extinguishment, is *unthinkable*. This thesis explores some of the possible parallels between claims to gendered, and to geographic, space. The categories, "man", or "woman", serve to contain people who have differing levels of sexual orientation and performance; of fecundity; of the desire or ability to parent; and possessing differing degrees of primary and secondary physical markers of sexual maturity. They are granted a place within the binary during childhood and through into old age (even when sexual activity by some of these people is either proscribed, unhealthy or bordering on impossible). The prospect that one could be more, or less, of a woman/man is threatening, and as such is exploited by advertising. The existence of transsexuals (at least those transsexuals who are visibly pursuing "the ordinary") threatens this constructed naivete in ways that other forms of "gender transgression[7]" do not.

1.4.2 Subverting the Naive?

It is the claim to "the ordinary" by transsexual people *exercising agency* that poses a threat to the innocent occupation of gendered space. The discourse by transsexuals undermines several of the assumptions[8] of indigenous, "natural" gender:

1. That gender is an inevitable consequence of one's birthsex,

[6]Unless it is transformed into a non-repeatable, unchallengable fiction, such as a creation myth.

[7]That is, those gender-transgressives who make it quite clear that they are not pursuing "the ordinary", such as stage transvestites, drag-queens and "gender-fuckers".

[8]I am drawing of the "everyday" assumptions about "natural" gender, as articulated by Garfinkel (1967, 122-128).

2. That one's gender is a consequence of one's socialisation as a child[9],

3. That gender is obvious, and knowable,

4. That sexual embodiment is obvious, knowable, unambiguous and immutable,

5. That the expression of gender is independent of social context

Even the celebration of transsexual discourse and transformation as "transgressive" can represent a defensive mis-reading of their claims to gender legitimacy, because in insisting that the process is a politically-charged "special case", it ignores the authors' reasons for transformation to "the ordinary". As my later discussion of the autobiographies will show, the transsexual narrative is about "gender-in-the-ordinary", negotiating the same ground as the non-transsexed, and using, as much as possible, similar tools and methods as the rest of the population.

At first sight, this work may appear to be yet another attempt to subvert "gender", however that term is understood. It has never been my intention to be "subversive" for its own sake, but if this thesis has any worthwhile substance, I may have plumbed new depths in the oft-attempted project to disassemble, or de-construct, "gender". I see an irony in the findings of this study: I conclude that

[9]This assumption about the social construction of gender undermines the previous assumption that it is consequent on one's physicality. Stoller addresses this apparent conflict by seeking to show that many transsexuals suffer a *deviant* childhood socialisation:

> The data suggest that in some cases, advanced transsexualism is a condition whose causes appear in earliest childhood, with the parent of the opposite sex playing the essential role in the metamorphosis to the opposite sex (1968, 140).

While this "cause" allows Stoller to advocate childhood *re-socialisation* as a "cure" in some cases, he also needs to resort to an "organic" cause to cover those other cases which are not accounted for within the *deviant* childhood socialisation model (Stoller, 1968, 132).

at its core, gender is a simple, immutable binary, which may be either the most, or the least, subversive understanding of "gender" possible. In this thesis, I will explore and challenge the assumptions and myths that allow *most* people a "naive" and unchallenged occupation of gendered space, by focussing on the stories of people who are denied such an untroubled hold on genderal legitimacy. The existing gender construct *appears* to contain such a bewildering level of obscuring redundancies and unarticulated assumptions, that it almost defies dissection. However, while the strength and stability of the model of "legitimate" gender lies in its unfathomability, much can be inferred by how the model handles the exceptions, which in my study, are transsexual autobiographers.

1.4.3 A Flight from the "Real", or a Claim on the "Ordinary"?

Although the autobiographies show individual transsexuals as relatively conservative, generally opting for conformity and anonymity in order to survive, most do not accept the existing sex/gender dichotomy uncritically. Many authors express an acute awareness of the construction of sex/gender, yet their stories usually concern a pursuit of the "ordinary" within the existing dichotomy, rather than any identification as a "third sex". In later chapters, I examine the distinction between the expressions of the "real" and the "ordinary" status of sex/gender in the autobiographies with the aim of introducing a more *informed*[10] construction of sexual embodiment and gender identity/roles which may be able to accommodate more diversity in the terms of engenderment, such as transsexualism.

In transsexuals' accounts of their journey from one sexed/gendered space to another, they illustrate *subjective* views[11] of the location

[10]I use the word, "informed" here, as the opposite of the "naive", or "innocent", terms under which the non-transsexed usually occupy gendered space.

[11]This "subjectivity" is not limited to the transsexual narrators themselves, but

and borders of masculinity/femininity. In this thesis, the general aim is to broaden the examination of sex/gender and material/discursive space.

More specifically, the aim of this research has been to examine gendered spaces, both in terms of the substantive physical sites and conceptual/discursive spaces transsexuals *have* occupied, *desire* to occupy, and *come* to occupy. Sixty-four transsexual autobiographies provide the substantive base of the research. I have questioned the roles that gender and sexual embodiment plays in legitimising the occupation of these spaces, and whether the terms under which transsexuals occupy such space is (or should be) any different to any other member of society.

1.5 Definitions

Dysphoria/dysphoric: I use the term, "Gender Dysphoria" to mean a feeling of unease about *some* aspect of gender (that is, "gender" as the narrator perceives it at the time). Perhaps a more correct term would be "sexual embodiment dysphoria", because when the transsexual narrator recognises the immutable nature of "gender" and the possibility of some amount of bodily transformation, they accept that they have a "body problem", rather than a "gender problem". See Chapter 8 for a discussion of a revised model of gender which addresses the discordant relationship between engenderment and embodiment that underlies the transsexual "condition".

Embodied/Embodiment: Having a physical body. The awareness of the meanings which flow from having that body, in a particular context (as my study concerns sex and gender, these are the contexts which I address). In this study, I will argue

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extends to the engenderment of everyone that they interact with, from psychomedical gatekeepers, to employers, to family and sexual partners.

that one's sexual embodiment is offered up to support one's claim of gender-legitimacy (SGL). This sense of "embodiment" refers to more than merely the physicality of one's genital arrangement at a discrete point in time: It also refers to the history, legitimacy and agency of occupying, modifying or resisting that embodiment.

Engendered/Engenderment: Attaching a "gender-value" to something (such as social roles or a sexed body). This engendering is contingent on the attitudes of the narrator and the people interacting with hir. It is possible to be simultaneously both engendered female (to oneself (ISG)) and male (to outside observers (SGL)). Furthermore, actions and objects become engendered, or lose their engenderment. Items of clothing, speech and gestures can either be engendered (GRB) or read as "ordinary" (no *apparent* gender-value) when one is attempting to "pass" or when pressing one's claim to gender-legitimacy. See *Passing*

Gatekeeping: I use this word in two ways. Firstly, I use it to describe the function that psycho-medical professionals perform leading up to approval (or rejection) for the genital surgery which transsexuals usually seek: *See "RLT"*, defined below. Secondly, I use this term to refer to the process of defending and demarking the borders of whatever constitutes "normal" gender. Many people serve as gender-gatekeepers; they range from pornographers to psycho-medical professionals, from advertisers to feminist gender theorists. "Gatekeeping" occurs when engenderment which is perceived to be out on the periphery of what is understood as "ordinary" gender (EUG), is examined, described, enscribed, contained, rejected, accepted, tolerated, deconstructed. None of these processes are seriously applied to "the ordinary", particularly where there is a prospect that the candidate could actually "fail" to be ac-

cepted into their claimed gender-category. "Ordinary" gender is constructed in such a way that the notion of subjecting it to "gatekeeping" is not only *impossible*, but it is *unthinkable*. I explore this topic in Chapter 8 and argue that the "gatekeeping" process is largely futile, because it is based on a misreading of the structure of gender within which the transsexual negotiates.

Genderal: I use this word as "pertaining to gender", in the same way that "sexual" is used as *pertaining* to sex. I claim in this thesis that core gender (CGI) is a simple thing, surrounded by multiple layers of socially-constructed assumptions and obligations which "pertain to gender"; but which are *not* gender, as a totality. As I also insist that there is a danger of mistaking these social constructs pertaining to gender as elemental "gender" itself, I need to maintain a distinction between the core (gender, the essential binary (CGI)) and the periphery (socially-constructed gender-performance (GRB)). Therefore, I resort to the term "genderal": Pertaining to gender (but not gender itself).

Gender-Anguish: I sometimes use this term in almost the same sense of the psycho-medical term "gender-dysphoria". However, as "gender-anguish" is not recognised as a formal diagnostic term, I have more often applied it to the early stages of unease with engenderment that proto-transsexuals describe, that is, before the anguish had necessarily been identified as meeting the psychological criteria of "gender-dysphoria", or gender identity disorder. As I discuss in Chapter 8, a more apt wording for what has become known as "gender-dysphoria" would be "sexual-embodiment dysphoria[12]". The problem lies

[12]Or, to be even more specific, the unwieldy term, *"social consequences of sexual embodiment dysphoria"* would approximate the major factor behind the anguish that pre-transformation transsexuals experience.

``Normal'' ``Natural'' These terms are so contextual as to almost defy definition, but as I draw on the work of Garfinkel, I have no difficulty in accepting his understandings of these words. As it applies to dichotomous gender, Garfinkel describes this understanding as providing: ``for persons who are 'naturally', 'originally', 'in the first place', 'in the beginning', 'all along', and 'forever' one or the other'' (1967, 116).

not with a sense of a gendered self, but with an awareness of having an inappropriate sexual embodiment with which to *legitimate* that conviction in any social context. It does not follow, however, that an untransformed transsexual would feel *euphoric* about the *gender*-order, as it applied to hir, as a consequence of social reactions to hir on the basis of hir birth-sex. The word,"anguish" might still be more properly applied to this pain, without implicitly giving primacy to genitalia over engenderment.

Gender-Dysphoria: *(also see Dysphoria and Gender-Anguish, above)* A psycho-medical term, describing the mental pain that transsexuals suffer because of the discordance between their internal sense of engenderment (core-gender-identity) and the *social* consequences of having a sexual embodiment appropriate to the other gender. While transsexuality could be seen as a life-long "condition"[13], treatment for gender-dysphoria, by way of hormonal/surgical/social transformation is usually a very effective solution.

Passing: The mechanics of gaining acceptance in one's claimed gender. To "pass", one needs to appear to be an "indigenous", "innocent", or "natural" occupant of one's claimed gender[14]. The evidence offered up is context-specific, and may include offering up appropriate mode of clothing, make-up, gestures, speech patterns, personal histories, affiliations. Whilst it is not always necessary to keep one's past a secret[15] to "pass",

[13]Some artefacts of being born transsexual would remain, long after the pain of the condition had passed. For example, infertility, scarring, bodily proportions, personal history, and in some jurisdictions, one's legal status, serve as markers of an otherwise socially transcended sexual/genderal past.

[14]The display of "indigenousness", rather than the quantum of sexual/genderal markers, is what allows one to "pass". Drag-queens usually employ excessive make-up, improbably-sized false breasts and exaggeratedly "feminine" clothing, gestures and speech to ensure that they do NOT "pass" as women.

[15]For example, Georgina Beyer, MP for Wairarapa has managed social accep-

one's gender-claim has to recognised as legitimate. In passing, one is accepted *as* a woman/man, rather than have one's claims *tolerated* (where the legitimacy of one's claimed gender is not accepted, but little, or no *overt* objection is raised to the mechanics of making the claim). The consequences of *"not passing"*, i.e., "being read" range from humiliation, intensification of genderal anguish, through to denial of service, to physical danger, or to even death.

RLT,Real Life Test Usually, psycho-medical professionals require a "Real Life Test" before they approve a transsexual patient's request for genital surgery. The transsexual is required to live full-time in their claimed gender for a specified period of perhaps one or two years. Many of the autobiographers were irked by this requirement, because the professional often imposes rigid, outdated, or stereotypical criteria of what constitutes a "woman" or a "man". Many of the story-tellers abandoned their attempts to have surgery within mainstream, Western medicine because of these restrictions and obtained surgery in Morocco, Mexico or Thailand *without any screening at all.* I will argue at 7.2.1 on page 313 that the "RLT" concept is flawed, because a regime where one's gender is "on trial" is not a "real" experience for the non-transsexed. Furthermore, without appropriately functioning genitals, "real" or "ordinary" sexual encounters are not possible. The RLT serves as a visible and quantifiable gatekeeping measure in an otherwise inexact and subjective process.

***Sex/Gender*:** I use this conflated term to refer to assumptions and categories where little or no distinction is made between "sex" and "gender". Before De Beauvoir (1953) and Stoller (1968) articulated a workable distinction between the two categories,

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tance as a woman, while being open about her past as a male-to-female transsexual.

descriptions of female/woman and male/man were blurred. Perhaps ironically, I will argue in Chapter 8 that "sex" and "gender" are not such distinct and mutually exclusive categories, and that "sex " and "gender" need to be dissected into several sub-categories before a full discourse on their interconnectedness is possible. I also conclude that the discursive act of declaring that "sex and gender are separate" oversimplifies the sex/gender landscape and shuts down deeper exploration of two complex and inter-related concepts.

Sex Change, Sex Re-assignment, Gender Re-assignment: When I am writing of the semi-abstract notion of changing sex, I use the term "sex-change". A less definite, and probably more accurate description of the present-day sex-change process is "sex re-assignment" surgery (SRS). This is the term I will use generally, as it is also commonly used amongst the current transsexual "community". The expression "gender reassignment", although used by some psycho-medical practitioners, inaccurately reflects the experience of the autobiographers in my study, as their perception of the *location* of their gender (CGI, ISG) has remained stable, despite surgery. Hormones and genital surgery do, however, improve a transsexual's chances of having the *social legitimacy* of their gender (SGL) reassigned. "Gender re-assignment" would probably be an appropriate term for the now largely discarded aversion therapy as a "cure" for transsexuality, or for the type of coercive gender reprogramming treatment proposed for transsexuals by Raymond (1979, 178-185).

SRS: Sex-Reassignment Surgery (also described as GRS: Gender Reassignment Surgery, GCS: Gender Confirmation/Congruence Surgery, or the now largely obsolete term, Sex-Change Surgery). The accepted model of sex/gender in any particular context determines which of these terms is more appropriate. Only

Stone-Butch: A ``stone-butch'' is a female-bodied person (probably lesbian or FtoM transsexual) who does not reveal hir genitals or allow them to be directly stimulated by their female sexual partner.

the early authors[16], who did not have a theoretical basis with which to compartmentalise "sex" and "gender" separately, treat surgical "sex change" as *absolute* change. The later (post 1968) authors do not dwell on sexual "authenticity", based on genital surgery, but use their transformation to support their claims to *legitimately* occupy their achieved gender. In this thesis, I will argue that the core of "gender" (CGI) cannot be changed[17], so therefore, the term "GRS" would be inconsistent with this thesis. In my model[18], surgical changes of sexual embodiment are primarily directed at strengthening one's claim to genderal legitimacy, both internally, and to the wider public. While "Sexual Congruence Surgery", or "Genderal Legitimising Surgery" would probably fit my model more closely, no author uses these terms, so I have adopted the more commonly-used "Sex Reassignment Surgery" (SRS), or the more prosaic, "genital surgery" as my term of choice.

Transgender: Whilst the word "transgender" is used by the GLB[19] literature as an umbrella term for *any* person doing *anything* genderally-transgressive, I use this term with considerable caution. "Trans"-"gender" implies that either one's gender is changed (I argue that transsexuals do *not* change the fundamentals of their "gender" (CGI)) or that "gender" is the transsexual *problem* (i.e., the "ordinary" understanding of a transsexual as having "a right body, wrong gender" model). I do not believe it is appropriate to use the word "transgender" when referring to transsexuals[20] (who, having accepted the

[16]Allen (1954) and Turtle (1963) are particularly vehement about their *sexual* authenticity.

[17]See "*transgender*" definition below

[18]See Chapter 8.

[19]Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual

[20]Except, of course, where a transsexual *also* identifies as "transgendered". Whilst I believe that the two terms properly apply to two distinct states, they are not mutually exclusive. The "transgender" discourse undermines the usual arguments that transsexuals offer up for pursuing surgery: Consequently, trans-

immutability of their "gender" (CGI), bring their *bodies* into congruence with their gender conviction (ISG) (right gender, wrong body model)). As it is applied to transsexuals, the term "transgender" is disarming and trivialising (that is, it undermines the main reason offered up for their bodily transformation).

***Transgenderist*:** A person who advocates one or more alternative readings of "gender". They may claim a multiplicity of genders, of fluidity between these "genders", or they may be engaged in an attempt to subvert what they see as the existing gender-construct (a "gender-fuck"). In Chapter 8 of this thesis, I will argue that these people are re-working aspects of the *periphery* of gender-role behaviour (GRB), rather than core-gender (CGI) itself. Their project of "subversion" is grounded upon what I will argue is a misreading of a *part* (language, performance) of the gender-landscape for the *whole*. Furthermore, I will also argue that core gender (CGI) is rigidly binary in nature, and structurally "unsubvertable"[21], so their project of a "gender-fuck" is both superficial and ultimately futile[22].

Transition: This word refers to the mainly social process of changing from one *attributed* sex/gender to the other. To transition

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sexual authors such as Feinberg and Bornstein spend a substantial part of their writings questioning the *appropriateness* of the surgery that they have had previously.

[21]See Chapter 8.

[22]I will argue that any *overt* act of gender "subversion" automatically places itself outside the very binary which constitutes the fundamentals of "gender". Having been self-marginalised as outside what is understood as legitimate "gender", it is difficult for me to regard these exercises as being anything *but* superficial, because the only area for engagement left is the surface of gender role-play (GRB) (see 4.6.1.1 on page 224and in Chapter 8). Whatever the "gender-fuckers" *may* be "subverting", it is hardly likely to be the *fundamentals* of the gendered landscape, as they have been sent off the field. Conversely, the narrative of a genderal "outsider", such as a transsexual or intersexed person, who *does* mount a substantial claim to "gender-in-the-ordinary" *is* more likely to challenge the existing understandings of gender.

from, say, "attributed male" to "attributed female", a transsexual person would usually have to modify their physical appearance (hormones, surgery, removal of body-hair), mode of dress (clothing, makeup, hairstyle), gestures, diction (mode, pitch and content of speech), history, legal documentation (such as passports and drivers licenses). A formally defined, and often heavily circumscribed, "transition" is required by many psycho-medical gatekeepers (see *RLT* above). If one is proficient in displaying all, or most, of the everyday markers of womanhood (or manhood) to be taken as "indigenous", then one "passes" (see *Passing* above) and one could be said to have "transitioned". If a transsexual cannot "pass" because of physical factors, or if one refuses to fully take part in the transition process, then a "gender-fuck[23]" has occurred (see *Transgenderist* above). "Transition" can also refer to a historical event: as in, "During my transition ...."

Transsexual: Stoller's definition of the condition: "Transsexualism is the conviction in a biologically normal person of being a member of the opposite sex" (1968, 89-90) is of limited use when deciding which biographical accounts should be included, or excluded from my study. However, as my criteria for this study specify that the principal subjects have written an autobiography[24] and have been involved in genital surgery[25], most borderline cases are excluded (there *may* be three cases of "other" transgenderism in my study: Howard [probable] and Star and Coccinelle [possible] and several sto-

[23]This "gender-fuck" may be limited to a failure of *representation* in the gendered landscape. One's internal sense of engenderment (ISG) may be battered by this experience, but not changed.

[24]I have included several biographies and co-, or ghost-written narratives.

[25]Some of those included have not had genital surgery, for a variety of reasons, some of which are outside their control. Nevertheless, they have all made *some* form of permanent commitment to present full-time as members of their claimed sex.

ries which *may be* fictional [Fontaine, McClain] and one which *is* fictional [Breckenridge]). The "transsexual" term can be used as both a noun describing a person who is born with the condition of "transsexuality" and adjective referring to these individuals, their condition, or the discourse surrounding them. It could be argued that after transition into a concordant sexual embodiment, that formerly transsexual persons cease to be included in the transsexual category. In almost all cases, they cease to experience "gender-dysphoria" after re-assignment, but they do retain historic artefacts of their former sexual embodiment. The significance of this historic component varies with social context and the individual's interpretation and management of their own engenderment[26]. My own definition; "*A person with a healthy conviction of being gendered either male or female, whose sexual embodiment and presentation runs counter to the social expectations of that gender identity*" (see 1.2.1 on page 18 above) addresses these concerns.

Transsexuality: A condition where one's internal conviction of engenderment is opposite to one's sexual embodiment *(see 1.2.1 on page 18 for a discussion of the range of definitions of the condition)*. As the social acts of gender attribution and legitimisation are largely dependent on one's *apparent* sexual embodiment, having an "inappropriate" body shape and dress prevents an individual engaging with the gendered landscape in a manner which is meaningful, or consistent with their internal conviction of engenderment (ISG). Without *external* confirmation of their core gender, transsexuals suffer mental torment *(see gender dysphoria/anguish above)*. Unlike the common usage of the term, "transgender", the word "transsexuality"

[26]A contiguous history of sexual embodiment is the fourth of the "everyday" understandings of gender-legitimacy identified by Garfinkel (1967, 122). *(see 8.3.1 on page 392 for a further discussion of this aspect of the gender-legitimatisation process)*

gives primacy to a notion of a "gendered self" over the physical "realities" of sexual embodiment (the "right-mind, wrong-body" model, that I will draw upon to interpret the transsexual narratives in this study). Again, unlike the notion of "transgender", the word "transsexuality" also contains the *solution* to their problem; that is, resolution by changing the outward appearance of the sufferer's sexual embodiment sufficiently to match their immutable internal sense of engenderment.

Transvestite: A person who feels a need to dress, in whole, or in part, in clothing of the opposite gender/sex. These people are *not* transsexuals, and they do not desire to permanently change their sexual embodiment[27]. Many transvestites *never* appear in public, or never attempt to "pass". The motivations for cross-dressing vary, from fetishism, to sexual arousal, to parody, to genderal "subversion", or to serve as a uniform of sexual agency (drag-queens working as prostitutes). Although in current parlance, the term, "transvestite" is usually limited to persons with male bodies, cross-dressing as women, performing *some* "representation" or parody of "woman", through to the fetishistic wearing of at least *some* items of female clothing, this has not always been the case. In previous centuries, women dressed as men to gain access to, and safety within, public space[28]. And, indeed, women in male-coded clothing

[27]Although a small minority of transvestites do have surgery, they usually regret it. The DSM-IV lists transvesticism as a differential diagnosis for Gender Identity Disorder (302.85), so misguided transvestites *should* be filtered out before, or during, the "real-life test" usually required of the psycho-medical gatekeepers (see my criticism of the "filtering" process at 7.2.1 on page 313.

[28]Up until the mid-20th Century, *some* women passed as men for their personal safety, or to gain access to public space. "A transvestite woman who could actually pass as a man had male privileges and could do all manner of things other women could not: open a bank account, write checks, own property, go anywhere unaccompanied, vote in elections" (Faderman, 1991, 44). Sexuality or fetishism are less likely to be their primary motives, when education, travel or many professions were closed to women, passing as a man was a *pragmatic* way of gaining the agency which was only granted to men at the time. While many of

has not necessarily lost all of its sexual connections. What has happened is that the male form of cross-dressing has become the *unmarked* form of transvestism. While this phenomenon lies outside the scope of this study, many of the transsexual story-tellers feel the need to differentiate themselves from transvestites. Some of the transsexual biographers had previously identified as transvestites as a temporary means of containing their gender-confusion, before realising that their anguish was more deep-seated and demanding of a permanent solution. Hodgkinson describes the difference between [male] transvestites and [MtoF] transsexuals as:

> Most transvestites enjoy cross-dressing only occasionally, and would be horrified at any suggestion that they should spend the rest of their lives dressed only in women's clothes. Transvestites are also proud of their male organs, and would not want to lose them (1987, 26-27).

Woman/female, Man/male: When I use these words without qualification, I mean whatever is *represented* as female/male in context. When I planned to distinguish between the broad ground of representation, and actual women/men who were born into their current gender without identity conflicts, I was inclined to use the term "congenital"[29] woman/man, or congenitally female/male, but I discarded it because it could be misunderstood. The terms, "genuine" or "real" woman/man cut across what is being represented. The word "genetic" woman/man is used in some texts, but this expression does

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these genderally-transgressive, female-bodied persons may well have included some early female-to-male transsexual precursors, for many of these women, their motivation may have been one of *agency*, rather than gender identity.

[29]Even this word is problematic, if the style of Mary Daly's dissection of language (1978) is used: "con"-"genital" implies that only these people have genitals (symbolic or actual). This then undermines the status of the reconstruction of genitalia which is at the heart of the surgical method of alleviating transsexuality.

not cope with genetic abnormalities, which I use to contest the essentialist notion of a binary "authenticity" based on sexual embodiment alone (all humans are "genetic", whether they are transsexual, or not, and in some cases of genetic abnormalities, the genital problem arises from *supernumerary* chromosomes. Thus the "problem" for some intersexed persons, of sexual/genderal *dis-ability* may stem from being *more "genetic"* than average). The term wome/in-born-wome/in also presents problems, because it is not only politically charged, but as no equivalent "male" term has currency, I would be forced to construct one. In this thesis, I often focus on the *strength* of the terms of one's occupation of gendered space, and although having a compromised history of sexual embodiment *does* undermine the strength of a transsexual's claim, *absolute* sexual authenticity is not the sole attribute that can be used to confer genderal legitimacy. I have, therefore, used a variety of expressions to describe sexual authenticity, depending on the context.

1.6 Methods

I had originally intended to examine published autobiographies of transsexuals for descriptions of gender-liminality, and to uncover the author's arguments for transcendence and gender-legitimisation, as an end in itself. Although I had considered surveying unpublished transsexuals by way of questionnaires, I discarded the idea because whatever form of data collection that I used would be predicated on one the pre-existing explanations of the transsexual "condition" (I was not convinced by *any* of the existing theoretical frameworks which addressed the topic). Limiting my study to *published* works also meant that I could cover, as nearly as possible, *all* the available data on a narrower topic (first-person, "public", declara-

tions of transsexuality in a printed format), rather than having to address issues of sampling and the representativeness of my respondents. Furthermore, I believe that everyday understandings of "gender" (EUG), and in particular, the *process* of gender legitimisation (SGL), is a necessarily a "public" act[30]: The authors in my study have made *public* declarations of their understandings of their engenderment, which are subject to scrutiny by not only their peers, but also psycho-medical professionals and the wider public. Over the course of this study, I interacted socially with many transsexual people, and it became apparent to me that many of their "private" declarations[31] of engenderment and genderal legitimacy would be almost unintelligible to non-transsexuals. In these depths of sexual and genderal despair, some of my proto-transsexual confidants described gender-in-the-ordinary as such a foreign concept that I had difficulty reconciling it with my own conviction of being gendered female. Many of my personal contacts were *both* proto-transsexuals *and* under a great deal of immediate stress because of their unfolding "condition" (I will argue in Chapter 8 that transsexuality is not a mental pathology, *per se*, but the social consequences of the condition are stressful to varying degrees). This study is not about mental-illness: I do not represent myself as being competent to pursue this line of enquiry. I am studying accounts of the social process of *pathologisation*, rather than the clinical aspects of a *pathology* (if such a thing exists, in the transsexual condition). The prescription of this thesis is that the transsexual phenomenon can be accounted for within a *slightly* re-worked model of gender, without resorting to the notions of either psycho-pathology, or of patriarchal conspiracy, which often

[30]And, I will argue at 7.1.1.1 on page 311 that the transvestite (or transgenderist) "project" is *not* directed at simultaneously bringing, as much as possible, both public and private aspects of engenderment into line in a stable and permanent manner. In the cases of proto-transsexuals who engage in casual cross-dressing to assuage their gender-anguish, they have not yet reached a stable or fulfilling resolution of their "problem".

[31]In the form of one-to-one discussions with myself.

appear in other texts on this topic. The published autobiographies offer an almost unique opportunity to critically examine the "natural" assumptions that we all make, about both the public, and private, aspects of engenderment, and I have attempted to use these narratives to do just that.

As I collected and examined more autobiographical works, I felt more confident in grounding my theory on the basis of the narratives themselves. I became convinced that these authors' descriptions of their engenderment were not *facsimiles* of "ordinary" gender, but these accounts were *of gender itself*, stripped of many of the naive assumptions which underpin "gender-in-the-ordinary", as it is performed by non-transsexuals. As I explored these stories, I was drawn back to Garfinkel's (1967) work, which I had originally interpreted as primarily a method of explaining, amongst other things, the *way* in which transsexuals described their sense of engenderment. The ethnomethodological approach of Garfinkel (1967) and Kessler and McKenna (1985) presented itself as a foundation, with which I could attempt to de-construct the "natural" assumptions of the existing Western[32] gender-construct.

The focus of this thesis has moved from an examination of the *mechanics* of transsexual story-telling, as a marginalised expression of engenderment, to using these texts to challenge and revise our understandings about the wider gendered landscape. I am not simply exploring the tales of how the border-dwellers "do" gender, rather, I try to draw inferences about the nature of "gender-in-the-ordinary" (EUG) by examining how its borders are policed. As part of my interrogation of these stories, I ask several questions:

- What is it about "ordinary" gender which generates such anguish amongst unresolved transsexuals?

[32]My study is based on transsexual autobiographies published in English. Therefore, the revised model of gender proposed in Chapter 8 has only been tested on these accounts of gender in Western society. Nevertheless, I am confident that with further testing and revision, a "universal" model which could account for engenderment cross-culturally may be possible.

- What are the physical, social, and psychological attributes necessary to mount a case for genderal legitimacy?
- What are the mechanics of mounting, and defending, a claim of genderal legitimacy?
- Can, or should, the "normal" gender-construct have stable borders? Are they *capable* of being defended?
- What is "gender", and is it necessarily binary in structure?

As part of this study, I also examine "other" discourses on the topic of transsexuality. Some psychological and gender theorists have taken it upon themselves to define, and to regulate, the transsexuals' access to surgical and hormonal treatment, others have questioned the "legitimacy", or "reality", of the transsexuals' transition across the social sex/gender-binary. These accounts have not only affected the transsexual narrators' understandings of their own "condition", but the theories of non-transsexuals give insights into where, and how, the "borderkeepers" police the existing gender-construct.

1.6.1 Personal Observations

During most of the period of this study, I served as a peer-support contact for local people with "gender" issues, which included transsexuals, transvestites and intersexed people. I did not conduct any sort of structured study of these contacts, for several reasons:

- I did not apply for ethical approval to conduct such a study, as initially, I was unaware of what information I could gain from my contacts, and
- Extracting information would have broken an understanding about the peer-to-peer relationship in which we engaged.

Nevertheless, I did take several things away from this period of contact:

- I became convinced that these transsexual contacts were pursuing "gender-in-the ordinary";
- I saw that their range of personal histories and character traits were both diverse, and a reflection of society-at-large;
- My awareness of the "situatedness" of engenderment, including my own, became more acute;
- Finally, as my respect for my transsexual contacts grew, so did my acceptance of the veracity of the written accounts of the autobiographers in this study.

While I sometimes feel a sense of frustration that I cannot cite the first-hand disclosures from my contacts, these experiences have contributed to the confidence that I drew upon when contesting some of the existing understandings about the gendered landscape. In this thesis, I have occasionally offered a small, abstracted, personal observation drawn from these contacts, but I have limited substantive quotations to published works.

1.7 Literature Review

My literature review covers three areas:

- The transsexual autobiographies;
- The feminist, sociological and other works which address both transsexualism and sex/gender (mainly the discussion of transsexuality in feminist literature);
- Supplementary texts (psychological and medical), to support the primary works.

1.7.1 Transsexual Autobiographies in Historical Development

I have located 64 stories of post-operative transsexuals published in English from 1932 to 1999. The works fall into three sub-genres:

In the early "heroic[33]" phase (1932-1955), the authors describe their absolute transformation from one rigidly-bounded sex/gender to the other[34]. The "sex/gender" distinction had yet to be articulated (Benjamin, 1966; Green and Money, 1969; and Stoller, 1968), so conflation of sex and gender pervades these stories. When "sex" and "gender" were synonymous, the transsexual authors had limited means of conceptualising embodiment, and they may have believed that genital transformation *must* generate all the attributes of their new sex. It is significant that of these first 7 autobiographies, all of the authors make *some form* of claim of "intersexuality", as the impetus for their transformation: Of all the later works claiming "change of sex", only three authors (Peter Stirling, 1989; Dawn Langley Simmons, 1995; and Lady Colin Campbell, 1997) make such claims, and these later stories offer up substantial evidence that they are, indeed, those of intersexed people.

In the second, "middle" period autobiographies (1974-1997), justification for "sex-change" is mediated by the publication of psychomedical work, which reveals a clear distinction between sex and gender[35], with primacy given to "gender" over anatomical sex:

> I didn't want to be "cured", to be reconciled to my male anatomy. I wanted to be rid of those hated organs, to

[33]I applied this word to the early stories because of their passing resemblance to Ancient Greek mythology: The tales are old, the agents of "sex change" (doctors) work in mysterious ways, the subjects (the transsexuals) seem driven by "fate", and some of the "modern" tenets of science and medicine seem to have been transcended to allow the "sex change" miracle to take place.

[34]While the "difference" *between* female and male is assumed to be wide, the distinction *between* sex and gender was neither consistently, nor clearly articulated in the earliest stories.

[35]Perhaps the most significant work of the time was Stoller's "Sex and Gender" (1968)

> be granted a body in harmony with my nature. If some hypothetical doctor had approached me with a syringe and promised that one injection would cure me forever of my compulsion to be a woman, I would have fled in terror. No woman would abandon her psychological gender merely to accommodate herself to the circumstances of a biological accident. Certainly I would not. Let the biological accident be corrected, not me (Hunt, 1978, 12).

In this passage, Nancy Hunt regards her "self" as inseparable from "being a woman", and that her "gender" is the essence of her identity, despite an oblique acknowledgment that the rational course of action would be to cure the compulsion to be a woman. Jane Fry, while pre-operative, also locates her "self" in her mind, not her body:

> I have the physical organs of a man, but I feel I am a woman. . . I know what I am on the inside, a female. There is no doubt there. . . The only thing that I want to change is my body, so that it matches what I am. A body is like a covering; its like a shell. What is more important? The body or the person inside? (Bogdan & Fry, 1974, 19).

April Ashley refused to grant *any* legitimacy to the genitals of her birth. The primacy of the gender identity *of her mind* was capable of rendering her *physical* markers of sex, "alien":

> ... my mind had made an internal choice of sex to which the external did not conform. My male genitals were quite alien to me. ... The elimination of these organs became essential to my finding life tolerable. (Ashley &Fallowell, 1982, 75),

and again, Jan Morris' birth-genitals were regarded as little more than a "nuisance" to be removed:

> To alter the body! To expunge those superfluities...To match my sex to my gender at last, and make a whole of me! (Morris, 1974, 50).

The third phase of transsexual writing is more "radical" and self defining. The first transsexual lesbian story appears in this subgenre (Bornstein, 1995). Stone's "A Posttranssexual Manifesto" (1991) posits a distinct discourse *outside* the existing sex/gender binary, which would be incongruous in earlier autobiographies:

> For a transsexual, *as a transsexual,* to generate a true, effective and representational counterdiscourse is to speak from outside the boundaries of gender, beyond the constructed oppositional nodes which have been predefined as the only positions from which discourse is possible (1991, 295 *italics in original*).

Not only has the changing definition of the sex/gender affected how some transsexuals have perceived themselves, the structure of stories acceptable for publication has shifted through time (possibly in response to the same shifting definitions). Bornstein (1995) argues that the autobiography of a journey between rigidly defined genders has been the only genre acceptable to publishers until recently:

> Up until the last few years, all we'd be able to write *and get published* were our autobiographies, tales of women trapped in the bodies of men or men pining away in the bodies of women. Stories by and about brave people who'd lived their lives hiding deep within a false gender- and who, after much soul-searching, decide to change their gender, and spent the rest of their days hiding deep within another false gender. Bornstein (1995, 12-13 *italics in original*).

1.8 Feminist Critiques of Transsexuality

"Feminist" critiques arose in the late 1970s from Mary Daly (1978) Germaine Greer (1979) who both mentioned transsexuality in passing, and Janice Raymond, whose book, The "Transsexual Empire" (1979) was the first "feminist" critique which *primarily* focussed on transsexuality. The interest of some feminist writers in the topic indicates that the notion of "gender", as it applied to transsexuals, was seen as an issue particularly relevant to women at the time (as if "gender" itself was a specifically *women's* problem, rather than the application of power based on notions about engenderment). This response is also relatively blind to the existence of female-to-male transsexuals (Raymond dismisses them as "tokens") even though at least two female-to-male autobiographies had been published by the time of Raymond's work (Robert Allen, 1954; and Mario Martino, 1976). The psycho-medical literature had acknowledged the existence of female-to-males since Krafft-Ebing in 1887, and through to more current works by Stoller in 1968. While the *relative* numbers of female-to-male and male-to-female transsexuals remains conjectural, male-to-female transsexuals had a much higher public prominence, due, in part, to the publicity surrounding Christine Jorgensen and Renee Richards (Richards' story had broken not long before the publication of Raymond's book, and she refers to Renee in it).

The rise of a "radical" feminist critique of transsexuality presumed that there were "natural" borders and limits to the category "woman", that breaching the borders ran counter to women's interests, and that these feminist theorists had an ability (and right) to define and police those borders. While there had been previous border-keeping exercises applied to the category "woman", based on race[36], class, or morality, this new critique grasped at both the

[36]For example, as a Negro ex-slave, Sojourner Truth felt the need to address the contested status of *her* womanhood within a largely white "feminist" move-

legitimacy of the transsexual *"problem"* (gender identity/sexual embodiment discontinuity) and the *"solution"* (transformation of sexual embodiment and social role/status).

1.8.1 Language: Pronouns as Tools of (De)Legitimatisation

Pronouns are more than matter-of-fact grammatical devices referring to one's genital arrangement, they convey an understanding about the gender-status of the participants in any discussion. I will argue in Chapter8, that gender-legitimacy is a distinct and important component of the gendered landscape, particularly for those whose authenticity is open to serious challenge. One key marker of genderal legitimacy in the accounts of individual transsexuals is the use of the personal pronouns and the words "woman"/"female" or "man"/"male". The application of these terms ranges from Raymond's (1979) absolute refusal to use anything but male pronouns in referring to M-F transsexuals (and her insistence on unwieldy expressions such as *Male to female constructed transsexuals*), through to feminists who accommodate some possibility of shifts in "gender" by way of changes in sexual embodiment[37]. Other essentialist critics also dismiss claims to gender as delusional and use personal pronouns to delegitimise[38]. Another feminist contemporary with Raymond; Gloria Steinham, while equally critical of *process* when discussing substantially the same concept of Renee Richard's entry into the public arena (1983, 206-210), uses the pronoun "she/her"

ment in her monologue, "Ain't I a Woman?" (1983, 39).

[37]For example, Judith Halberstam's discussion of "Transgender Butch" (1998, 142-173).

[38]Millot uses terms such as: "a typical male phantasy" (1990,15), "hypochondriac delusions" (1990, 115), "an obdurating and even fallacious response to the enigma of his desire" (1990, 142). Draper (198?, 121) states "reason dictates that transsexualism is a psychosis created by a delusion". Raymond talks of: "illusion of inclusion" (1979, xxi), "the schizoid state of a female mind in a male body" (1979, 179), "transsexuals are not women. They are deviant males" (1979, 183) and, like Millot, her use of personal pronouns relating to birthsex throughout the book.

when referring to the trans-sexed tennis player[39]. Both writers have difficulties with medical intervention to cure transsexualism, yet the former sees the need to express her refusal to acknowledge the permeability of sex/gender boundaries at every opportunity within her text, while the latter does not. The autobiographies and the liberal texts, which acknowledge some degree of sex/gender permeability, use the pronoun most appropriate to each transsexual at whatever stage of social/gender transformation they are situated. This leads to conceptual difficulties, such as a "male" and "female" pronoun referring to the same individual being used in close proximity within the text, sometimes in the same paragraph. The language of ownership of body parts can be unorthodox, with expressions such as "his vagina", and "her penis". For transsexuals, and non-transsexual theorists, the *significance* of those body parts to the expression of engenderment is altered, although the understanding of the meaning of that significance is dependent on the stance of the writer.

1.8.2 Boundaries and Binaries

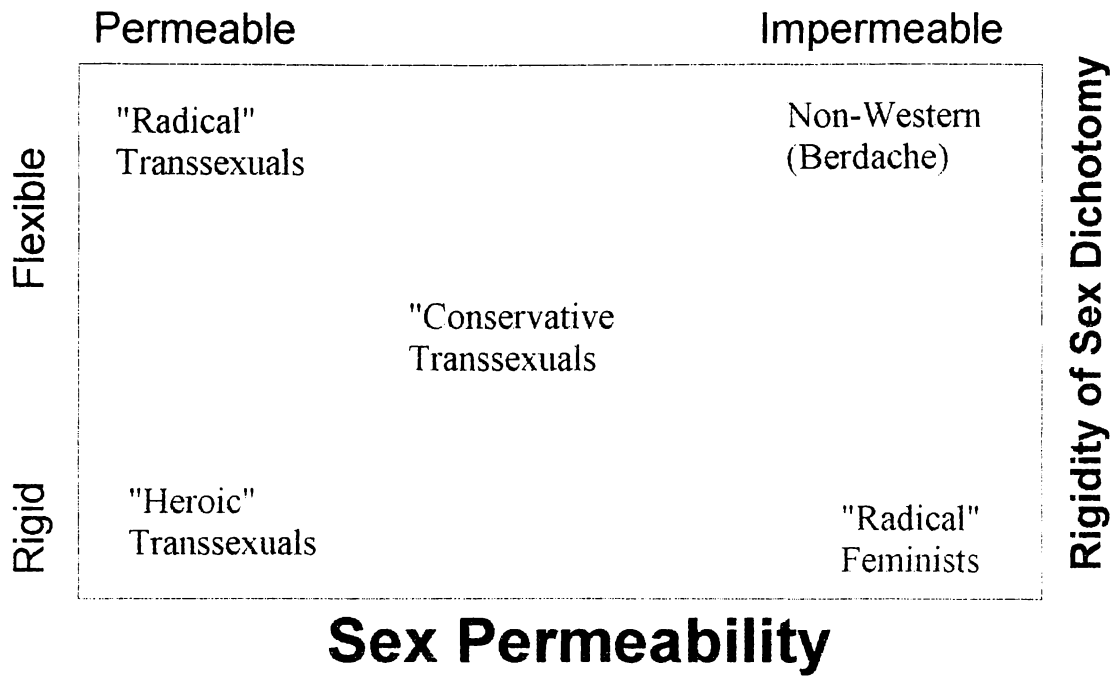
There seems to be four possible ways of handling the concept of transsexualism (and positions intermediate between the four extremes):

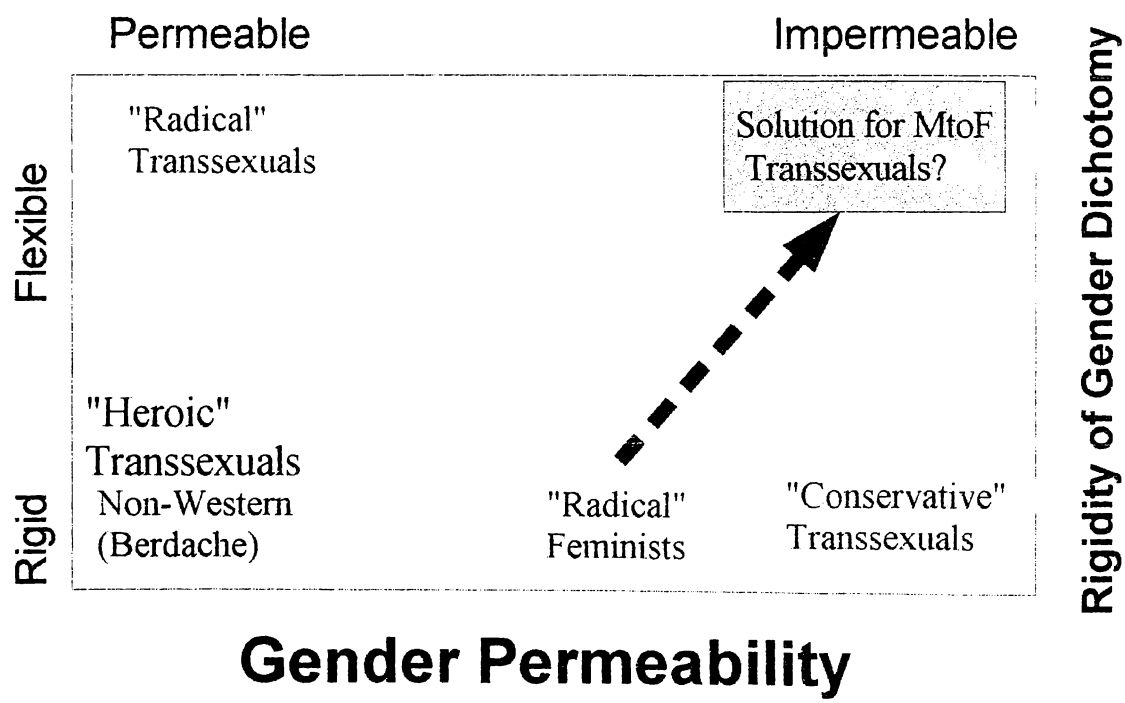
- A rigid gender binary with no permeability between genders (EUG[40]) (the "everyday" understanding (EUG), and the feminist essentialist position),

[39]For example, in expressing her concern that the discussion about transsexuality was diverting examination of existing gender-roles, the author states: "When I got to the inevitable Renee Richards questions, therefore, I simply defended her right to change her own body if she wished, but pointed out that she was an exception that had little to do with the plight of most women" (1983, 207).

[40]I will argue that Raymond's (1979) structure of "gender" is inconsistent, but she often falls back on a position which roughly equates to my "everyday understanding of gender" (EUG).

Some Notions About Sex/Gender "Permeability" and "Rigidity"





Figures 1a & 1b: Some notions of "rigidity" and "permeability" within the sex/gender landscape addressed in this study

- Rigid binary at the level of core gender (CGI), with permeability of *social* gender (SGL and GRB) possible (the recurring theme in the transsexual autobiographies),
- Multiple genders, with permeability between those genders (the Bornstein/Rothblatt "radical" transsexual position),
- Multiple genders, with strictly regulated permeability between those genders (the non-Western solution) [see Figures1a & 1b].

Some feminist essentialists use transsexuals as dehumanised vehicles to further other arguments. Greer exploited the gender status of one of the narrators in my study (April Ashley) by manipulating personal pronouns which refer to her in a brief account of Ashley's annulled marriage to reinforce Greer's wider argument on women's metaphorical castration. Thus, April Ashley is referred to as "he" before, and after, surgery, as "he" during her career as a successful female model, as "he" through her brief marriage, and finally, on Ashley's divorce, Greer ironically declares that:

> As long the feminine stereotype remains the definition of the female sex, April Ashley *is a woman*, regardless of the legal decision ensuing from *her* divorce. *She* is as much a casualty of the polarity of the sexes as we all are. Disgraced, unsexed April Ashley is our *sister* and our symbol (1970, 62-63, *italics added*).

The arguments of Raymond (1979) and other feminist theorists on gender of the essentialist era deny agency to transsexuals and portray them as "dupes" and victims of a psycho-medical "empire", and/or patriarchy:

> Transsexuals, as masochists, have great difficulty in believing in the validity and sanctity of their own insides.

> ....The transsexual therapist - in adjusting the transsexual mind and behaviour to the stereotype of the desired sex - and the medical specialists - in adjusting the transsexual body to the desired body-type of the opposite sex - are dealing with transsexuals as manipulatable objects and reducing them to the world of appearances. (Raymond, 1979, 144-145)

The autobiographies do not reflect this mindless acquiescence, with accounts of disagreements with the psycho-medical establishment being so consistent that they form a rite-of-passage and denouement for the sub-genre (Ashley, Morris and Richards all sought surgery [without compulsory psychotherapy] from Dr Borou in Casablanca, after refusing to accept the gender-role moulding of Western therapists).

Raymond takes a curious position in advocating that transsexuals forgo medical intervention, so as to better undermine the oppressive nature of the current gender roles (1979, 178-185). It seem ironic that, in her professed project of revising the status of *her* engenderment, she seeks the support of the same minority who she insists must relinquish any attempt at re-definition of *their* gender (and she displays no willingness to impose equivalent restrictions on her own gendered space). I will argue in Chapter 8 that while the existence of postoperative transsexuals does destabilise our understandings about the boundaries of the existing gendered landscape, these formerly marginalised people have as much investment in being legitimately gendered *within* those same boundaries as anyone else. The imposition the type of personal constraints on transsexuals that were proposed by Raymond, such as "conscious-raising" instead of surgery (1979, 182) would create and maintain deviance, rather than undermine it. Such course of "treatment" would ensure the *continuance* of gender-anguish, rather than present the prospect of *transcendence*. Such pain

within the gendered landscape is likely to be infectious, spreading to the wider population in the same way that entrenched homophobia has constrained hetero-sexuality as well.

For the wider population, Raymond offers up *sexual* characteristics, i.e., chromosomes as an indicator of *genderal* legitimacy: "If chromosomal sex is taken to be the fundamental basis for maleness or femaleness, the male who undergoes sex conversion is *not* female" (1979, 10 *emphasis in original*).

In her border-keeping of genderal legitimacy, Raymond is not (and cannot be) consistent as she would find such a task almost impossible. She tactically takes a back-flip on the importance of chromosomes to genderal legitimacy when attempting to contain the "untidiness" of intersexed people. A small proportion of children are born with contradictory chromosomal arrangements and/or ambiguous genitalia or internal organs. The rigidly dichotomous, "immutable sex" / "mutable gender" position of feminist essentialists is, not unexpectedly, ambivalent toward these "exceptions". In a paradigm where sex is fixed and absolutely impermeable, there can be *no* anomalous sex/genders. The *same* medical establishment that has spawned "The Empire" can provide chromosomal evidence of the child's underlying genetic makeup, and often attempts to alleviate these discomforting[41] "anomalies" with surgical and pharmacological interventions. Raymond (1979) assumes that the category, "woman" is uncontested in meaning, and has a chromosomal basis, i.e., a woman is born with XX genetic makeup and that the "other" category (XY?) must be immutably male. "Intersexed" women with Turner's syndrome (XO) and Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (XY), together with the other genetic anomalies mentioned above are usually phenotypically, and socially, fe-

[41] Usually, such an "anomalous" (inter)sexual embodiment is far more "discomforting" to the people *around* the intersexed infant, than to the "patient" hirself, particularly as the "anomaly" is usually "corrected" long before an intersexed person would ever be in a position to give informed consent to such intervention.

male and do not usually have their status of woman challenged, even by "radical" feminist essentialists[42].

Raymond's essentialism generates the need for complex border-keeping on multiple fronts, admitting that: "Transsexualism is multifaceted" (1979, 99). She acknowledges that some persons born intersexed have "anomalous" biology and/or chromosomes, but in this case, she strategically dismisses these markers of sexual legitimacy by giving precedence to sex-of-rearing:

> [T]hose who are altered shortly after birth have the history of being practically born as male or female and those altered later in life have their body surgically conformed to their history. When and if they undergo surgical change, they do not become the opposite sex after a long history of functioning and being treated differently (1979, 114-115).

This somewhat serene dismissal reduces engenderment to a socially-constructed "victimhood". It assumes that "functioning" within a sex/gender is imposed from without, and by that reasoning, transsexuals should satisfactorily "function" in their original gender (and never have existed). Raymond's "victimhood" also ignores the agency that many of the transsexual authors claim in *counter-socialising* themselves during childhood (see 6.3 on page 264). Finally, Raymond's reading of the intersexed "condition" is superficial, and as was indicated in the subsequent outcome of John Money's much publicised "John/Joan" case, childhood gender-socialisation may count for much less than was previously believed[43] (Colapinto, 2000).

While individual arguments mounted by Raymond and other essentialists *can* be challenged, a more pertinent observation is that

[42]Germaine Greer has recently attacked the genderal status of intersexed women with these conditions in her book, "The Whole Woman", 1999, 64-74.

[43]The real-life "John/Joan", David Reimer, had a very unhappy childhood as a "girl" and reverted to a male role in his early teens (Colapinto, 2000).

her essentialism appears indefensible, *because* it requires *so many* border-keeping exercises directed at either regularising, or delegitimising the manifold exceptions to her notion of "woman": The complex and inconsistent structure of that border-keeping exercise reflects much of the underlying substance of what Raymond regards as the engenderment within.

A *simple*, unitary model of gender requires a *complex* set of explanations to account for the exceptions. Even in Gatens' argument (1996, 3-17) for recognition of socially constructed valuation of sexual embodiment, rather than engenderment, as the site of women's oppression, she must deal with the situation of male-to-female and female-to-male transsexuals as being different in both *substance* and in *numbers*. She claims that the "relative rarity" of female-to-males is driven by their need to gain male privilege, while male-to-females are the result of a failure to separate their identity from that of their mothers. She also needs to describe the transsexual situation as being the reverse of that described by the narrators in this study:

> The transsexual knows, most clearly, that the issue is not one of gender but one of sex. It is not masculinity *per se* that is valorized in our culture, but *the masculine male* (1996, 15 *italics in original*).

Which transsexual knows the above "issue"? The transsexual authors in this study are driven by issues of "gender", with *inconsistency* of sexual embodiment their initial problem, and subsequently, transformation of that embodiment becomes the solution to their gender-anguish. I am unable to detect a pattern of celebration of the acquisition of "male privilege" in the stories of female-to-males[44], nor can I see a consistent *pathology* in childhood socialisation among the male-to-females which would account for their

[44]Due to the mechanical difficulties of constructing a convincing penis, female-to-males find themselves in a position of having little, if any, "privilege" as masculine *sexual agents*, yet they still express satisfaction with their transformation.

apparently willing forfeiture of that privilege. Conversely, I will argue in on page 276 that notional *femininity* may be the site of engagement for *both* male-to-females and female-to-males.

1.9 Post-modern Examinations

Epstein & Straub declare: "and what is more postmodern than transsexualism?" (1991, 11). But what, if anything, *makes* the transsexual phenomenon, "postmodern", and "postmodern" to whom? Are post-modern theorists mistaking the pragmatic negotiation of a private angst for a deliberate, public act of gender deconstruction? As a disruptive "public" act, the notions of transsexuality and transgenderism *could* be regarded as vehicles for deconstruction of gender, and the two identities are often conflated in such theorising:

> All this deconstruction and yearning for fluidity anticipate future evolutions of social genders and physical sexes, the actual outcome of which can only be speculated about. For now, these circulating representations of new genders to come urgently reveal the limitations of our existing categories (Nataf, 1996, 56).

The transsexual experience *of* gender, as distinct from the transgendered discourse *on* gender, does not require new categories of "sex" or "gender" and such fluidity as may exist, is the metaphorical "fluidity" of the refugee, not of the adventurer. The transsexual condition is only comprehensible as a constrained navigation *within* a binary gender model, and to represent their stories as a transgression of that binary *as a whole,* is only possible if one gives little, or no, weight to the personal narrative of the transsexuals themselves.

Some of the post-modern theorists on the transsexual phenomenon are transsexuals themselves, but their understandings of the project

of gender-deconstruction may be prosaic, rather than theoretical. Riki-Anne Wilchins acknowledges the work of Butler and Foucault and applies their theories to a specifically transsexual context:

> Foucault asked about the necessity of making one's self an object of possible knowledge, to be learned and memorised. For genderqueers, that necessity is survival. The purpose of a gender regime is to regulate these meanings and to punish those who transgress them. In order to survive, to avoid the bashings, the job discrimination, and the street-corner humiliations, my friend will be forced to place herself as a site of *truth* to be mastered. That knowledge will come from others. She must know how others see her so she can know how to see herself; otherwise, she enters society at her peril (Wilchins, 1997, 36, *emphasis in original*).

While the "realities" of the threats to the personal safety of transsexuals are significant, I will argue in Chapter 8 that the "prize" of transsexual re-embodiment; genderal legitimacy, is almost wholly dependent on the *meanings of engenderment* attached by others. As the stories of gender-anguish prior to transformation in this study illustrate, an internal sense of being gendered (ISG) means almost nothing, in terms of self-esteem, if the outside world does not accord with that conviction. Indeed, the gender-anguish is usually at its height when the transsexual's internal sense of gender (ISG) is strong, yet at variance with hir accepted presentation (GRB, SGL) on the gendered landscape. Whether the sufferer is alone on a hypothetical "desert island", or unable/unwilling to present in a way which reflects their core gender, gender-legitimacy (SGL) is a *public* act which will elude them.

1.10 Psycho-Medical Literature

The modern notion of "transsexuality" has never left the realm and control of the psycho-medical establishment, even if a few frustrated individual transsexuals have fled to Casablanca, Thailand and Mexico to avoid the genderally-constricting gatekeeping practice expected of the "professionals" within mainstream Western medicine. It is possible that the "condition" would never have come into being *in the way that it is recognised today* without the psycho-medicalisation of the transsexual demands for transformation, but some form of gender-anguish would have still been present. By containing, and controlling, the transsexual condition within the psycho-medical establishment, its threat to the naive construction of "ordinary" gender is defused: "Normally-gendered" people would never want to change their sexual embodiment, so transsexuals need to be "treated" by professionals with training on how to handle mental (i.e., genderal) abnormality.

In the nineteenth century, Krafft-Ebing described patients presenting with a condition which *might* be construed as equivalent to modern transsexuality (Cases 129 to 133, 1998, 200-221). However, consideration should be given as to how gender-anguish might have been perceived and articulated within *that* sexual/genderal landscape[45].

Hirschfeld described transvestites, who, in some cases, more closely resembled the modern notion of "transsexual" (1914/1991). He approved the genital surgery of several male-to-females, more

[45]There was no clear distinction between "sex" and "gender" at the time, so the notion of "changing sex" and the imperative for doing so, may have been regarded in a rather different way that a modern transsexual might perceive their condition. Furthermore, Krafft-Ebing was reporting the patient's presentation from a particular stance of regarding this, and other sexual variance, as a *pathology*, in particular, as the sub-title of the work suggests, as a *medico-forensic* study. The "forensic" aspect was temporally relevant, because at the time of writing, many of the "deviances" discussed, such as homosexuality and cross-dressing were criminal acts in many jurisdictions.

as a palliative for extreme and persistent transvesticism, than as a specific treatment for the as-yet-unnamed condition of transsexuality. He abandoned his work in 1933, when the Nazi government took power in Germany.

Cauldwell (1949) described the case of a female-to-male person, for whom the psychologist coined the term "transexual".

An endocrinologist, Harry Benjamin published "The Transsexual Phenomenon" (1966) which was based on his experience of treating transsexuals. His work, although not as rooted in the psychological mainstream as Stoller's publication, offered the prospect of a reliable (and possibly even slightly respectable) treatment for the condition.

Howard Garfinkel, an ethnomethodologist, published "Studies in Ethnomethodology" in 1967, which uses the author's notes on treating one transsexual[46] patient, Agnes, to support his arguments regarding the "natural" attitude to gender which non inter/trans/sexuals assume.

Stoller drew on his work with transsexual patients to publish "Sex and Gender" (1968). This work not only provided a semi-respectable framework for the psycho-medical treatment of the condition, but it gave the transsexual narrators who published after this work, a clearer way of articulating their feelings and motivations in addressing their embodiment.

1.10.1 Historic Treatment of Transsexuality

The gender/genital sex *conflict* of what is accepted as generating Western transsexualism[47] is not a recent fabrication of industrialised society. At least by the understandings of Western anthro-

[46]Throughout Garfinkel's study, leading up to Agnes' approval for genital surgery, the author had accepted Agnes' claims to be *intersexed.* (see 2.1.7 on page 90).

[47]Western transsexualism, necessarily depends on the availability of surgery, hormones, and a suitable theoretical framework in which to become the psycho-medicalised phenomenon that we recognise today.

pologists, it *appears* that some non-Western cultures often cope(d) with gender ambiguity by creating "third genders"[48]. Thus the various cultural expressions of other genders in Amerindian society were accommodated with institutions such as the berdache (Devereaux, 1937), where genetic women and men could cross gender boundaries, either temporarily, or permanently. Western society would have difficulty with physical gender ambiguities such as the apparent spontaneous change of girls to males at puberty which is prevalent in some parts of Santo Domingo, but that society has accommodated this phenomenon by the institution of the guevedoce (Imperato-McGinley, et al, 1974).

Paradoxically, although Industrialised society is able to attempt medical interventions to alleviate gender ambiguities that non-Western societies have coped with culturally, it may be less willing to challenge the understandings about the structure of this dichotomous gender regime. This is particularly the case of feminist essentialism, which is predicated on the existence of two genders, rigidly defined and apparently both fixed from birth *and* policed by patriarchal socialisation throughout a woman's life-course. It seems inevitable that any reading of transsexual autobiographies from a feminist essentialist standpoint will reject any notion that a "sex-change" has occurred. It would then follow that the transsexual who sought "mutilating" surgery, and the medical institution which provided the service *must be pathological.* A circularity is set up where the transsexual is deemed unfit to define their own engenderment by dint of their "pathology", and the radical standpoint appropriates to itself the grounds to advocate that the "misguided" practice should be prohibited.

[48]Although a detailed examination of non-Western cultures is outside the scope of this study, I speculate that such "third genders" could be expressions of a lesser, or at least different, term of occupation of gendered space within an otherwise binary system. The Sambian *kwolu-aatmwol* translates as "transforming into a male thing" (Herdt, 1996, 436). The wording suggests that these intersexed persons are moving *within* a binary, rather than occupying a third position outside it.

1.10.1.1 Demanding Transsexuality?

Both Hausman and Fausto-Sterling seem to object to the condition of transsexuality being predicated by the *demand* by transsexuals themselves for transforming surgery, as if agency by a group which should know its place *as object of enquiry* could be regarded as a problem in itself:

> By demanding technological intervention to "change sex", transsexuals demonstrate that their relationship is a dependent one (Hausman, 1995, 110).

Hausman does not acknowledge that the transsexual "patient" is primarily negotiating a sex/gender construct which is not of their making, and she reduces the *agency* of transsexuals (the quest for bodily transformation) for the *symptom* of a dependency which is bordering on victimhood. Fausto-Sterling also applies this form of hindsight to deny the possibility of transsexual agency:

> The transsexual emerged as an identity or type of human, when, in exchange for for medical recognition and access to hormones and surgery, transsexuals convinced their doctors that they had become the most stereotypical members of their sex-to-be. Only then would physicians agree to create a medical category that transsexuals could apply in order to obtain surgical treatment (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, 253).

Fausto-Sterling assumes that gender-anguish amongst proto-transsexuals did not exist *a priori* and independently of society's possibly flawed[49] construction of engenderment. Is the demand by transsexuals for bodily transformation a problem *in itself* for those who see themselves as leading debate on engenderment, or is it evidence of a

[49]Here I mean, "flawed", in the sense of having its over-simplified foundations unarticulated. See my discussion in Chapter 8.

degree of agency which the non-transsexed theorist is reluctant (or perhaps incapable) to grant? The privilege of the gender-theorist, *as expert*, is threatened by the prospect of the transsexual, *as agent*.

1.10.2 Milestones

This list is by no means exhaustive, but it contains what I see as the most significant publications and events which altered the discourse on transsexuality. I do not wish to give the impression that the transsexual story-tellers passively soaked up the prevailing discourse of their times and made their autobiographies to fit. To make the most convincing claim to gender-legitimacy, the writers had to couch their stories in the most authoritative discourse available to them. It should also be noted that the stories of transsexuals also *drove* the "expert" discourses by psycho-medical professionals, as many of them drew on their experience of "treating" transsexual patients.

1932 Hoyer published "Man into Woman". This is the first biographic account in English of a surgical transformation of sexual embodiment. The transsexual subject, Lili Elbe, dies the same year.

1933 Hirschfeld's sexual clinic in Hamburg, Germany was closed by the new Nazi government, and his records of his work on transsexuals were largely destroyed.

1946 Michael Dillon, the first surgically transformed female-to-male with a biographic record[50] published "Self", a somewhat

[50]Alan Hart, a female-to-male precursor, had limited surgical transformation (probably only a hysterectomy) in the 1920s, and wrote several novels, at least one of which contain characters which are probably semi-autobiographical (*The Undaunted* [1936]). Dillon wrote an autobiography which has not been published: Hodgkinson published a *biography* of Dillon in 1989 which drew on his own material.

obscure discussion of endocrinology and sex/gender variance.

1949 A psychologist, Cauldwell coined the term "transexual"[51] when describing a patient who displayed behaviour corresponding to the current understanding of the word "transsexual".

1953 Simone de Beauvoir's "Second Sex" is published in English. She argues that "women" are constructed, rather than born. Her "social construction of gender" argument strengthened early transsexuals' convictions of their claims to gender.

1953 News of Christine Jorgensen's "sex change" broke in the US press. While there had been publicity of other transsexual transformations elsewhere, hers was the first "public" discourse of the phenomenon in the USA. She became celebrated, parodied, and reviled, and her story became the spark which gave other emerging transsexuals an insight into their own conditions. After the furore had died down in 1968, she published an autobiography, in which she sought to refute much of the earlier mis-representation of herself by the popular press.

1966 Harry Benjamin, an endocrinologist, published "The Transsexual Phenomenon". He describes his largely successful treatment of transsexuals by giving them what they wanted: Hormonal and/or surgical changes to their sexual embodiment. This book was the first publication by a psycho-medical professional which did not dismiss transsexuals as pathological and delusional.

[51]The word was spelt with one "s", which does not convey the same meaning as the current "ss" spelling. Trans (cross) - Sexual is self-contained, whereas, tran-sexual or trans-exual contains, however one splits the word contains a meaningless syllable. Riki-Anne Wilchins also uses the single "s" as a deliberate, political act: "This seemed a way of asserting some small amount of control over a naming process that has always been entirely out of my hands - a kind of quiet mini-rebellion of my own" (1997, 15).

1967 Howard Garfinkel published "Studies in Ethnomethodology", which explores the "natural" assumptions that surround the everyday construction of gender. While these "assumptions" de-legitimate transsexual claims to their achieved gender, the process of "passing" as described by Garfinkel, is based on these same naive assumptions. His book drew heavily on his work with transsexual patients.

1968 A psychiatrist, Robert Stoller published "Sex and Gender", which articulated a distinction between sex and gender. The book drew heavily on Stoller's experience of being one of the early "gatekeepers" for transsexuals, or gender-dysphoric people. His publication sanctioned a discourse by later transsexual autobiographers who took up his description of the sex/gender distinction. It may be debatable whether Stoller drew on a concept that many of his transsexual patients already knew: i.e., that sex and gender are distinct, and not always concordant, or whether Stoller's book allowed the transsexual story-tellers to articulate the distinction more clearly. He argued that transsexuality stems from a pathology (inappropriate childhood socialisation), and proposed rigourous resocialisation of children who displayed deviated gendered behaviour.

1970 A UK magistrate, Justice Ormrod, in *Corbett vs. Corbett* annulled the marriage of a post-operative male-to-female transsexual, April Ashley, on the grounds that she was not legally a woman. This case set a precedent regarding the status of "sex-changes" which still applies in the UK today.

1974 Jan Morris published "Conundrum". While she was by no means the first male-to-female autobiographer and her book is not necessarily representative of most of the transsexual writers, she was widely read. Critics such as Raymond draw

on her background of privilege and her somewhat uncritical adoption of stereotypical "female" behaviour.

1977 Mario Martino published the first *unequivocal* female-to-male autobiography. Robert Allen had previously published his story, "But for the Grace", in 1954, but in it, he made not wholly convincing claims of being *intersexed*. Michael Dillon's autobiography predated both of these works, but it remains unpublished.

1979 Janice Raymond published "The Transsexual Empire", a highly critical attack on the transsexual phenomenon. I address the substance and shortcomings of this book at 1.8 on page 46 and 8.1.2 on page 360. Perhaps more than any other book, this work gave voice to an essentialist reaction to transsexuality which, in turn, generated more vilification and exclusion of male-to-female women from many parts of the women's movement of the time. Many of the subsequent transsexual autobiographers felt the need to either address Raymond directly (Wilchins, Riddell, Spry), or allow a defensiveness to creep into their writing.

1988 Carmen Rupe published "Carmen", New Zealand's first transsexual autobiography.

1995 New Zealand Parliament amended the Births, Deaths and Marriages Act to allow for amendment of sex on birth certificates and comprehensive legal recognition of new sex/gender status following genital surgery.

1996 Geri Nettick published "Mirrors", the first *biographical* account of a self-identified lesbian transsexual. While several of the earlier authors argued that gender identity is quite distinct from sexual orientation, Nettick's work was the first book-length story of a transsexual "becoming queer" by way of bodily transformation.

1999 Georgina Beyer became the world's first openly transsexual member of parliament, when she was elected as MP for Wairarapa, NZ

1.10.3 Western Treatment of Gender Ambiguity before Availability of Hormones/Surgery

Until a clear distinction had been made between physical sex, gender, and sexual orientation, these concepts were often conflated. Given the prohibitions surrounding sodomy, defining one's "sex/gender" could be either life-threatening, or life-saving. Furthermore, the restrictions placed on women in entering "public" space, or gaining personal autonomy, gave an incentive to many ambiguously gendered/sexed persons to opt for a "male" persona in public. Expediency also allowed the possibility that some women, who were not in any way "male" in terms of engenderment, to adopt a male role on either a permanent, or temporary, basis.

Outside of ritualised expressions of homosexuality, there seems to have been few, if any substantive advantages to genetic males adopting "female" roles for personal gain or safety (except, perhaps, avoidance of military conscription, or press-ganging). It may, therefore, be concluded that historic accounts of male-to-female gender transgression were primarily an expression of either a precursor to that of modern transsexuals or of transvestites.

While many examples of gender-transgression by female-bodied persons exist, the interpretation of their motives within modern understandings of engenderment is problematic: What does the case of Joan of Arc say about her gender which would be comprehensible today? Did she present in a largely male guise to gain the authority which would have been denied her as a woman? Or would the assumption of that authority be unthinkable *unless* one had an intrinsically "male" gender identity? Even at the time of her trial, the nature of her transgression was contentious:

> In the act of debating Jeanne's male dress, her supporters and opponents also established their positions on gender roles and the effect of sex on behaviour. Jeanne defied stereotypical gender roles to a certain extent, but in the inversion of roles she conformed to the sexual hierarchy by adopting male dress and androcentric symbols of heroism and strength. . . Her paradoxical status, like the dichotomous views on her cross-dressing from equally historical and canonical sources used to defend or impugn her, reveals the fundamental contradictions in medieval cultural views of gender (Hotchkiss, 1996, 68).

The context of the gender landscape within which the transgression took place is very important. It is doubtful whether the physical embodiment of many of the women who passed as men was sufficiently masculine to pass unnoticed as males, yet according to the historic accounts, many were accepted in that role. While agency, autonomy, bravery or rationality were seen as "male" traits, it would be in the interests of those charged with maintaining that order to either brutally suppress attempts by female-bodied persons to pass themselves as males[52], or to accept that it was possible, in certain circumstances, to transcend most the social restrictions of female embodiment. Thus, the adoption of a "male" social role by women in the Balkans up until the mid-twentieth century was possible by not only presenting as "male", but by denying any vestige of "female" sexuality:

> In Balkan culture virgins were seen as a relatively unclassified category, clearly set apart from those who have become "women" through matrimony and motherhood, and somehow more akin to the male gender -

[52]Or to be accused of witchcraft because of the "untidiness" of expression of similar genderal traits, while retaining a female presentation (possession of a *female* body by a *male* devil).

> which serves more or less as the marked prestige gender (Gremaux, 1996, 281).

"Passing" for these women depended on the *acquiescence* of the society in which they were situated and, as such, was different from the relatively unchallenged status of genetic males[53]. The conferring of a "male" status to female-bodied persons may be conditional upon them maintaining the traits of agency, autonomy, bravery or rationality on an ongoing basis. In death, or after being incapacitated, many of these "passing" women were again treated *as women.* While suspicions about the sexual status of Dr James Barry were voiced during hir lifetime as British Surgeon-General (exposure during hir service in the Crimean war would have been highly likely) s/he was only *publically* exposed at the time of hir death:

> Throughout Barry's life rumors were spread about his gender: 'many surmises were in circulation about him', wrote a patient from his earliest days in Cape Town, 'from the awkwardness of his gait and the shape of his person it was the prevailing opinion that he was female' (Garber, 1993, 203).

Jack Garland was accepted as male during hir lifetime, but hir body was buried in a white, lacy dress[54]. Likewise, despite a sexually ambiguous appearance and never wholly covering up hir history, Billy Tipton was accepted as a man until hir death (although hir three wives had suspicions about hir embodiment, they did not publically declare their doubts until after Billy's death).

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[53]There were limits, even for genetic males, and "unmanly" behaviour such as cowardice, irrationality or effeminacy was frowned upon.

[54]"Jack struggled throughout his life to maintain his male identity, yet in a final symbol of rejection by family and society, and a final assault upon his body, this little old gray-haired man was buried in a woman's white satin dress" (Sullivan, 1990, 172).

While historically, there may have been vested interests in suppressing doubts about the sexual embodiment of female-to-male transgressives (and, conversely, publically voicing those same type of doubts concerning male-to-females, such as the Chevalier d'Eon) the "modern" distinction between sex and gender makes this police-action less appropriate. What historical aspects of these transgressives can be applied to modern transsexual engenderment? There are probably few parallels in the current Western gendered landscape, although amongst non-Western cultures, the same social acquiescence to a less-than-unequivocal physical presentation could make up for the local lack of access to transforming surgery and hormones (for example, Fa'fafine in Samoa). Now that substantive re-working of sexual embodiment is possible in Western society, a claim of gender-dysphoria generates an *expectation* that resolution will be found through permanent bodily/social transcendence, rather than contingent social accommodation alone.

1.11 Other Discourses

There is a dearth of literature on sex/gender that is relevant to, and contemporary with, the "Heroic" autobiographies and, therefore, the legitimacy of their "sex-changes" is not directly contested (transsexualism was not recognised as a distinct psycho-medical condition until the publication of DSM-111 in 1973).

During the "middle" period of the transsexual autobiographies, much of the feminist literature which addresses transsexuality is hostile, both to the transsexuals themselves, and to the psycho-medical process which brought the phenomenon into being (Raymond's "Transsexual Empire" [1979]). The epistemological gulf between these feminist essentialists, the transsexuals themselves, and the professionals supporting them is wide, with each side occupying opposing poles of the interplay between sex, gender and

the permeability within each of them (see Figures 1a & 1b).

In the late period, the "radical" autobiographies occupy similar ground to other post-modern examinations of sex and gender. Unless the author declares her/himself to be transsexual, it is difficult to discern the gender continuity of the writer from the text alone. Nevertheless, other authors, such as Claudine Griggs (1998), still make claims to "the ordinary" within gendered space.

1.11.1 Popular Press

The tabloid press has seized upon transsexual stories from time to time.* Prior to the modern availability of surgical transformation, stories were printed of gender-transgressive, probably proto-transsexual, usually female-bodied[55] people, whose "true" sex was revealed at death or serious injury.

Following the death of Jack Bee Garland in 1936, he was buried in a white, lace dress and the local newspaper revealed his "secret" embodiment:

> "'Jack Bee' Was Woman", shouted the front page of the *San Francisco Chronicle* the next morning. "The tiny, little 'old man' with the big heart, known to hundreds as Mr Garland, writer, former newspaper man and social worker, was a woman", it told the world, and that in fact he was the long-vanished Elvira Virginia Mugarrietta (Sullivan, 1990, 8).

Even when some public weariness with stories of the transsexual phenomenon might have been expected, the death of Billy Tipton in 1989, a non-operative, female-bodied person who had lived almost all of hir adult life as a man, generated a wave of publicity. Perhaps

[55]One exception was the Chevalier d'Eon (1728-1810), whose "real" sex was a matter of public concern. The Chevalier lived as a woman for much of hir adult life, but after hir death was revealed as a male-bodied person (Kates, 1995).

Footnote *

David King (1996, 133-150) provides a survey of press coverage of what he describes as ``Cross-dressing, sex-changing and the press''. As with many of the journalists involved, he conflates transsexualism and transvesticism, and the article focusses on *external* reactions to the phenomena: ``To understand the meanings which transvesticism and transsexualism have in our culture, then we have to look at how media products are put together and how they are received'' (1996, 150). King's article provides a useful insight into some of the gendered landscape which the transsexual narrators negotiate. My discussion in this section attempts to explore the reactions of the narrators to their depiction in the press.

by that time, the fascination stemmed from hir relative success in passing hirself off as male, without hormonal/surgical assistance, even when such treatment was available. Newspaper headlines focussed upon the transgressive aspect of his life: "Musician's Death at 74 Reveals He Was a Woman" *New York Times*, 2 Feb 1989; "My Husband Was a Woman and I Never Knew", *Star*, 21 Feb 1989.

The "modern" transsexual autobiographers in this study faced the threat of exposure and the threat of misrepresentation in the popular press, even while they were still alive. Christine Jorgensen's story was the first high-profile exposure in the USA press from 1952 onwards and was of an order which has probably never been equalled. Although she had hoped to remain in control of her story by initially signing an exclusive contract with *American Weekly*, other newspapers made up for the lack of first-hand "facts" by using speculation and fictitious accounts:

> Looking back on it, I can understand why some of the misconceptions prevailed and how they got an early start. . . Unable to reach me and gather the real facts, rival newspapers proceeded to enlarge on the slightest item to keep the Jorgensen story moving before the public. If I sneezed, it was duly reported as an event. perhaps the controversies would have been minimized, had the information been shared equally (Jorgensen, 1968, 187-188).

Christine resented the publicity which dogged her for the rest of her life, both in terms of her own lack of privacy, and that of her family and friends:

> If I have been harsh in my treatment of the press, it is because at the time I felt that it invaded the last chambers of privacy, and I particularly resented the energetic pursuit of my family. . . The unusual, especially in

> sexual anomalies, is what the public wants to read with breakfast coffee (Jorgensen, 1968, 330).

Nevertheless, she also acknowledges that the same publicity made her career as an entertainer possible. After the ongoing publicity, a working life as a stage performer was one of the few avenues of employment left open to her, in any case.

Other early transsexual biographers shunned publicity, and made life-changing decisions to avoid it. Michael Dillon was exposed in 1958[56] by the *Sunday Express* (11 May) after an investigation into a discrepancy in his entry in two UK peerage books: *Burke's Peerage* listed him as a female, Laura Maud, while *DeBrett's* recorded him in his current male persona of Laurence Michael (Hodgkinson, 1989, 137). As a result of this publicity, Michael resigned his position as ship's doctor and fled to India, leaving behind UK society for his few remaining years (he died in 1964). Although this exposure led to his pursuit of what he regarded as a "higher calling" of a Tibetan Bhuddist monk, he was nevertheless angry at the intrusion into his privacy:

> By what sense of values did a newspaper editor and reporter think that five minute's light reading by the general public justified such an assault on a doctor's career? Or did they stop to think at all? . . My career at sea would have been ended anyhow by this thoughtless act. The fact that circumstances quite apart from these were leading me to a new life in any case, of which they knew nothing, makes no difference to the inhumanity of the deed (Dillon, quoted in Hodgkinson, 1989, 140-141).

A great deal of publicity was generated as a result of Renee Richards' entry into women's tennis competitions in 1976. Despite Renee's

[56]This was not the first time that he had aroused the interest of the press. In 1937, while still presenting as female, s/he had been briefly exposed in the Daily Mirror with a picture taken while s/he was rowing (in shorts). The caption to the photograph read "Man or Woman?" (Hodgkinson, 1989, 140).

pleas to the investigating journalist that public exposure would ruin her career as a doctor, and embarrass her family, her past as a transsexual was disclosed to the public (Richards, 1983, 319).

For Chris Johnson and Cathy Brown, publicity led to their rejection by the gender program which was managing their transformation (Brown, Johnson & Nelson, 1982, 188-190). The novelty of a transsexual *couple* was reported anonymously in their local paper, which aroused the interest of national (UK) newspapers:

> But unfortunately Fleet Street seized upon the story, seeing it as a sensational true-life drama that ought to be exposed before the eager curiousity of the reading public. Tracking down this bizarre family became a top priority and a journalist with a reputation for seeking out the impossible was dispatched from London on the unenviable task of foot slogging around Handsworth in search of Britain's and possibly the world's first transsexual couple (Brown, Johnson & Nelson, 1982, 185).

While public exposure on the grounds of being a former transsexual no longer generates the same public interest, Some of the biographers in this study have exploited the popular press for their own ends.

Caroline Cossey's life was disrupted twice by exposure by the tabloid press. She was working successfully as a model and had had some public exposure as a television presenter and a minor part in the James Bond film, *For Your Eyes Only*. This level of public prominence may have enhanced the titillation value of her now long-concealed past as a male-to-female transsexual. On the first occasion a *News of the World* reporter hounded her family and friends and came up with a headline, JAMES BOND GIRL WAS A BOY. She was devastated by the intrusion into what she regarded as her private life:

> "What right?" I thought as I stared at that paper. "What right does anyone have to hound another human being, to harass their family, to ruin their career, to take away their dignity that was so hard won?" That story wasn't news. It didn't help people to live better lives . . . I had hurt no one, and now I felt that my life was in tatters. Everywhere I went I would be known as "Tula - the transsexual". How could I hope to establish a relationship with any man? (Cossey, 1991, 131).

As a result of the press exposure, Caroline's appearance in the James Bond film was excised. For some time afterwards, she could only find work in modelling which was of a low-key nature. She eventually met, and fell in love with a wealthy businessman, Elias Fattal, who married her in 1989, despite knowing her background. Three weeks after her marriage, Caroline was again exposed by the *News of the World* with the headline SEX CHANGE PAGE THREE GIRL WEDS. Her reaction to this second intrusion was as angry as the first time, nine years earlier:

> "The bastards!" I exclaimed, feeling the blood drain from my face. "They've done it again". Not content with having ruined my career and caused untold suffering to me and my family, they were now damaging my marriage. The final sentence stuck a knife in my heart. It read: 'She's really landed on her back this time.' I threw the paper across the room in a rage (Cossey, 1991, 200).

Her husband's conservative family were aghast at the publicity and pressured him into seeking an annulment[57] of their marriage.

Stage performers, such as Carmen (1988) and Carlotta (1994) found exposure in the popular press to be much less traumatic,

[57]Under UK law at the time, she was still regarded as a man, and so the marriage could have been held to be invalid (see 2.1.18 on page 102).

and perhaps even a welcome enhancement to their careers. Carlotta recounts how her mother was proud of her child's publicity: "Whenever an article about me appeared in a magazine or newspaper she would take it to show her friends in Balmain" (Carlotta, 1994, 111).

1.11.2 Anthropological Literature

Anthropologists have studied apparently gender-transgressive behaviour amongst Polynesian, Asian and Amerindian societies. Some of the conclusions reached in these studies may be of limited value when theorising about Western gender transgression, except to illustrate that a state of sex/gender conflict is not a purely Western "condition", and that ways of accommodating gender transgression are contingent upon the *local* understandings of engenderment and the physical resources available for transformation[58].

1.11.3 Cross-Cultural Aspects of Sex/Gender Transgression

There has been only limited institutionalisation of sex/gender transgression in Western society, until the recent recognition of the categories transsexual and other transgenderists. In non-western cultures, a form of sex/gender flexibility has been present and institutionalised in many societies. Although these non-Western sex/gender "transgressors" may (or may not) appear to "change sex" within the Western understanding of sex/gender, their underlying concepts of sex and gender may be so different to our own that comparisons between these *cultural* accommodations to gender unease/fluidity would be difficult, and are outside the scope of

[58]It could be argued that the available physical resources also affect the understandings of engenderment. Now that hormonal and surgical transformation is available in the West, the desire to proceed with this re-embodiment becomes a defining characteristic of the transsexual condition itself.

this study.

The spaces in which Western transsexuals cross "sex/gender" boundaries are embodiment, social, and legal. In other cultures, the location of the imperative for "changing sex" could be located elsewhere: fulfilling kinship obligations; religious functions; sexual orientation or performance; access to, and control of property, or to spouses; or of the ability or desire to fill gender-specific tasks. In some cases, "changing sex" can mean moving between the "public" or the "private", and this has parallels with the non-institutionalised practice within western societies until recently, of women disguising themselves as men, in order to obtain access to the "public" goods of education, or of physical assets, or to be able to move within the landscape with a similar degree of safety to "other" (i.e., "real") men. Whilst, no doubt, some of these female-bodied gender transgressives were proto-transsexuals, it would probably be wrong to assume that they all were. The understanding about the sex/gender landscape in which these transgressions took place is different to that of the modern transsexual story-tellers and, therefore, outside the scope of this study.

1.11.4 Non-Western Cultural Accommodation of Sex/Gender Ambiguity

There have been many accounts of how Western researchers have read cultural adaptations to *some sort* of gender transgression. However, the veracity of these accounts is sometimes questionable, and in most cases now unverifiable, as the cultures studies have been undermined, or even erased by western contact. The investment that the writer has in "gender" is often apparent in the interpretation that is made of these often exotic, historic examples of gender transgression.

Devereaux (1937) reads Mohave gender transgression as "institutionalised homosexuality". Likewise, Katz (1976) and Williams

(1986) claim that such gender transgressives are "homosexual", because they wish to make the argument that "gayness" has been an enduring, historic, and cross-cultural phenomenon. Whether any of the Amerindian participants at the time of observation thought of themselves as in any way "homosexual", is far from clear.

Millot (1983) offers up a range of examples of historic gender transgression to undermine contemporary transsexual claims to gender-legitimacy. She includes groups, such as Phrygians and Skoptsy, whose membership required castration of their male adherents, despite there being no evidence that they were driven by anything but *religious* motives, focussing on the disdain of sexual function which has often been a characteristic of other religions, which did not demand such extreme bodily mutilation.

Several authors have explored some of the accounts of women who passed as men in Western history (Garber 1992, Hotchkiss, 1996, Wheelwright, 1989). It may be tempting to claim that either *all* of these women were proto-MtoF-transsexuals, or conversely, that they were not necessarily proto-transsexual, but motivated by the need to obtain the privileges which were until comparatively recently, only accorded to men (ability to work and study, to own property, to fight, or to travel safely). The disparity between access to "public" space between women and men would have been a greater incentive to cross-dress for these historic women than today, therefore, passing as a man may have been the only way that even non-transsexual women could become educated, or to gain meaningful work, or to travel independently. On the other hand, the social difference between the superficialities of gender-role-behaviour (GRB) would have been greater than today, and therefore it would have been more difficult for anyone *but* a proto-transsexual to acquire and maintain the required form of gender-coded behaviour. Whatever the underlying motivation, a female-bodied person who had a gender identity which we would recognise today as "transsexual" would have far more personal resources to

women disguising themselves as men, in order to obtain access to the "public" goods of education, or of physical assets, or to be able to move within the landscape with a similar degree of safety to "other" (i.e., "real") men. Whilst, no doubt, some of these female-bodied gender transgressives were proto-transsexuals, it would probably be wrong to assume that they all were. The understanding about the sex/gender landscape in which these transgressions took place is different to that of the modern transsexual story-tellers and, therefore, outside the scope of this study.

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Whatever form of gender transgression did take place in these historic accounts, it occurred within *that* particular gendered landscape. I am, therefore, skeptical about the usefulness of these accounts in comprehending the modern Western phenomenon of transsexuality. Indeed, even within the past century, there have been such developments in the transsexual narrative that even Lili Elbe's 1932 account of her sense of engenderment would be significantly different, almost to the point of being risable, to cur-

opens up only a small possibility of moral sanction for transsexual surgery:

> The good of the whole takes precedence over the part. It is necessary, however, that this amputation should be a really efficacious means, and the only means, of saving the life and the health of the whole body. Consequently, the only legitimate castration, in the opinion of theologians, is that which can claim to be the *only* efficacious means of preserving the individual from a worse evil than that of the castration itself (Riquet, 1955, 28).

This determination could be interpreted from the subjectivity of a transsexual narrator to sanction sexual transformation. They could argue that this type of surgery is the only treatment which is efficacious, and capable of addressing the health of the whole body (where this can be regarded as an abstracted sense of embodiment). Furthermore, for the transsexual, loss of their birth-genitals presents not only a lesser evil, but usually no evil at all. The later interpretations, as discussed below, do not grant the transsexual this degree of agency in defining their condition.

In the Vatican-sponsored publication "Sex and Gender", The Reverend Ashley argues that because post-operative transsexuals are rendered infertile, their transformations run counter to church requirements to procreate:

> The question still remains for the Christian moralist. If these persons seek such an operation purely as a means of relieving the obsessive anxiety from which they suffer, and intend after the operation to live as celibates (since valid marriage is not possible for them, and they as Christians cannot exercise their sexuality outside of marriage), can this surgery be justified as an extreme measure to make it possible for the person to live without

> anxiety? . . . My personal judgement would still have to be negative (Schwartz et al, 1983, 43).

The author goes on to recommend the use of psycho-active drugs to "lessen the anxiety and depression" (Schwartz et al, 1983, 43). This author's position is a refusal to privilege what he sees as personal comfort (he admits, in the above passage that surgery would *relieve* the anxiety) over the requirements of theology (he prefers the use of drugs which *lessen* anxiety).

Moraczewski, in the same Vatican publication, takes a different approach. He is concerned as to whether a transsexual's body, or their gender, is the reflection of their soul: "It would seem therefore that an individual's gender identity, being more psychological than anatomical, reflects the soul's participation in the body's sexuality"(Schwartz et al, 1983, 304). He seems to be saying that if one's *soul* is primarily a reflection of one's mental state, rather that one's embodiment, then transsexual surgery might be justified within a theological context. He remains, however, skeptical about whether the transsexual phenomena actually exists in the way that many psycho-medical practitioners claim: "Before such surgery could gain the moral approval of the Church, it would be necessary for the clinical scientists to show that indeed a person's gender, and his or her anatomical sex objectively can be discordant" (Schwartz et al, 1983, 305). He does not make it clear *what* further evidence would be required to satisfy his doubts about the existence of this discordance.

1.11.7 Fiction

Despite the irony in one of its opening lines[59], Gore Vidal's "Myra Breckenridge (1969)" is unequivocally fictitious. Jennifer Fontaine's "Jennifer: Woman by Choice" (1981) and Jerri McClain's "To be a

[59]"The novel being dead, there is no point to writing made-up stories" (Vidal, 1969, 8).

Woman" (1992) are almost certainly works of fiction, although they are not presented as such.

Vidal's story depicts the main protagonist as a sexual predator who is contemptuous of men. The central character, Myra, boasts: "No man will ever possess Myra Breckenridge, though she will possess men, in her own good time and in ways convenient to her tyrannous lust" (Vidal, 1969, 18).

1.11.8 Other References

A search on the Internet for "transsexual" will yield a large number of matches. Depending on the search engine used, the matches can run into millions. However, the majority of these sites are pornographic and of an explicitly sexual nature. Even refining the search to "transsexual + women" goes some way towards reducing the number of prurient sites, as if some pornographers do not regard transsexual *as* women. The conflation of a serious, even consuming issue of gender dysphoria with that of sexual titillation is not only frustrating for a serious researcher, it also provides an indication of how the phenomenon is still regarded by at least one section of the community (the consumers of internet pornography).

1.11.8a: Other Examinations of the Transsexual Narrative

1.11.8a.1 Prosser

Having read Prosser's work several times, I have concluded (with some sense of frustration) that there was little in his book which either added to my argument, or challenged it. His brief opening comment about his own transition into manhood (Prosser, 1998, 1-2) *almost* qualified him as a FtoM narrator in my study, but even with my more lax criteria for FtoMs, his personal details are fragmentary. Furthermore, these brief comments seem to be offered up not as personal genderal validation, but as a way of positioning himself within the discourse which he is examining (in a similar way to my comments about my personal circumstances in Chapter 10). As a parallel study which preceded my own, Prosser gives an alternate reading to the transsexual condition, which I understand to be a *different* state of engenderment: ``To learn of transsexuality is to uncover transsexuality as a story and to refigure one's own life within the frame of that story'' (Prosser, 1998, 124). Prosser seems to accept transsexuality as a lifelong, and distinct condition, lying somewhere between the ``pathology'' of the psycho-medical professionals, and the pragmatic transcendence of this form of problematic engenderment by most the narrators themselves. None of the narrators acknowledge his work, and their narratives are not directly addressing Prosser's stance (whereas many of them are cognisant of both the psycho-medical, and the feminist-essentialist position). While I could have included a longer reference to Prosser's work as one description of the mechanics of story-telling, I concluded that it neither added to my reading of the narratives, nor contributed substantially to the transsexual authors' understandings of the gendered landscape in which their stories are told.

1.11.8a.2 Ekins

As with Prosser's work, it was my judgement that Ekins (1997) did not add anything substantial to my argument. He only cites three ``conventional'' TS narratives (Ashley, Morris & Star). If Ekins' work is ``grounded'' in anything, it is in the ``gender-fuck'' end of established academic gender-theory. The TS narrative is only rarely drawn upon, it is never accorded any authority, and it is frequently conflated with that of transvesticism, transgenderism and ``gender-fuck''. I assume that the purpose of the author is similar to the other gender-destabilisers which I discuss in 4.6.1.1. Ekins' use of the word ``grounded'' is quite different to my understanding of the appropriate application of the word. I believe that although *every* discourse is ``grounded'' *somewhere*, the usage of the word seems best applied when the grounding is done in a narrative which is not priviledged, or orthodox (and I see Ekins' work as yet another regurgitation of the current academic gender-theory orthodoxy). I see Ekins' work as yet another example of ``giving the audience what it wants'' which I consider that I have discussed adequately in 4.6.1.1. As I have argued that this discourse sets out to assimilate that of my subject narratives, I am reluctant to devote any more of my thesis to this matter, because if I did so, the ``gender-fuckers'' would have, indeed, succeeded. While I am confident that the majority of my narrators would find little to object to in my analysis (I have offered parts of my work up to some of them for comment allready) the same could not be said of Ekins' account: It is simply *not* grounded in the TS narrative in the first place.

1.11.8a.3 Kessler and McKenna

Kessler and McKenna (1978) re-visit the earlier work of Garfinkel (1967) to explore the mechanics of gender-attribution, which forms such an important part of the gender-legitimisation process for the transsexual narrators. Kessler and McKenna re-iterate and clarify Garfinkel's gender-schema for the ``natural'' attitude to gender (1978, 113-114). They also draw on the transsexual phenomenon to illustrate how gender attribution takes place independently of, and outside the ``natural'' basis of physical sexual embodiment and childhood socialisation. However, unlike Garfinkel who used case-notes from a gatekeeper/patient relationship in the case of ``Agnes'' , Kessler and McKenna draw on a form of transsexual narrative from ``Rachel'' as a reflexive exchange of letters. In her concluding letter to Kessler and McKenna, a now post-operative ``Rachel'' is able to declare: ``For once, I'll feel as good as you are (That's within me - nothing you've done)'' (1978, 213). It is unlikely that Garfinkel would have ever encouraged such feelings amongst his ``patients''.

Chapter 2

The Narrators

2.1 The Context of the Story-Telling

I have devoted this chapter to setting out summaries of all the transsexual authors that I have examined as part of this study. I have intended that this rather long, and sometimes repetitious account should serve as more than a listing of the "facts" offered up in the narratives. It also serves to illustrate the diversity of background of the transsexual authors. If the transsexual "condition" was caused by a defective or peculiar childhood socialisation, it is not apparent in these texts. There *is* no causative pattern (apart from the expression of a history of gender-dysphoria itself). "Modern" transsexuality is only recognisable as such within a Western psycho-medical framework over the last seventy years. Gender dysphoria has existed long before modern hormonal and surgical techniques were available, but the cultural adaptations to the condition were necessarily different[1].

In the end, the most important justification for this chapter is the propriety of acknowledging the *humanity* beneath the narratives. It is all too easy for non-transsexual gender theorists to draw

[1]See my discussion 1.11.4 on page 74 for an examination of some of these adaptations.

on abstracted notions of "sex-change", or of gender-fluidity, when they argue for alternative, multiplicities of gender from the safety of their own seemingly unassailable gender-authenticity[2]. Such notions have little meaning to the transsexual story-tellers. "Gender-in-the-ordinary" can bring unendurable pain, when it conflicts with "sexual embodiment-in-the-real". Unlike the theorists, the transsexual authors found little or no joy in living a "gender-fuck"[3]. Their names, faces and stories could, or should, call the armchair theorists to account for their speculation.

I feel that it is important to lay out the author's birth-names, birth-dates, and other published details, where they have been disclosed. While I do suspect that two or more of these accounts are fictitious, these autobiographies are, for the most part, stories of real people, not merely agents in an abstract gender construct. I was tempted to include a photograph of the author (where available) for the same reason, but I decided against it, because of technical reasons. I have included at least two stories[4] which are almost certainly fictitious for several reasons:

1. They meet my criteria for inclusion unless they specifically

[2]Some of the transsexual authors in this study, such as Bornstein, Feinberg, Rothblatt and Wilchins, also use the same approach. It seems significant that none of these authors offer up a "conventional" transsexual narrative. Several explanations are possible: The imperative for transformation that the other story-tellers articulate would be undermined by a "gender fluidity" discourse. Their attempts at undermining the binary nature of gender could serve as a *substitute* for the "conventional" transsexual discourse. Both approaches acknowledge the binary nature of gender, and that the need to be legitimately gendered is a strong and compelling force in the gender landscape at present: While the "conventional" transsexual authors are arguing for their inclusion within a binary model of gender, the "radical" authors are arguing that the rigidity of the existing binary model of gender may have contributed to their gender-anguish. A revised model of gender, which would make *both* types of narratives comprehensible, is discussed in Chapter 8 of this thesis.

[3]For example, the quotations by Claudine Griggs and Riki-Anne Wilchins at 6.3.1 on page 270 illustrate some of the transsexual authors' unease with the readings of their "condition" by outside theorists.

[4]Fontaine, 1981 and McClain, 1992.

state that they are fiction[5], and

2. They can be read (with some caution) as a reflection of a judgement by presumably astute publishers of what the general public may have wanted to read about the transsexual phenomenon.

Therefore, these stories are cautiously accepted as being "real" autobiographies, even though they are marked as being of suspicious veracity where they are sexually-charged, dwell on promiscuity, or casually conflate sexual orientation with gender identity.

In these summaries, I have avoided using gender-coded personal pronouns for the transsexuals before they have changed their sexual embodiment. Therefore, I have tried to use the "neutral" words s/*he* and *hir* prior to surgery and she, he, her, his afterwards. This is not an attempt to represent the alteration of one's genitals as the *sole* determinant of genderal authenticity (although it is usually the major marker). I needed, however, to manage the grammar of the chapter in a way which was clear, consistent, and respectful of the author's genderal status. There is no "correct" usage of these pronouns: The authors are often describing events which span a period of their life when their body was under (re)construction, or reflecting back to a time in their childhood when they were innocently unaware of what impact having a particular genital arrangement would have on their sense of their gendered self as adults.

This chapter is intended to summarise and contextualise the authors' lives. I have not presented a significant critique of either the process of transsexual story-telling, or of the substance of the narratives of any of the authors in this chapter. Some stories contain significant observations on social attitudes to gender and

[5]I have also included one overtly fictitious story (Myra Breckenridge) because it was published soon after the publicity surrounding Christine Jorgensen's "sex-change" was starting to subside: It may provide an indicator of how the "message" of Jorgensen was absorbed by many readers.

sexual embodiment, while others never go past the superficial and mundane. I have re-visited many of the stories in other sections of this thesis, to support my arguments on the structure of engenderment, so the length of the following summaries should not be taken as an indication of the substance of each author's story and/or of their introspection of their engenderment.

The authors are presented in order of the date of publication of their first biographic work, rather than the date of their birth, or of the time when they transformed themselves. Because language, as it evolves through time is a component in the gender-legitimisation process, *when* a story about gender-role transformation was *written* may be more pertinent as a marker of genderal understanding, than when the author's transformation took place.

2.1.1 Lili Elbe (Male-to-female, Denmark/Germany)

Man Into Woman, Hoyer, 1932

Lili's story was translated from German into English in 1932. Her story represents the first account of "sex-change", by way of surgical intervention[6]. Einar Waegner was a Danish painter, living in Germany who, after facing a gender-identity crisis following a session of cross-dressing to pose for hir wife's painting, sought out medical treatment. S/he found "The Professor[7]", an almost exaggeratedly competent and forceful "expert". The investigation into Lili's gender dysphoria uncovered "physical" evidence for hir condition, including the conflating of a recurring nosebleed with a metaphorically trans-located menstruation.

Details of Lili's treatment are not always specific enough to be as

[6]There had been many accounts of non-surgical transformation, either of a mythical nature, or of historical women posing as men to gain access to male privilege, to work, study, travel, or fight in areas which were denied to women.

[7]The professor would have been Magnus Hirschfeld, who was conducting a program which treated intractable "male transvestites" with genital surgery. The program was abandoned in 1933, when Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany, and several of the doctors fled overseas.

comprehensible as later accounts of sexual transformation, but hir surgery was probably consistent with that described in an article by Abraham (1997). Hir surgery seems to have followed the multi-stage, incremental approach to transformation which was applied to several of the earlier patients: Remove male organs ... Wait ... Construct a facsimile of female genitalia from grafted skin from another site[8]. The *only* hormonal treatment that Lili received was a transplanted set of ovaries from a female donor (The fate of the donor is dismissed casually: Why she had her ovaries removed is not addressed in Hoyer's book[9]). While this transplantation may have given Lili a small, and very temporary boost in hir estrogen levels, it could not have had any long-term effect on hir feminisation.

Lili died soon after the final round of treatment of "heart failure". She never painted after her transformation, and offered up her lack of talent/desire to paint as *evidence* for her claim to womanhood. She also seized upon stereotypical notions of women of the time, claiming to become dependent and unassertive in her new role (see 4.1 on page 186).

2.1.2 Michael Dillon (Female-to-male, UK)

Self, 1946

Michael Dillon was born Laura Dillon into petty Anglo-Irish aristocracy in 1915. S/he grew up in a very eccentric family and was

[8]This technique differs from the approach pioneered by Dr. Georges Borou in Casablanca, who used the patient's penile skin to line the neo-vagina.

[9]Lili is curious about the fate of the woman, but her concerns are dismissed, as being beyond Lili's comprehension:

"Tell me, Matron," asked Lili abruptly, "why are really healthy ovaries removed from a woman?"

"But, Miss Lili," answered the Matron, "it would take too long to explain this to you, especially as you do not possess the necessary anatomical knowledge to understand it. But be easy in your mind, the Professor knows what he is doing. Leave everything to him. Moreover, you need not have any fear, as your operation will be quite a minor one" (Hoyer, 1932, 172).

deeply troubled by hir gender-dysphoria, describing it as having a: "terrifying sense of being in the wrong body, of being a different gender inside from the one proclaimed by the outside" (Hodgkinson, 1989, 37). S/he insisted upon attending Oxford university, both as a means of escape from the tyranny of hir two senile aunts, and because hir family had regarded higher education as being the *sole* prerogative of their *male* children. S/he began hormonal transformation shortly before World War 2, and worked as a mechanic because s/he could not enlist to fight as a man. After the war, he availed himself of newly-developed plastic surgery techniques (which had been developed to treat injured servicemen) to construct a penis. Despite still presenting as a mechanic, Michael had a book published in 1946, in which he discussed, in a detached manner, issues of gender, hormones and sexual embodiment. It is remarkable that this rather obscure and technical book was accepted for publication, because Michael had to deny his previous academic record (because it was gained under his female name, Laura). After his re-embodiment, Michael went on to re-train as a medical doctor in his new persona.

In 1950, Michael fell in love with a male-to-female transsexual, Roberta Cowell (see below). Although Roberta showed some initial interest, s/he did not reciprocate Michael's infatuation. After his marriage proposal was rejected, Michael never attempted to form a romantic attachment ever again. He adopted an almost misogynistic attitude towards women. After working for several years as a ship's doctor, he was exposed by the press, and he fled to India, where he entered a Tibetan Bhuddist Monastery as a novice. As Labsang Jivaka, he published another book, *"Imji Getsul"* in 1961, about his life as a monk, in which he only rarely hints as to his gender-variant past. He did not cope well with the harsh lifestyle, and restricted diet of a monk and he died of malnutrition in 1962. Although he did write an autobiography, it remains unpublished because of its inaccessible writing style (it was assessed as being

"quite unpublishable", by a reviewer for Routledge (Hodgkinson, 1989, 188)).

2.1.3 Roberta Cowell (Male-to-female, UK)

Roberta Cowell's Story, 1954

Roberta Cowell was born Robert Cowell in 1918 and initially displayed little outward sign of effeminacy or unease with hir birth-sex. In fact, s/he over-compensated by engaging in activities which were, at the time, coded by hir peers as "hyper-masculine". S/he enthusiastically played "male" sports, raced cars, and flew aeroplanes. S/he became a fighter pilot during World War 2, and was captured and spent some time in a German prisoner-of-war camp. After the war, s/he resumed motor-racing, "when a violent emotional shock upset my glandular system and my feminine characteristics became more marked" (1954, 1).

Roberta read Michael Dillon's *"Self"* and tracked him down. As a result of their meeting, Michael fell in love with Roberta, and s/he responded in a less passionate way for a while, before completely rejecting Michael. Despite Roberta being pre-operative during their relationship, s/he saw *hir* claim to female gender as more "authentic" than Michael's claim to manhood (even though he had completed his own physical transformation several years before). As with Lili Elbe's earlier story, Roberta's narrative recounts her feelings about re-socialisation into a constrained female persona of an earlier time, but unlike Lili, she does not abandon her intelligence or volition as part of her claim to womanhood.

2.1.4 Robert Allen (Female-to-male, UK)

But for the Grace, 1954

Robert Allen was born Joyce Allen in 1914, and grew up as tomboy. After a disastrous (and probably unconsummated) mar-

riage to a male, s/he enlisted in a female army unit during World War 2, and started to explore sexual relationships with women. Robert claims to have *spontaneously* started to masculinise and asserts that he needed only a small, but unspecified, amount of treatment by doctors. While none of the early stories provide much detail of surgical transformations, this account is even more vague about the author's sexual embodiment. Robert displays a deep seated hostility towards other trans-people and his reticence to disclose details of his own transformation may be an attempt to distance himself from them. Like his male-to-female contemporaries, he is not above offering up accounts of his own indulgence in the gender-stereotypes of the times, and he often mentions engaging in fighting and aggressive behaviour as part of his claim to manhood.

2.1.5 Hedy-Jo Star (Male-to-female, USA)

I Changed My Sex!, 1955

Hedy-Jo was born Carl Hammonds in 1920. After a relatively hostile childhood as a "sissy", Hedy-Jo ran away from home at age 17 to work as a female-attributed dancer and stripper. Although s/he had considerable difficulty in obtaining psycho-medical clearance for genital surgery, she was operated on in 1962 and claimed in her autobiography to be the first patient of an emerging gender-dysphoria program in the USA. Despite her claims, she was by no means the first surgically transformed male-to-female transsexual in the USA. Howard Garfinkel's account (1967, 160) of "Agnes" states that she had similar surgery in 1959, and this treatment was not described by Garfinkel as being particularly ground-breaking at the time (see 2.1.7 on page 90). Furthermore, Agnes was a transsexual who successfully misrepresented herself as having an obscure "intersex" condition to obtain surgery. To do so, she must have been aware of a previously-existing program.

2.1.6 Georgina Turtle (Male-to-female, UK)

Over the Sex Border, 1963

Georgina Turtle was born George Turtle in 1923 and claimed to be ambiguously genitalled since birth, as a consequence of hir intersexed condition. S/he entered the Royal Navy as a *male* dentist in the closing stages of World War 2. S/he claimed to become increasingly aware of hir "femininity", especially after the publicity surrounding Christine Jorgensen's transformation[10] and sought psycho-medical treatment. She started taking female hormones and underwent an unspecified type of surgery to complete her transformation to womanhood. In 1960, she received one of the last alterations to the sex shown on a UK birth-certificate[11], and she draws on this change in legal status to re-force her claims to genderal authenticity.

Turtle married as a woman in 1962, and proceeded to publish several books which *insist* that her case is quite different from that of "ordinary" transsexuals. In "Over the Sex Border" (1962), she resorts to esoteric arguments and theories of engenderment which appear nowhere else in the contemporary literature[12]. While her physical appearance in the photographs contained in her two books is consistent with her claimed intersexed condition of XO/XY mosaicism, such a chromosomal arrangement is hardly sufficient to claim a *female essentialism.* She has, by her own admission, *no* paired X chromosomes and would fail buccal smear tests in the same way that genetic (XY) males would.

[10]Turtle expresses resentment that the publicity of Jorgensen's case may cheapen her own claim to a higher degree of sexual "authenticity": "[I]instead of exciting me, it immensely distressed me as I felt that no one would then believe that my own case had not been influenced by hers and that I might be different "(1962, 33). (See also 4.5 on page 212).

[11]As a result of of the judgment leading to April Ashley's annulment of marriage in 1968/70 *(Corbett vs Corbett),* the UK government has refused to amend birth-certificates.

[12]Her theories on sex and gender are discussed further at 4.5.3 on page 215.

2.1.7 "Agnes" (Male-to-female, USA)

in Studies in Ethnomethodology, 1967

"Agnes" is the pseudonym given to a patient of Howard Garfinkel and Robert Stoller. S/he presented to them as an "intersexed" person, having a profoundly feminised body, in every way except for having a fully-developed penis. S/he requested genital surgery and the two gatekeepers gave their approval after a relatively short period of psychological screening. Hir gender presentation was so "natural" as a female (in spite of her contradictory genitalia) that Garfinkel drew upon hir case to develop his theory about the "natural" attitudes towards everyday engenderment that non-inter/trans/sexuals experience. Although hir embodiment represented a hitherto undescribed manifestation of intersex embodiment, the gatekeepers accepted hir story, and approved hir request for genital surgery. Some time after surgery, Agnes gratuitously confessed that she had been taking her mother's hormone replacement pills since puberty, which had the effect of promoting female secondary sex characteristics. The gatekeeping professional, Stoller, confessed: "My chagrin at learning this was matched by my amusement that she could have pulled off this coup with such skill" (Garfinkel, 1967, 288).

Agnes' resourcefullness is remarkable, as she would have have made her decision to proceed with hormonal transformation in 1950's, in the Mid-West of the USA, when the only readily available information on "sex-change" would have been the publicity surrounding Christine Jorgensen (which was often of a sensationalist nature). She also anticipated (probably correctly) that presenting as an "intersexed" person would have ensured her a smoother passage through the gatekeeping process than if she had been open about her transsexuality from the start.

2.1.8 Christine Jorgensen (Male-to-female, USA)

A Personal Autobiography, 1968

Christine Jorgensen was born George Jorgensen in 1926. Although s he is celebrated as the first American transsexual "sex-change", Alan Hart (FtoM) preceded her by over 50 years[13], and Hedy-Jo Star claims to be the first trans-person to have surgery *within* the USA (Christine had her initial surgery in Denmark). S/he displayed an effeminacy during childhood and was harassed because of it. Hir brief, and angst-ridden service in the Army during the final months of World War 2 was made much of by later publicity.

Christine travelled to Denmark in 1950, and spent several years in a "conservative" program of hormonal and sexual transformation (she did not have a vagina constructed in Denmark, because it would have been seen as encouraging "homosexuality"). On her return to USA in 1953, she received a great deal of press coverage and this public exposure continued, in some form, for the rest of her life. She abandoned hope of disappearing into anonymity, and spent the rest of her career as a stage entertainer, exploiting her previous notoriety.

Christine's autobiography was published in 1968, long after her transformation, and represents an attempt to rebutt many of the sensational and inaccurate stories which had appeared in the press in the preceding 15 years. This autobiography also offers up some of the now-dubious essentialist notions of the "causes" of transsexuality which were undermined by the publication in the same year of Stoller's "Sex and Gender"[14]. This rather conservative autobiography represents the last attempt by a transsexual author to

[13]Alan Hart did not publish an autobiography, but several of his novels contain references which may be construed as metaphors for his problematic sexual embodiment and gender identity.

[14]By making a clear distinction between "sex" and "gender", Stoller rendered the earlier claims by the first transsexual authors, that they were somehow "intersexed", redundant.

explain their condition as an "intersex" variant.

2.1.9 Myra Breckenridge (Fictitious, "male"-to-"female", USA)

Myra Breckenridge, Vidal, 1969

Myra Breckenridge is Gore Vidal's fictitious account of a male-to-female transsexual, who probably reflects the public understanding of the phenomenon immediately after the publicity surrounding Christine Jorgensen's story (see above). In this story, homosexuality and transsexuality are conflated, and Myra is portrayed as a sexually aggressive woman who is both very attractive and convincing as a female and, when the story demands it, is also clearly recognisable as having been born male (when s/he exposes hirself to "Uncle Buck"). The book ends with an accident which results in the re-masculinising of the main character to "Myron" (the subject of a 1974 sequel by the same author). I have not counted this fictional work as one of the "genuine" published narratives, but this text serves as a distillation of the early public understanding of the condition.

2.1.10 Jan Morris (Male-to-female, UK)

Conundrum, 1974

Jan Morris was born James Morris in Wales in 1927. While s/he recognised a longing to be female from early childhood, s/he also had a countervailing admiration of "male" coded behaviour[15]. S/he pursued various "macho" activities, and was part of the team which supported Hillary's climb of Mount Everest in 1953. S/he married

[15]"Soldiering has always paradoxically attracted me. . . I have always admired military virtues, courage, dash, loyalty, self-disciple, and I like the look of soldiering. I like the lean humped silhouettes of infantrymen, and the swagger of paratroops, and all the martial consequence of embarkation or parade" (1972, 32).

(and remained so, even after transition), fathered children, and became a successful travel writer. On several occasions, s/he sought psycho-medical assistance for hir gender dysphoria, but s/he discontinued treatment soon afterwards. In middle-age, s/he underwent genital surgery by Dr Georges Borou in Casablanca because s/he refused to divorce hir wife to satisfy the requirements of UK surgeons.

In her autobiography, Jan treats her sexual transition in a similar manner to her travel writing, using flowery, enigmatic language and almost celebrating a form of genderal naughtiness:

> Alter the body! Of course this is what I had hoped, prayed and thrown three-penny bits into wishing wells for all my life: yet to hear it actually suggested, by a man in a white coat in a medical surgery, seemed to me like a miracle, for the idea of it held for me then, as it holds for me now, a suggestion of sorcery. To alter the body! To expunge those superfluities, like the Phrygians of old, to scour myself of that mistake, to start again, to recapture some of that white freshness I used to feel, singing the psalms at Oxford! To alter the body! To match my sex to my gender at last, and to make a whole of me! (Morris, 1974, 50), *or*
>
> Those events had been arcanely forecast to me. A Xhosa wise woman, telling my future in her dark hut of the Transkei, had assured me long before that I would one day be a woman too: and a reader of mine in Stockholm had repeatedly warned me that the King of Sweden was changing my sex by invisible rays. I had myself long seen in my quest some veiled spiritual purpose, as though I was pursuing a Grail or grasping Oneness. (Morris, 1974, 99-110).

Even her name, Jan, was deliberately chosen to be ambiguous.

As an already well-known (male) travel writer, it is perhaps not surprising that Jan's autobiography was widely read, and it may be that her other-worldly approach to engenderment did nothing to threaten the existing naive assumptions underpinning "ordinary" gender. No-one, not even the other transsexual autobiographers express their perceptions of "gender" in quite the way that Jan Morris did:

> To me, gender is not physical at all, but is altogether insubstantial. It is soul, perhaps, it is talent, it is taste, it is environment, it is how one feels, it is light and shade, it is inner music, it is a spring in one's step or an exchange of glances, it is more truly life and love than any combination of genitals, ovaries, and hormones. It is the essentialness of ones self, the psyche, the fragment of unity. Male and female are sex, masculine and feminine are gender, and though the conceptions obviously overlap, they are far from synonymous. (Morris, 1974, 25).

In her own way, Jan is performing a similar "public service" to the transsexual entertainers, such as Bornstein and Carlotta (see 4.6.1.1 on page 224). Her "gender" reads as being comfortably far, far away from the "ordinary" to be ignored as a threat to the existing understandings of gender (EUG).

2.1.11 Jane Fry (Male-to-female, USA)

Being Different, by Bogdan, 1974

"Jane Fry" is a pseudonym for a trans-person born in USA ("John Fry" is the pseudo-birthname). S/he suffered childhood harassment because of hir effeminacy. S/he joined the US Navy, suffered physical injury as a result of further harassment, but was discharged on psychological grounds (due to an admission of "homosexual" behaviour). Hir feelings of gender-anguish became

worse, and s/he attempted suicide. However, when s/he sought psycho-medical treatment, hir presentation was mis-interpreted as a severe mental illness. Hir only relief was living as a woman. S/he spent several periods of incarceration in mental institutions, which were counter-productive: The hospital staff insisted on hir reverting to "male" clothing and hir gender identity issues were never properly addressed.

The book is co-authored by a psychologist, who adds several interpretive chapters to argue his belief that such institutions were systematically incapable of constructively coping with gender dysphoria (or, indeed, *any* form of patient-initiated self-introspection). The now accepted models of gender dysphoria and transsexuality were literally unthinkable to the professionals who encountered Jane. The more that Jane attempted to gain insight and self-acceptance into hir conviction of female engenderment, the more that hir story was re-worked by the professionals to fit an existing model of mental illness: "Devaluing an individual's perspective by viewing it as naive, unsophisticated, immature, or a symptom of pathology may serve those in power, but it also makes a service organisation a place where one-sided rituals are performed in the name of science" (Bogdan & Fry, 1974, 222).

Jane's story ends with hir living as a woman outside an institutional environment, after coming to terms with hir engenderment and awaiting genital surgery. S/he remains, however, scarred by the experience of institutionalisation.

2.1.12 Canary Conn (Male-to-female, USA)

Canary, 1974

Canary Conn was born Danny O'Connor in 1949. S/he wanted to be a girl from age 6, and hir effeminate presentation caused many taunts during hir school years. S/he was a talented singer, who won a contest as a teenage performer. When hir only girlfriend

became pregnant, s/he reluctantly married her, but the marriage was alienating for Canary. S/he sought psycho-medical help for hir gender dysphoria, but hir case was mis-interpreted as male homosexuality, or transvesticism. S/he then sought genital surgery from a clinic in Mexico, which did not insist on the same level of psycho-medical gatekeeping as operated in the USA. After surgery, Canary resumed her singing career, and assisted in re-education of psycho-medical professionals towards an appreciation of the transsexual condition.

2.1.13 Mario Martino (Female-to-male, USA)

Emergence, 1977

Mario's autobiography purports to be the first female-to-male transsexual autobiography, and it is certainly the first *published* book which has modern surgical/hormonal female-to-male transition as its main theme[16]. Mario Martino was born Maria Martino (probably in the 1920s) into an Italian immigrant family with rigid, traditional attitudes to gender roles:

> My father was cast in the same mould as the Godfather. An Italian immigrant, Pa was the patriarch, his word undisputed. When he called, we did not ask why, we went to him on the run (1977, 3).

Or of his mother:

> Anyone with a problem could come to Ma, or she'd go to their home, cook, and help care for the whole family. She was the angel of mercy on our block. Italian-American, her face and her eyes smiled, and her black

[16]Two previous female-to-males, Allan Hart and Michael Dillon, wrote works which *allude* to transcendence of sexual embodiment, but from a third-person perspective. Dillon also wrote an autobiography in the 1960s, but it has never been published. Robert Allan did address his female-to-male transformation more directly in 1954, but he claimed to be "intersexed", rather than transsexual.

> hair curled in a pretty way. She was warm and giving as Pa was unbending (1977, 4).

During childhood, s/he somewhat naively assumed that she was a boy, and led a tomboy existence until the onset of puberty. After being repelled by the expectations made of a heterosexual teenage girl, s/he entered a nunnery as a novice, but was later discharged in disgrace because of allegations of a lesbian encounter.

After hir discharge from the nunnery, Mario worked as a nurse and this profession helped hir both to gain access to treatment, and facilitated hir transition to a male within the nursing profession. As part of his involvement with peer-support, Mario makes the somewhat contentious observation that female-to-male transsexuals are usually more stable and more realistic in their hold on engenderment than male-to-females (1977, 236-240). He also describes the trauma of experiencing a deterioration, and partial loss, of his constructed penis (phalloplasty).

2.1.14 Nancy Hunt (Male-to-female, USA)

Mirror Image, 1978

Nancy Hunt is a pseudonym. S/he was born in the late 1920s and was convinced that s/he was "really" a girl since before the age of 5 (or, rather s/he felt that the anatomic distinction between girls and boys should not have disqualified hir from being a girl): "This struck me as unjust, since I felt that I had as much right as my sisters to be a girl. It did not occur to me that this discrimination was rooted in the mechanism through which I voided my bladder" (Hunt, 1978, 45). As s/he entered adolescence, s/he secretly cross-dressed, while grudgingly accepting the social consequences of hir male sexual embodiment. S/he was drafted into the US Army in the closing months of World War 2, but felt alienated in the masculine environment. S/he later coped with hir gender dysphoria by over-acting the male role:

> I specialised in the most masculine stories I could find or devise, anything that would take me into a world where I could study and enjoy the way men conduct themselves- for although I differed from them, I liked their company. ... In the office, these stories came to be known as my series about the danger men, and by implication, I became a man who lived on familiar terms with danger, an artist with a typewriter but a lion on the streets (Hunt, 1978, 87).

As a male, s/he married, and worked as a reporter specialising in "male" coded topics, such as the Vietnam war:

> I had gone out there [Vietnam] for several reasons, the same ones that had impelled me to write about the danger men: curiosity about the nature of manhood, reckless contempt for my own skin, perverse pleasure in the frailties that set me apart from my heroes, and the occasional twinge of pride when I managed to equal them in strength or daring, when I truly felt myself a part of male society (Hunt, 1978, 94).

During hir transition to womanhood, s/he was forced to accept a demotion within hir newspaper:

> [T]hey kept me as a token and an insurance policy. ... to retain a full-blooded transsexual on the staff was to offer the ultimate proof of corporate liberality, a sure defence against any conceivable accusations of prejudice. ... Introducing a sexual anomaly into this finely tuned machine required some daring on the part of management (Hunt, 1978, 154-155).
>
> The copy desk and I soon struck a balance of toleration thanks in part to my oldest and best male friend,

> Clarence Peterson. ... Now both of us through weariness and misfortune, had been brought low to the ignominy of the copy desk, where we figuratively embraced like two exiles in a foreign land (Hunt, 1978, 156-157).

2.1.15 Patricia Morgan (Male-to-female, USA)

The Man-Maid Doll, 1979

Patricia Morgan's account arouses some suspicion that it may be fictional, although it is not as obvious as that of McClain or Fontaine (see below). Patricia Morgan was born Henry Glavocich in 1939. Hir father was violent towards hir mother and she left the marriage shortly after Henry/Patricia was born, but the violence continued. Henry was sent to a juvenile home for boys after s/he was caught "playing doctor" with the girl next door. S/he continually escaped from the institution, only to be recaptured and returned, until s/he was old enough for admittance to more secure adult jails. The author engaged in childhood cross-dressing, but unlike the other two possibly "fictitious" accounts, s/he does not attempt to normalise this activity as something "harmless" (as transvestic fiction does). Instead, s/he does express a reasonably convincing account of gender-dysphoria:

> I was a very unhappy, very mixed-up child. I knew there was something about me that wasn't normal. But I didn't know what it was or what I could do about it. I was crying out for someone to help me, but there was no one I could turn to (1976, 15).

As a boy, s/he also worked as a gay male prostitute.

As an adult, Patricia drifted into New York city, where s/he worked as a transvestic prostitute and spent some time in male prisons after being convicted of petty theft, prostitution and vagrancy. She claimed to have had genital surgery in Los Angeles,

however, the description of the procedure is either fictitious, or the doctor had an unusual technique[17]. While recovering with a friend who was working as a prostitute, Patricia was raped by one of her friend's clients. This assault led to medical complications and to yet another arrest for prostitution.

Patricia eventually enters "the ordinary" as a woman, with the assistance of an elderly male admirer, who helps her start a business. The book ends with the author reflecting on her journey:

> I've been lucky. I've made it as a woman. It was a long, hard struggle, but I've finally managed to stabilise my life. I don't know what the future holds for me, but I feel confident I can face it (1976, 112).

If Patricia's story is factual, then it illustrates the particular difficulties faced by the early transsexuals. Social constraints forced many of them into prostitution and other criminal activities to survive, and to finance their surgery. Staying sane, alive, and out of prison or mental institutions was quite a challenge for her transsexual contemporaries. By comparison with the mechanics of change to their sexual embodiment, the other *social* barriers at the time may have been even more insurmountable.

2.1.16 Phoebe Smith (Male-to-female, USA)

Phoebe, 1979

Phoebe Smith was born James Smith in 1939 . S/he was taunted by hir family and at school for being a "sissy" and was sexually

[17]The two-stage surgery may not have been particularly unusual for the time (late 1960s or early 70s), that is, first remove penis... wait... construct vagina in a subsequent operation. However, the re-location of the patient's testicles inside the abdomen is not mentioned by the other narrators. The formation of the lining of her vagina by way of *granulation*, rather than a skin graft is, again, not described elsewhere (Morgan, 1976, 57-64).

attracted to a male schoolmate. In 1956, after hearing about "sex-change" surgery[18], she made enquiries as to whether s/he could have the same treatment. Hir enquiries were dismissed, and s/he attempted suicide. S/he maintained a barrage of correspondence with many doctors and governmental officials (including the US president) in an attempt to gain access to surgery. Frustrated by the lack of support, s/he arranged to have surgery in Mexico in 1969 (at that time, s/he had not socially transitioned to live as a woman and had not taken female hormones). S/he had partial genital surgery[19] and returned home to Georgia to begin her *social* transition to live as a woman (she had the support of her family throughout her transformation). S he completed her surgery two years later. She experienced employment difficulties for several years because of publicity surrounding her transformation.

2.1.17 Jennifer Fontaine (Male-to-female, USA)

Woman by Choice, 1981

As with the Jerri McClain autobiography (see below) this story is almost certainly fictitious. The book is published by a company associated with "Hustler" magazine. The author claims to have been born "John", and in hir teens, s/he moved to New York to work as a dancer in a nightclub which specialised in transvestic revues. S/he became a heavy drug user, who also engaged in prostitution to support hir habit, and to pay for surgery. The book contains sets of un-captioned "before and after" photographs which appear to be unrelated to the narrative. These photographs, and the tone of the

[18]This was probably part of the ongoing publicity about Christine Jorgensen's transformation, which originally broke in 1953.

[19]While the Mexican doctor was not following the Harry Benjamin Standard (requiring two years living in one's new gender-role), he still expressed reservations about performing the surgery on a person who had not yet started on a hormone program. The surgeon reluctantly agreed because of the distance that the author had travelled (Smith, 1979, 61-62).

text[20], suggest that this work is fiction, designed to titillate in a similar way to many of Hustler's other publications. The story contains accounts of murder and drug-related deaths to add to the air of sleaze around the author's transformation. Her plans to marry her male lover were thwarted when her fiance's brother exposed her as not being a "real" woman. The tale ends with long, tragic monologue, with the post-operative "author" suiciding with a drug overdose.

2.1.18 April Ashley (Male-to-female, UK)

April Ashley's Odyssey, 1982

April Ashley was born George Jamieson in 1935 to a poor, socially dysfunctional family in Liverpool, UK. S/he was taunted over hir "sissy" persona by hir father and brother. After an early, unsuccessful attempt at acting in a male role as a merchant seaman (which ended with a suicide attempt), s/he fled to Paris, where s/he became a stage performer in a transvestic revue, Le Carrousel[21]. Offstage, s/he lived as a woman. While s/he had earlier regarded hir effeminacy as part of a straightforward "homosexual" personality, hir peers at Le Carrousel helped hir to see hirself as transsexual, and made hir aware that hir gender dysphoria might be alleviated by genital surgery. Despite the lack of access to such treatment in the 1950s, she was eventually successful in having surgery with Georges Borou in Casablanca in 1960.

A considerable part of April's autobiography recounts her experiences of socialising with the rich and famous in England and France, sometimes with gratuitous name-dropping. April married

[20]"Just look at my long, black hair - and my face is that of a goddess; soft and serene. Men love my devilish green eyes. They say I smile like a wicked woman. And that's not all, darling! When I'm in a bikini at the beach, men go absolutely mad over me, and women die of envy. These are God's gifts to me - the only thing that I had to add was a little silicone. Believe me, silicone is a girl's best friend when she's flat-chested. And I'm not kidding, honey!" (1981, 5).

[21]Another autobiographer, Coccinelle, also worked with April in this nightclub.

a minor English peer, the Hon. Arthur Corbett, who had transvestic tendencies himself. After publicity about April's past embarrassed Arthur Corbett, he sought, and won, a divorce from her (or more specifically, an annulment on the grounds that April Ashley was still legally male). The 1968-70 judgment, which declared the marriage invalid, created a precedent which applies to UK-born post-operative transsexuals even today. The *Corbett vs. Corbett* judgement is used to prevent the birthsex on UK birth certificates being altered to reflect the realities of adult sexual embodiment.

2.1.19 Coccinelle (Male-to-female, France)

Reverse Sex, Costa, 1982

Coccinelle was born Jacques DuFresnoy in France and after 1953, s/he worked as a a female impersonator in Paris before her transformation. She was one of the earliest patients to have genital surgery with Dr Georges Borou in Casablanca in 1958. She exploited fascination surrounding her "sex-change" to add to her stage persona, and continued to have relatively minor surgery to enhance her credibility as a female. April Ashley[22], who worked with Coccinelle at "Le Carrousel" was astounded by the casual approach that she had towards her embodiment:

> Coccinelle had paved the way as a result of the extraordinary degree to which she regarded her body as an adjustable object. She'd had masses of silicone injections in her breasts. She'd had five nose jobs . . . When her nose collapsed to nothing, she tried to have a sixth to build it up again with mere nostrils to work with (Ashley & Fallowell, 1982, 77).

Carlotta, who also exploited the public interest in gender transgression as part of her own risque stage act, mentions that when

[22](see 2.1.18 on the page before above)

Coccinelle toured Sydney in the early 1960s, she had her show closed down by NSW police because of her lewd behaviour on stage (Carlotta, 1994, 21).

2.1.20 Chris Johnson (Female-to-male, UK)

The Gender Trap, 1982

Chris Johnson was born Anne Johnson in 1949. S/he grew up in relatively privileged circumstances, but felt uncomfortable with hir childhood socialisation as a girl. Anne married, but resented the wifely role expected of hir. When forced to choose between abandoning hir university study, or maintaining hir marriage, s/he left hir husband. S/he explored hir sexuality, identifying as lesbian for a while, but never feeling at ease in this role. S/he later met Eugene Brown (see below) and their friendship grew, and though initially unable to identify the source of their attraction, their troubled gender identities began to reveal themselves. On a pilgrimage to Stonehenge, s/he realised the "true" location of hir gender identity (ISG), i.e., that of a male:

> [S]he chuckled to herself, considering how fitting it was to be contemplating her future in such a place. A sense of power and pattern of fate and the ironies of life were never lost on Anne. 'As I sat there quietly I began to wonder what would happen if I turned my whole world inside out, if I faced up to the one obvious and glaring truth. 'No, I wasn't a lesbian, I wasn't even a woman - what I really was was a man! 'Suddenly it all seemed simple, I'd finally resolved all the questions I'd always been asking and never allowed myself to answer' (1982, 106).

As Eugene had also reached a complementary conclusion about hir gender identity (in hir case, that it was female) they resolved

to marry, and to embark on a course of transformation of their sexual embodiments. Eugene started treatment first, as they concluded (probably correctly) that a male-to-female *social* transition was more problematic than an equivalent female-to-male process.

The couple decided to have a child while they were still fertile in their birth-sexes. The dual biography opens with an account of how alienated Chris/Anne feels about childbirth and the social situation surrounding the experience:

> No doctor was aware that his patient felt little more of a woman than the men around her, and that as they prodded and probed, she was suffering the hundredfold indignity of giving birth. For it was tantamount to asking any man to experience childbirth, a notion he would undoubtedly find quite alien. Anne was no exception (Johnson, Brown & Nelson, 1982, 16).

Perhaps because of this now-unrepeatable process of procreation, both parents profess a special love for their daughter, Emma.

After they had both embarked on hormonal transformation, they sought genital surgery through the UK National Health system. Their treatment was thwarted after they were exposed in the press: The doctors involved somewhat petulantly reviewed their cases in light of this publicity, and denied them access to publically-funded surgery.

2.1.21 Cathy Brown (Male-to-female, UK)

The Gender Trap, 1982

Cathy Brown was born Eugene Brown in 1948. Unlike hir partner-to-be, Chris/Anne, Eugene grew up in poverty. Eugene suffered doubts about hir gender since childhood and relieved the anguish by cross-dressing as a woman. S/he became involved with the practice of Kung Fu and met Anne while s/he was teaching the

martial art. After transition, she became Cathy (see Chris Johnson's story above).

2.1.22 Caroline Cossey (Male-to-female, UK)

Tula, I am a Woman, 1982, and *My Story, 1992*

Caroline Cossey was born Barry Cossey in 1954. Apart from a single, unsuccessful attempt at heterosexual sex, s/he tried to address hir gender-anguish by launching into a brief period of homosexual encounters, before starting to live as a woman at age 16. S/he then found work in London as a female stage performer in a nightclub. S/he initially expected that hir parents would not accept hir gender-expression and avoided contact with them for several years. Using hir older brother as an intermediary, s/he later revealed hir gender identity to hir parents, and found that they were warmly supportive. After working in Europe as a showgirl and stripper[23], s/he returned to UK for genital surgery in 1974. She then worked successfully as a fashion model, in television and movies[24] before a tabloid newspaper, News of the World, exposed her past and she went into hiding. She then published *Tula - I am a Woman*, an autobiographic rebuttal to the sensationalism of the newspaper exposure. Her career as a model was, for the immediate future, almost destroyed.

After a period of working as a masseuse, she met a Jewish businessman and a relationship developed. After he proposed marriage, she divulged her past, but he still expressed a desire to marry her. As part of her preparation for marriage, Caroline converted to Liberal Judaism and was accepted into her fiance's family. Immediately after the wedding, the tabloid press *again* exposed her past in

[23]The European regulations at the time prohibited strippers from revealing their genitals during their performance, which made it possible for the pre-operative Caroline to work in the industry.

[24]She acted as one of the "Bond-girls" in *For Your Eyes Only*, but she was removed from the credits when the newspaper exposure surfaced.

the same way that they had done a decade earlier. Shocked by the publicity, her husband's family pressured Caroline's new spouse to abandon her, and seek an annulment of the marriage. After the annulment, Caroline the approached the courts of the European Commission to seek a ruling to overturn the UK government's position on birth certificates[25], but she was unsuccessful. Caroline's second autobiography *"My Story"*, was published in 1991 in response to her later exposure and the trauma surrounding the dissolution of her marriage.

Caroline subsequently married a Canadian man and now lives in the USA.

2.1.23 Renee Richards (Male-to-female, USA)

Second Serve, 1983

Renee Richards was born Richard Raskind in 1934 into a family whose members had partially reversed gender roles. Hir mother was a dominant, forceful doctor, and hir older sister (named Michael) displayed a strong tomboy role. As a boy, Renee was tormented by hir sister and mother, by dressing hir as a female, and mocking hir masculinity. Renee compensated for hir gender dysphoria by adopting a strong "macho" role and s/he followed the family tradition and became a doctor. In hir early teens, s/he also developed a need to cross-dress as female in secret. Later, as s/he accepted hir identity as a "transvestite", s/he became more public about hir cross-dressing (despite being 188cm tall). As part of hir attempt to become "macho", s/he entered the US Navy as a doctor, and became a successful tennis player.

Renee vacillated between believing that s/he was a transvestite, or a transsexual, and sometimes into denying that s/he suffered from any gender dysphoria at all. During a traumatic trip to Eu-

[25]Her approach to the Commission co-incided with that of Mark Rees (see below).

rope, s/he twice went to the front door of a Moroccan sex-change clinic[26] and then baulked:

> Issues that I had considered settled years ago assailed me again as I stared at the clinic shining in the sun. For fifteen minutes or more I continued to stand, waiting for these ghosts to be gone; yet they persisted, became stronger. Finally, I turned away and walked the distance to my hotel. . . Up until that moment of truth in front of the clinic, I would have said confidently that I was a woman trapped in a man's body; but I had stood paralysed, not fifty feet from the remedy and had been unable to cross the remaining space (Richards & Ames, 1983, 247-8).

Over a period of twenty years, s/he engaged in psychotherapy to address hir gender issues, but this treatment led to frustration because the psychotherapists were resistant to ever accepting sex-change surgery as a cure for transsexuality, *particularly* when their client was a "respectable" doctor.

After yet another failed attempt at "normality" (by having a mastectomy, re-marrying and fathering a child) Renee finally found a doctor who was prepared to operate on his peer. Following her genital surgery, she moved to West Coast USA and resumed playing tennis, this time as a woman. During the 1977 season, Renee's past was exposed and attempts were made to exclude her from playing on the women's tennis circuit, on the grounds that she was not "really" a woman, and that her original male embodiment gave her an unfair advantage over "real" women in competition. Although Renee was eventually successful in obtaining a legal

[26]This was the clinic of Georges Borou, who required no psychological assessment prior to surgery. Several of the other authors (Ashley, Coccinelle, Morris) also used this surgeon, because they found their local psychological screening to be either offensive, or almost impossible to negotiate. At this time, Renee had been unable to convince a USA-based psychological practitioner of the validity of hir gender-conviction.

judgement on her right to compete in women's tennis, the publicity surrounding her gender-status was debilitating, and probably drove her to write her autobiography.

As with Christine Jorgensen's earlier story, Renee's autobiography is designed, at least in part, to address and rebutt the earlier, often sensationalist, criticism and misrepresentation of herself in the press. Both autobiographies are written by figures who already well-known to the public as a result of their transsexualism, with no possibility of "self-outing" or destruction of anonymity by way of publication of their stories.

2.1.24 Roberta Perkins (Male-to-female, Australia)

Issues, 1982, Drag Queen Scene, 1983

Roberta Perkins was born Robert Perkins in Sydney, Australia. Although s/he was aware from childhood that s/he had some sort of gender-related problem, the shame surrounding sexual issues and a lack of specific information about the transsexual condition delayed resolution of hir anguish. S/he married and fathered children, before meeting other proto-transsexuals, and gradually coming to terms with hir engenderment: "None of us had access to knowledge about our condition, and what we had learned was in the main negative and condemnatory. Most of us clung together for support" (1983, 17). After surgery, she conducted several studies of transsexuals living in the Kings Cross area of Sydney, as part of her Sociology degree.

2.1.25 Elizabeth Wells (Male-to-female, Australia)

View from Within, in Walters & Ross, 1986

Elizabeth Wells became aware of hir difference from hir male peers between ages 4 and 7. As with many other proto-transsexuals, s/he did not feel able to discuss hir feelings with hir parents (an

illustration that although s/he had not taken up childhood genderal socialisation[27] as a "male", s/he did recognise what was *appropriate* for boys to feel about their engenderment). S/he tried to counter hir discomfort with the reality of being embodied male by trying harder in conventional "male" roles. S/he spent three years in the Army, and although s/he presented an acceptable gender-coded image to hir fellow-soldiers, hir internal gender-anguish remained unresolved:

> The policy was to make me tough, masculine, and aggressive - the exact opposite of what I wanted to be. I did my best, having no choice in the matter, and with luck and sheer willpower managed to keep up with the rest. I liked many of my companions, and constantly envied their unconscious 'wholeness' (Wells, 1986, 10).

After discharge from the army, she attempted many other "male" activities, and s/he developed a drinking problem and attempted suicide several times. When she finally sought psycho-medical help, s/he was offered aversion therapy, but s/he declined the treatment (recognising that hir gendered "self" had primacy over hir sexual embodiment). S/he had a relatively trouble-free transition into social womanhood and was accepted by most of hir friends. After genital surgery, she regarded herself as a more complete, adult person:

> Sometimes I look back at that 'other person' I used to be, and it seems to me that the real tragedy of the problem was that it had stifled so much of my potential. So ever-present was it over the years that it had claimed all my attention. . . In many ways I had never grown up (Wells, 1986, 15).

[27]In Chapter 8, I will argue that childhood genderal socialisation is only effective on enhancing *gender-role* performance and cannot create, re-inforce, or alter *core-gender* identity. Such socialisation can, however, affect the *degree* of gender-dysphoria and the transsexual's agency and knowledge to resolve it.

2.1.26 Carmen Rupe (Male-to-female, NZ)

Carmen: My Life, 1988

Carmen was born Trevor Rupe, into a semi-rural Maori family in the early 1940s. During hir childhood, s/he naively thought that s/he would become a Catholic nun when s/he reached adulthood. S/he became involved in petty crime while a teenager. After completing hir compulsory Army training in the 1950s, Carmen started to appear on stage as female impersonator, interspersed with working as a "male" prostitute. During this time, s/he was imprisoned for running a brothel. On hir release, Carmen started several nightclubs in Wellington; *The Balcony*, and *Carmen's International Coffee Lounge*, which featured a transvestic revue, and offered illicit alcohol and sexual services.

In 1975, at a time when a NZ government MP, Colin Moyle was under suspicion of a homosexual liaison, Carmen made non-specific allegations of other parliamentarians' sexual improprieties. S/he was summoned to Parliament House to substantiate these claims, but hir testimony was inconclusive. In 1977, Carmen ran a colourful campaign for mayor of Wellington, but s/he was not elected. While Carmen mentions that s/he has had breast implants, hir autobiography is evasive about whether s/he has had genital surgery. S/he now lives in Sydney, Australia.

2.1.27 Margo Howard-Howard (Male-to-female, USA)

I was a White Slave in Harlem, 1988

Margo Howard-Howard was born Robert Hesse in Singapore in 1935. The author does not expound hir gender identity in any depth. This autobiography is focussed on hir drug-addiction, and hir social life within the New York "drag" scene. No details of hir bodily transformation (if any) are given.

2.1.28 Peter Stirling (Intersexed, Female-to-male, Australia)

So Different, 1989

Peter Stirling was born Jean Webb in Melbourne in 1936. S/he was raised as a girl and not identified as intersexed during childhood (although hir baritone voice was noted as unusually low for a girl of fourteen (1989, 20-21)). S/he showed little interest in gender-socialisation as a girl. At 18, s/he joined the WRAAF, but went AWOL after hir innocent friendship with another woman was read as "lesbian". In reaction to the "lesbian" accusation, and hir growing doubts of hir "normality", s/he married a man with the hope of a "cure":

> 'I am normal! *I am!*' my mind screamed its own reply, but I was slowly having doubts about this because it was almost as though my body and mind were of two separate individuals. On the one hand, there was the body which which was attracted to the female sex while the mind revolted at such an attraction, and on the other hand was the body which was repulsed by the male sex, yet this mind desperately wanted a normal relationship. I baulked at actually admitting I was anything but a normal female and each time this type of argument presented itself I would use the same old excuse that, given time, all would change (1989, 65).

S/he became pregnant and hir feelings of alienation around the birth were read as "post partum depression" (1989, 72) but this event re-inforced hir concerns about being somehow "abnormal". Nevertheless, the expression of this unease is still framed within a conventional gender-framework of "failure as a woman", rather than the type of discourse which might characterise that of a transsexual (there are no clearly articulated expressions of "feeling like

a man" in this part of hir narrative):

> My torment and guilt at knowing that I could not be the type of wife that Robert deserved was compounded by my anxiety to conceal this fact while *finally* accepting that even though I had given birth to a child, there was something *wrong* with me. The acceptance only perplexed me further because I had no idea just *what* it was about me that was abnormal, nor did I know to whom I could turn to for advice. I had tried the medical profession with disastrous results[28] (1989, 77, *emphasis in original*).

S/he separated from hir husband, and again fell in love with a female work-mate. At the same time, hir body was becoming progressively more masculine in appearance, apparently of its own accord. Hir girlfriend suggested that s/he tried presenting as a male. In considering the "experiment", s/he expressed an innocence which is atypical of the transsexual narratives:

> "Yes, I do think it would have been a lot more simple had I been born a boy, but I can't honestly say I've always felt like a boy because I don't know how a boy actually feels. Come to that," I laughed, "I'm not too sure how a girl feels" (1989, 86).

S/he left hir daughter with hir mother and travelled to England with hir female lover. In London, s/he sought medical treatment, including hormones and a mastectomy. S/he was identified as having a XXY chromosomal arrangement[29] (1989, 136). He adopted

[28]The psychiatrist who s/he contacted after the birth refused to take hir concerns seriously, yet accused the new mother with wanting to harm hir baby.

[29]This chromosomal pattern, Kleinfelter's Syndrome, usually manifests as that of a feminised "male" embodiment. The "Doctor's Note" by Dr B. Fretze, at the conclusion of the book reveals that, unlike "classic" Kleinfelter's, Peter's reproductive organs were unequivocally female. The doctor is puzzled by Peter's genetic makeup, and suggests another possibility, that of XX,XY, or XX/XXY mosaicism.

a male gender presentation, and re-married as a man[30]. He returned to Australia, but felt too embarrassed to reveal himself to his family for six years. When he finally made contact, he was warmly accepted. His narrative avoids celebration of agency, which pervades many of the "conventional" transsexual stories. Manhood seems to have been something which simply "happened" to him, and in his case, he grew to feel comfortable in his new role :

> For while there was the obvious and immediate change to my appearance, it was to be a long and a very emotional haul before I could completely come to terms with myself. It was not that I did not have confidence in my ability to face my new life as a man (even at the late age of thirty-two), for I felt most comfortable and natural about myself (1989, 248).

2.1.29 Louis Sullivan (Female-to-male, USA)

From Female to Male, 1990

Louis Sullivan was born Sheila Sullivan in 1951. Hir gender/sexuality was outside the existing model of transsexuality: Prior to hir transformation, s/he identified hirself as a "heterosexual female transvestite who was sexually attracted to gay men" (Feinberg, 1996, 144). S/he faced opposition from psycho-medical gatekeepers because of hir identification as a gay male. After his transformation, he formed one of the first female-to-male support groups in the USA. He died of an AIDS-related condition in 1991.

2.1.30 Stephanie-Anne Lloyd (Male-to-female, UK)

Girl in a Million, 1991

[30]It is unlikely that such a marriage would be recognised as legal, either in the UK or in his birthplace, Australia. Nevertheless, the validity of such marriages is often only tested at the time of separation or divorce.

Stephanie-Anne Lloyd was born Keith Hull in 1946. Hir childhood desire to cross-dress as a female was in conflict with the family's involvement in the Jehovah's Witness church. S/he compensated for hir internal gender anguish by behaving as a "Casanova":

> I was particularly anxious to avoid any situation which might call attention to my "difference", and having so many girls chasing me helped to provide the perfect cover. So many incidents with so many girls somehow or other came to light that everyone was convinced that I had a Casanova complex. I'm sure that my parents thought I was sex maniac in the making, and the lads I knew were certain I was having the time of my life, which was really quite ironic. However, thanks to the next girl I met I was able to sustain the notion that I was a full-blooded, healthy male, and nobody was any the wiser (1991, 33).

Keith went on to marry one of hir "conquests" and to father three children. S/he prospered financially, rising to manager of a chain of retail stores. After Keith endured a rather unproductive series of sessions with a psychiatrist for "stress"; Keith's wife, Marilyn, did her own research and identified her husband's problem as being that of "a textbook transsexual" (1991, 76). Marilyn initially appeared to be supportive of her husband's cross-dressing, and the couple proceeded with their somewhat modified relationship, but the marriage inevitably failed when Marilyn sought a conventional relationship with a non-transsexual man. Keith continued to support the family financially after the couple had separated. Stephanie had genital surgery and *then* announced that she would transition on the job, while remaining in her management position. To her astonishment, this move was initially accepted by her employers. However, when her story broke in the tabloid press during the following month, she was forced to resign. The collapse of her

financial fortunes led to an acrimonious divorce. To add to her post-surgical misery, she was excommunicated from her church:

> I was more than disappointed - I was devastated. To appeal would be futile. I just had to find a way of accepting my excommunication. Far worse than that, however, would be having to come to terms with the fact that as far as Jehovah's Witnesses including my parents, were concerned, I was now officially dead[31] (1991, 123).

After contemplating suicide, Stephanie created a new business, catering for casual transvestites by offering facilities for discrete cross-dressing. The business grew to encompass support for transsexuals as well. This organisation was far from benign, however: Other transsexual authors mention her dishonesty in selling fake "hormones[32]" (she was prosecuted for this offence) and offering an expensive "gender program" which misrepresented itself as a "gateway" to genital surgery (Grant, 1994, 265-267). When the "trans" business faced financial difficulties, Stephanie again branched out into prostitution, but this activity ended when she was arrested. Her defence to the charge was that she was still legally male, according to UK law, so she could not be charged with that offence. While this maneuver was successful in avoiding prison, she went on to marry her male business partner by travelling to Sri Lanka (where her status was recognised as female[33]).

2.1.31 Stephanie Castle (Male-to-female, Canada)

Feelings, 1992

[31]This is an ironic variation on the often-mentioned social "death" of the person represented in the narratives as the transsexual's birthsex.

[32]"Sex Change Pills Just Vitamins", in Neil (1992, 253).

[33]Nevertheless, while the UK government may not have actively sought to dissolve this marriage, it is most unlikely that it would generate any entitlement *as a married woman* within the UK. If her partner ever sought a divorce, Stephanie would be in the same legal position as April Ashley found herself in when her marriage was annulled in 1968 (see April Ashley's story above).

Stephanie Castle was born in the UK in the late 1920's. Hir birthname is not specified. S/he engaged in secret childhood cross-dressing and a single homosexual encounter in hir early teens. S/he grudgingly adopted a male gender role, worked in the merchant navy, and emigrated to Canada. Stephanie was married twice, and had three children with whom she still maintains contact after hir transformation. The book explores medical, psychological, theological and legal aspects of transsexualism, but it offers up many biographic fragments of the author's transition into womanhood.

2.1.32 Jerri McClain (Male-to-female, USA)

To be a Woman, 1992

This account is almost certainly fictitious. Jerri supposedly accepts a "challenge" to live as a woman for one year, and finds that the lifestyle has more appeal that "he" ever imagined. The book is in the format of a diary, with copies of letters from acquaintances and psycho-medical professionals attached. Although the book never reveals its veracity, the author's elaborate descriptions of clothes and makeup and the acting out of stereotypical "feminine" mannerisms mark it as similar to the sub-genre of transvestite fiction[34]. The author states that s/he was a member of "Tri-Ess" (Society for the Second Self), a specifically heterosexual transvestite organisation founded by Virginia Prince[35], which *vigorously discourages* both transsexuals and homosexual cross-dressers. Hir comment on the society is one of uncritical acceptance:

[34]Ackroyd observes that: "In some instances the transvestic fetish is so pervasive that the writing breaks under the strain. The short stories and the novellas are, for example, often dominated by tactile sensations and intimations of texture" (1979, 148).

[35]Virginia Prince describes the organisation that he founded as ". . . [T]he largest such organisation in the country [USA] dedicated to what we have come to refer to as "uncomplicated" (by other patterns) heterosexual cross-dressers" (Transvestia, 1977, 103).

> "Tri-Ess is a sorority with chapters all over the world. The sorority is made up of "sisters", men who like to dress occasionally as women, men who would like to meet with others of the same persuasion in order to discuss common needs, wants and desires" (1992, 18).

After the year of the "challenge" ends, the author claims to be committed to genital surgery and the book concludes, somewhat enigmatically, with a letter of appointment with the surgeon. Another indication of the probable fictive nature of the narrative is that the author does not mention any "mechanical" impediment to passing as a woman (despite only starting on hormones towards the end of the "year"). Again, unlike the accounts by most of the other biographers, Jerri claims to have met with nothing but encouragement from gatekeeping psychiatrists: "He tells me that in all the years he has been practicing, he has seen few full-time transitions as successful as the one I have made" (1992, 178).

2.1.33 Adrienne Clarke (Male-to-female, NZ)

She is My Son, Holland, 1992

Adrienne Clarke was born Alan Clarke in 1963. Adrienne's story is a biography, told by hir mother, who was initially ill-informed about her son's condition and remained somewhat ambivalent and confused about the nature of transsexuality[36]. The mother first read her son's sexuality as first "homosexual", then "transvestite"[37], before developing a reluctant acceptance of Adrienne as a transsexual woman[38]. With the assistance of hir mother, Adrienne started

[36]Even the title of the biography betrays this ambivalence: "She is My Son".

[37]I could never resign myself to the anomaly of seeing Alan in a dress. It didn't matter how nice he looked (and he did look lovely), I always seemed to find fault with whatever he had on. Secretly, I always hoped that if I didn't give him approval, he might give up the whole idea of cross-dressing and become my son again (Holland, 1992, 46).

[38]Looking back, I realise that I was being naive and selfish because all I really

a transvestic, lip-synching revue which toured New Zealand with some success. The revue, "Les Belle Boys", also featured Georgina Beyer (see below) and Adrienne's brother, Steven (as a "straight" man) as performers. Adrienne and hir mother travelled first to Singapore, and then on to the UK, to obtain genital surgery for Adrienne.

The author (Adrienne's mother) seems to dwell on trivia (i.e., the price of drinks (1992, 68) and accommodation (1992, 73)) and appears to be somewhat xenophobic (1992, 67). She offers up tabloid press cuttings which do little, or nothing, to enhance Adrienne's gender-legitimacy (1992, 81, 93, 94).

2.1.34 Leslie Perez (Male-to-female, USA)

Dangerous Games, 1993

Leslie Perez was born Leslie Ashley in 1938. S/he cross-dressed from an early age and was taunted at school because of hir effeminacy. S/he made many suicide and self-mutilation attempts while in hir teens. S/he left school early and worked as a transvestite prostitute. At age 17, s/he enquired about the possibility of "sex-change" surgery, but this dismissed by hir psychiatrist, who recommended marriage instead. Leslie did marry, and fathered a child, but the marriage failed shortly afterwards. S/he resumed sex-work, and took part in the killing of a violent client in 1961. S/he was sentenced to death, and spent four years on death row, before a re-trial declared hir to be "insane[39]". After release from prison in 1991, s/he sought genital surgery, but faced some resistance because of hir history of mental instability and criminality. She obtained genital surgery in 1992.

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wanted was to have my son back. I was grieving for him terribly and, even though I had this beautiful female calling me Mum, to me it was not Alan. It was as if Alan had died and this person was taking his place (Holland, 1992, 50).

[39]This must be one of the few instances where the prevalent psychological attitude that transsexuality was a pathology worked in a transsexual's favour.

2.1.35 Erica Rutherford (Male-to-female, Canada)

Nine Lives, 1993

Erica Rutherford was born Eric Rutherford in Scotland in 1923. S/he does not recall any gender-confusion in childhood. S/he entered Naval college as a cadet, but was repelled by the structure of naval life and the institutionalised homosexuality. S/he contrived to fail an eyesight test and was discharged from the Navy. S/he entered RADA drama school in London on the eve of World War 2 and while there, s/he first experienced some doubts about hir gender identity. S/he again contrived to avoid conscription into the regular army, this time by presenting as "transsexual", by way of "my long explanations of my sexual fantasies and descriptions of my longing to live as a woman" (1993, 21). S/he was, however, required to entertain the troops as part of the drama group. During the war, s/he also took up painting, and married the first of hir three wives when s/he became pregnant, but they separated soon afterwards. S/he remarried a South African and moved there to farm, but again the marriage failed (the author married once more, also ending in divorce).

After migrating to Canada, the author experienced ever-deepening bouts of depression and s/he contemplated suicide. The underlying cause, gender dysphoria, intensified until it was unendurable:

> My conflicts were now so strong that I used every opportunity when I was alone to cross-dress and dream about the end of my masculine state. I had indulged from time to time in some masochistic fantasies, until one of these repeated vicious activities left me slightly injured. I received sufficient shock from this experience to realise that I must go back to the psychiatrist. . . . I pried open the lid of a Pandora's box and it was never to close again (1993, 200).

Although s/he does not specify the *type* of injury sustained above,

it is likely that it was directed at hir penis[40]. Despite discouragement from some of the psycho-medical staff that s/he contacted, s/he proceeded with hir social transformation into a woman. S/he held an academic position at this time, but s/he was marginalised by the artistic community when hir story became public. She mentions having surgery, but does not give details. She has re-united with her former wife and daughter, and continues to paint.

2.1.36 Katherine Cummings (Male-to-female, Australia)

Katherine's Diary, 1993

Katherine Cummings was born John Cummings in Scotland in 1935, and spent hir childhood in the Gilbert Islands (now Vanuatu):

> Few small boys could have had a childhood like this. Yet my secret dreams even then were not to be a hero in Kipling's far-flung battle lines, nor to explore my own Coral Island as if I were a character from Ballantyne. *All I wanted was to be a girl"* (1993, 3, *italics added*).

S/he and hir family were evacuated to Sydney, Australia, with the onset of World War 2. S/he indulged in secret cross-dressing as a child, while maintaining, as much as possible, an outward appearance of conventional masculinity, including becoming a Naval cadet. As s/he entered university in the 1950s, the news of Christine Jorgensen's "sex-change" broke, and the basis of hir gender-confusion became clearer. Nevertheless, s/he went through periods of "purging" hir female wardrobe. The belief that hir desire

[40]Other autobiographers mention self-injury: Katherine Johnson deliberately inflicted injury to hir unwanted genitals, Renee Richards did so inadvertently, as part of an over-enthusiastic attempt to conceal hir penis.

to cross-dress (or to "be" a woman) could be suppressed by simply trying harder at masculinity was with hir, on an intermittent basis, for the next thirty years. At other times, s/he immersed hirself in cross-dressing (with hir wife's grudging tolerance) within the underground transvestite culture of North America and Australia.

John worked as a librarian and continued in this work in Canada and the USA and after hir return to Australia. This profession was sufficiently gender-neutral for hir to continue working in libraries through hir transition into hir life as a woman. At the age of fifty, the author had reached a level of despair about hir suppressed gender identity, that s/he contemplated suicide[41]: Instead, she decided to accept that s/he could only resolve hir gender dysphoria by living as a woman. When embarking on hir transition, s/he agreed to contribute to a periodic radio program, "Katherine's Diary" for the Australian Broadcasting Commission, in which s/he gave regular accounts of hir experiences during hir transition. The radio series ends with her account of her genital surgery. Although her autobiography shares the same title as the radio series, it is not in the form of a diary and includes much more material.

Katherine's wife initially showed some acceptance at the start of hir transition, but the couple separated soon afterwards. Hir wife adopted a stance of refusing to allow Katherine to contact her, or their children, unless Katherine reverted to a male presentation and role. Divorce followed, and Katherine's former wife insisted on going through the highly symbolic (but legally unnecessary) process of having their now-dissolved marriage *annulled*

[41]The day I decided not to commit suicide was one of the saddest days of my life. Having chosen to live, I was miserable and apprehensive, because it meant that I had decided by default that despite having been born male I was going to live the rest of my life as a woman. I knew that this would be an agony for my wife and children, who had no idea that I was transsexual. I knew that there would be grief, and attempts to explain, and feelings of betrayal. I had to find the right words to tell the children that although they may no longer have a conventional father, they would always have two loving parents (Cummings, 1993, 1)

by her (Roman Catholic) church. Only one of Katherine's three daughters wanted to have any form of contact with their former father. Katherine's book ends with a note of resentment that her involvement with her family has been terminated in such an ignominious way. In a later publication[42], she comes to terms with her estrangement from her family, and reveals that s/he now identifies as lesbian.

2.1.37 Leslie Feinberg (Female-to-male, USA)

Stone Butch Blues, 1993

Leslie Feinberg was born in 1949: Hir birthname is not confirmed. Leslie has not written an autobiography, but hir novel, *"Stone Butch Blues"* has, as its main character, Jess, whose personal profile closely matches that of the author. Autobiographic fragments also appear in Feinberg's other works. In the 1970's, s/he had breast-reduction surgery, took male hormones and started living as a man. S/he offers an explanation that s/he could not successfully "pass" as female, and presenting as male allowed hir access to employment opportunities usually denied to women. The author has latterly taken a "transgender" stance: "I am a person who faces almost insurmountable difficulty when instructed to check off an "F" or "M" box on identification papers" (1998,11).

2.1.38 Carlotta (Male-to-female, Australia)

He Did It Her Way, 1994

Carlotta was born in wartime Sydney of the 1940s to a solo mother (hir father was an anonymous American serviceman). In her biography, Carlotta does not disclose either hir birthname, birthdate, and only her current "offstage" forename, "Carol". Carlotta left home in hir teens and gravitated to Sydney's Kings Cross

[42]Confessions of a Transsexual Woman, 1997.

to become a very successful performer in a transvestic revue, without ever attempting to live as a stereotypical adult male. When s/he started in show-business, Kings Cross was a magnet to US soldiers on R&R leave from the Vietnam war, and gangsterism, prostitution, and drug-use were rife. Carlotta peppers her story with titillating items of scandal about other celebrities and her own sexual exploits. She had one of the first "sex-change" surgeries performed in Australia in 1974 by a visiting UK surgeon. Unlike most of the other story-tellers, Carlotta does not draw a strong distinction between gay "camp" and a transsexual identity[43]. She has performed on stage in the revue, *"Les Girls"* for over twenty-six years, exploiting the notion of "queerness" to its fullest. For example, she recounts performing in Invercargill, NZ: "My favourite line down there was 'It's so cold in Invercargill you'd freeze your balls off' which I'd deliver while scratching my crotch. Never failed to get a laugh" (1994, 99), or "So I tap myself in the crotch with the microphone and say, 'How do you like my Tupperware box?' and it will crack everyone up every night, guaranteed" (1994, 124).

Was Carlotta a "real" transsexual, or a transvestite entertainer who *happened* to have genital surgery? While Carlotta's story focuses on the stage character, "Carlotta", this narrative offers occasional glimpses of the woman within:

> All throughout these people were treating me as if I was some kind of deviant. I still believe I knew much more about what was going on than what they did. To me it was no worse than having a wart removed (Carlotta, 1994, 68).
>
> For all those people who continue to ridicule us and believe that we choose to be what we are, sorry, but you're wrong. I've lived this life. I know (Carlotta, 1994, 74).

[43]Even after surgery, she refers to female clothes as "drag".

While Carlotta's book contains many photographs of her on stage in costumes which are outrageous parodies of "female" attire (i.e., "drag"), she also includes photos of herself in "the ordinary". I believe that, rather than this book representing a whole life of this woman, this narrative is that of a stage performer who has, and manages to maintain, a private life.

2.1.39 Julia Grant (Male-to-female, UK)

Just Julia, 1994

Julia Grant was born George Roberts in 1954. S/he had a traumatic childhood of sexual and physical assaults from hir father, and hir mother was alcoholic. Around puberty, George engaged in homosexual sex to earn money. As soon as s/he was able to leave school s/he did so, and joined the Royal Navy as a means of escape from the unpleasant home environment. George was discharged on "medical" grounds as a result of being caught in a sexual liaison with a male shipmate.

While George suffered a great deal of gender-confusion since childhood, s/he initially identified as a homosexual male, and a promiscuous one at that. S/he lapsed into crime and spent increasing amounts of time in prison, where s/he continued hir sexual liaisons with hir fellow inmates. When s/he reviewed hir life and gender identity in the late 1970s, s/he concluded that s/he was transsexual and sought out hormones and genital surgery. To finance hir surgery, s/he agreed to have hir transformation made into a television program by the BBC. Shortly after returning home from surgery in 1980, she had complications with bleeding and, as a result of a wrongly-interpreted assessment of her condition by a hospital emergency department, her newly-constructed vagina was destroyed. Her story ends on a note of some regret over lost opportunities as a sexual agent, but she still plans on having another attempt at reconstructive genital surgery.

2.1.40 Petric Smith (Female-to-male, USA)

Long Time Coming, 1994

Petric Smith was born Elizabeth Cobbs in 1940. Elizabeth grew up in Alabama, in a family who had associations with the Ku Klux Klan. S/he married and had a son. When hir uncle was charged with the bombing of a church which caused the death of four African-American girls, s/he was a principal witness for the prosecution. In 1979, after hir uncle's conviction, s/he fled into hiding, fearing retribution from the Klan. The author underwent surgery (no details given) and re-emerged in 1981 as a male, Petric Smith.

Unlike many female-to-male transsexuals, Elizabeth Cobbs adopted a conventional heterosexual, female-gendered lifestyle prior to hir transition into manhood. In the stiflingly conservative family environment that the author grew up in, gender-variance may have been rendered unthinkable, or even life-threatening. Although the author does not elaborate, it may be that Petric's gender-issues emerged more strongly at the time when s/he was forced to contemplate assuming a new social identity and the breaking of family ties (for hir own safety after the trial).

2.1.41 Kate Bornstein (Male-to-female, USA)

Gender Outlaw, 1995

Kate Bornstein was born Albert Bornstein in 1948 to Jewish-American parents. After marrying three times as a male, s/he had genital surgery and exploited her gender-transgressive persona on television, on the stage, and as a public speaker. Her first book, "Gender Outlaw", published in 1995, departs from the conventional biographic format into a "scrapbook" style of short quips, and includes the script of her stage play, "Hidden: A Gender". Her later publication, "My Gender Workbook" (1998) moves even further from the conventional narrative format by incorporat-

ing semi-serious "exercises" intended to disrupt everyday assumptions about sex and gender. Kate's language and her discourse on gender is provocative, in keeping with her career as an entertainer:

> I identify as neither male nor female, and now my lover is going through his gender change, it turns out that I'm neither straight nor gay. What I've found as a result of this borderline life is that the more fluid my identity has become, and the less demanding my own need to belong to the camps of male, female, gay or straight, the more playful and less dictatorial my fashion has become - as well as the style of self-expression (1995, 4).

While her hold on "gender" on a personal level is presented as something quite different to how it is practiced in the "ordinary"[44], she acknowledges the work of post-modern theorists on gender, such as Judith Butler. In her first book, she also reveals that she identified as lesbian after her re-embodiment. However, her partner, Catherine Harrison was a female-to-male transsexual, who went on to transform his sexual embodiment to male, as David Harrison. Kate's later book, "My Gender Workbook" (1998) is almost wholly focussed on gender-disruptive "exercises" and quizzes, and her attitude to her *personal* engenderment is even less accessible.

2.1.42 Mark Rees (Female-to-male, UK)

Dear Sir or Madam, 1995

Mark Rees was born Brenda Rees in 1942. S/he grew up as a tomboy, naively assuming that s/he would somehow develop into

[44]The propositions of gender-fluidity and multiplicity on which Bornstein's book is based run counter to the model of gender which I develop in Chapter 8: While Kate's challenges to existing gender-constructs are intentionally entertaining, this thesis argues that core gender (CGI) remains binary in structure and "ordinary" in performance. I contest some of the gender-disruptive arguments in Bornstein's book at 6.3.1 on page 273 and 4.6.1.1 on page 224.

a male in later life. The onset of puberty brought home the realities of hir sexual embodiment, together with the miseries of gender dysphoria. S/he joined the WRENS, but was discharged from the Navy because of suspicions over hir "lesbian" sexuality.

For a while, Mark accepted hir identity as being "lesbian", but became increasingly aware that s/he was different from hir lesbian "peers", and recognised that hir "difference" was an issue of gender identity, rather than of sexual orientation. After a series of unproductive encounters with psycho-therapists, Mark obtained hormones and a mastectomy. He lived as a man from then on, but remained relatively unhappy, because of his limited job prospects and social acceptance. He pursued a university degree and was elected to local government. In 1984, he sought a judgement from the European Commission, which he hoped would overturn the UK government's refusal to amend birth certificates to reflect a post-operative transsexual's new sex/gender status. The judgement of the Commission declined to override the existing UK policy, and the *Corbett vs Corbett* judgement still stands for UK-born transsexuals.

2.1.43 Jayne County (Male-to-female, USA)

Man Enough to be a Woman, 1995

Jayne County was born Wayne County (in the 1950s?). S/he became a stage performer during the "punk" era; exploiting gender-transgression and iconoclastic behavior (s/he describes hirself as a "drag-queen revolutionary" (1995, opp. p50). S/he appeared *en femme* in experimental movies, such as *Pork* by Andy Warhol in 1971. Hir story ends with hir living in Berlin in 1994, convinced that s/he is transsexual, but having decided not to have genital surgery:

> When I started to think of myself as transsexual, it was a natural progression for me to go ahead and assume more of a female identity through hormones. For a

> long time, I thought I was going to go the whole way and have a sex change operation, but I'm glad that I found my level before I did that. I'm used to my little friend by now, and quite honestly I'd rather save the money for a facelift (1995, 176-7).

2.1.44 Raymond Thompson (Female-to-male, UK)

What Took You So Long?, 1995

Raymond Thompson was born in Wales "once upon a time, a very long time ago" (1995, 1), probably in the 1950s. He never discloses his birthname, even making an elaborate point of non-disclosure[45] . S/he adopted a strongly tomboyish lifestyle and became increasingly involved in petty crime. Raymond never admits to *ever* having accepted, or performed in any way coded as "female". As hir criminal behaviour escalated, s/he spent more time incarcerated in at first girl's borstals, and then adult women's prisons. While imprisoned, s/he formed sexual attachments with several of hir fellow inmates, but because of hir alienation from hir own "female" body-parts, s/he avoided being touched, and settled for a series of one-way "stone-butch" relationships.

Raymond's gender dysphoria led to recidivism, anti-social despair, and attempts at suicide. He was eventually successful in negotiating his way through a largely unsympathetic public health system to become sexually re-embodied as a man, in a series of somewhat ill-coordinated stages. Although this ghost-written book ends before Raymond has had an extended period of time to reshape his life as a man, he appears to be much happier with his new embodiment, and presents a prospect of leaving his past anti-social behaviour behind him. As the book closes, he re-kindles a relationship with a woman who he had known in his teens, long

[45] "The life that I led, when *this other name* was assigned to me, is a life that is no longer part of me" (1995, 1, *emphasis added*).

before his re-embodiment.

2.1.45 Martine Rothblatt (Male-to-female, USA)

The Apartheid of Sex, 1995

Martine Rothblatt works as a lawyer and lives as a woman in a "lesbian" marriage (s/he does not disclose whether s/he has had genital surgery or other physical transformation: Part of hir re-working of "gender" involves depreciating the value of genitals as signifiers of "difference"). S/he draws on history, biology, sociology and the law to argue that the binary categorisation of "gender" is oppressive. S/he advocates either the elimination of any social and/or legal recognition of gender, or alternatively, the multiplicity of "sexual identity" based on colour-coding (1995, 110-116):

> "A deconstruction of sexual identity into objective, un-genitally infected elements requires a new chromatic lexicon. . . Sexually we are not "men" and "women", but we are shades of purple, orange, green, and brown (1995, 115).

Some of hir suggestions for change include language reform (1995, 124-131), "sex-free" marriage (1995, 79-85) and de-segregation of public toilets along gendered lines (1995, 91-95). Rothblatt's message runs counter to the driving imperative in the "conventional" transsexual narratives. Although hir discourse *appears* radical, I will argue in 4.6.1.1 on page 224, and Chapter 8 that such stances serve to *preserve* the existing gender construct.

2.1.46 Dawn Langley Simmons (Intersexed, "male" to-female, USA)

Dawn: A Charleston Legend, 1995

Dawn Langley Simmons was born Gordon Langley Hall in the UK in 1937. S/he was born with ambiguous genitalia and raised as a boy. Her natural parents were unmarried, and on the domestic staff of Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicholson. The author was later adopted by the actress, Margaret Rutherford. S/he entered into hir literary career early, with hir first publication at age 4. S/he specialised in writing biographies of the British Royalty and other celebrities. S/he moved to the USA, and entered the Johns Hopkins gender program in the 1960's (the same program that was treating "conventional" transsexuals). After her transition into womanhood, she married an African-American man in South Carolina. This was the first inter-racial marriage sanctioned in that state, which had no provision for such marriages at the time. The marriage lead to violent reaction. The couple's home was looted and burned, and death threats were made against them. Although many of the other authors faced hostility because of their gender-transgression, Dawn's sexual/genderal transition almost passed almost unnoticed, as a result of the *racially* based hostility directed at her and her husband. The couple later had a daughter, and fled northwards to escape the hostility in South Carolina. Her husband suffered a severe mental illness and was institutionalised. Dawn is unique among any of the authors in this study, in that she gave birth *after* her transformation: Every other author was either rendered sterile, or very nearly so, by their re-embodiment.

2.1.47 Loren Cameron (Female-to-male, USA)

Body Alchemy, 1996

Loren Cameron was born in 1959, but does not disclose hir birthname. As a child, s/he engaged in "tomboy" activities. S/he identified as "lesbian" until s/he was 26, when s/he began hir transformation. As a transsexual man, he faced hostility and rejection from many of his former lesbian acquaintances. Loren has

worked as a photographer and produced *"Body Alchemy"*, a book containing photographic portraits of both himself, and other transmen.

2.1.48 Claudine Griggs (Male-to-female, USA)

Passage Through Trinidad, 1996

Claudine was born Claude Griggs in 1953. Although her first personal account, *"Passage Through Trinidad"* is in the form of a diary, nominally spanning the period of six months around the time of her genital surgery, she also incorporates other material from her earlier life, by way of reflection. Although s/he had wanted to be a female from childhood, s/he grudgingly accepted hir fate of being embodied as a male and attempted to make the best of it. S/he joined the US Air Force after leaving school, but was discharged after several years on psychological grounds after revealing hir hitherto-suppressed transsexuality. Hir physical appearance was sufficiently sexually ambiguous[46] that s/he slipped into a female role without difficulty and lived as a woman from thenceforth. When s/he announced hir intention to live as a woman, hir family disowned hir for over a decade. S/he entered a gender program and was approved for genital surgery in 1975, but needed two years to save sufficient money for the operation. Before s/he was due to have surgery in 1977, she discovered that hir surgeon had just been struck off the medical register for malpractice[47]. This encounter discouraged hir from seeking surgery again until 1991.

Although s/he took a law degree, s/he foresaw difficulties in

[46]"I've been very lucky, as transsexuals go, and have had ambiguous sexual characteristics since puberty. Making the transition from life as a man to that of a woman was relatively easy - basically all I needed appearance-wise was a change of clothes. Many times people thought I was a woman even when I was not consciously trying to pass as female" (1996, 17).

[47]The surgeon was probably the notorious Dr Brown, who continued to perform unsanctioned surgeries, mainly from Mexico, until his imprisonment for the death of a patient in 1999.

registering and working as a lawyer, because hir birth certificate still showed hir as "male". S/he therefore accepted work as a legal clerk, rather than risk exposure of hir past. Whilst in a pre-operative state, s/he changed hir sexual orientation from "heterosexual" to "lesbian" and remained so after surgery.

After her genital surgery, Claudine experienced severe depression. Although she does not regret that she had surgery, she loathes ever having been transsexual:

> One year since surgery. I wonder whether the process has been worth it - not just the sex-change, but life. It occurs to me that transsexualism is basically an incurable affliction, and there is not much else that can be done to improve my social status or self-image or chances at happiness . . . Maybe tomorrow I won't hate being transsexual. Maybe tomorrow, just possibly, the trip to Trinidad[48] will have been worth it (1996, 210).

Claudine's later book, *"S/he"* explores both the transsexual phenomenon, and the wider context of "gender". Her post-operative depression had been lifted at this stage, but her hatred of having been a transsexual remains[49]. In her second book, she discusses the results of her questionnaire directed at other post-operative transsexuals.

2.1.49 Geri Nettick (Male-to-female, USA)

Mirrors, 1996

Geri (Geraldine) Nettick was born Gerard Nettick in the early 1950s. S/he was miserable at school, because the gender socialisation that s/he received ran counter to hir internal conviction of

[48]Trinidad, Colorado. A small, former mining town in the USA where gender re-assignment surgery is performed by Dr Stanley Biber.

[49]See 6.3.7 on page 293 in this thesis.

being gendered female (CGI, ISG). Instead of accepting, or even reacting to, the enforcement of masculinity, Geri grieved for the loss of connection with the girls, who s/he regarded as hir peers:

> . . . I was aware that I was being taken away from involvement with other girls. I felt sometimes as if I was being forcibly held and pulled away from an outgoing tide - an image that came up in nightmares. The exclusion hurt, despite the relatively soft boundaries of first grade. I still knew I couldn't wear a girl's uniform or go to the girl's lavatory, that I wasn't allowed to choose to be a girl. I also sensed that nobody else felt the way I did. I was learning to feel like an outsider (Nettick, 1996, 46-47).

Hir family were also unsupportive: Hir mother refused to acknowledge the tentative attempts that Geri made to her to discuss hir gender anguish (1992, 137). Geri's father threatened physical violence to counter hir "sissy" behaviour:

> ... [S]uddenly, he jumped up and reached into an open drawer. "You wanna be a goddamned female?" he roared, brandishing a sizable butcher's knife. "Then come over here, and I'll cut your goddamned nuts off for you!" He advanced on me and I ran out the door and into the front yard (1996, 140).

Identifying hirself as a transsexual lesbian, Geri fled home into the lesbian community in San Francisco, at a time when the first "radical" feminist wave of reaction to the transsexual phenomenon was being articulated (Janice Raymond published *The Transsexual Empire* in 1979, and Sandy Stone, a transsexual recording engineer had just been expelled from the staff of the lesbian-centred *Olivia Records*). Living full-time as a lesbian-identified woman, Geri met both acceptance, and total rejection, from members of "the community". Furthermore, hir non-stereotypical presentation as a *lesbian*

trans-woman hindered hir attempts to negotiate the conservative psycho-medical gatekeepers to obtain approval for genital surgery. Geri finally obtained surgery, and slipped into "stealth-mode"[50], not disclosing her past history of embodiment, to avoid the possibility of trans-phobic hostility from her lesbian peers.

Geri recounts the pain that she felt when she met the woman who had been her first sexual contact after surgery. While the encounter had been fondly remembered for several years as a special event for Geri, the other woman dismissed her in public, as an amusing aberration:

> I told her that I'd never forgotten our affair, that I remembered her fondly. She replied, "Oh, I could never forget! You know, I've told that story to *so many* of my friends - here I finally got the courage to start something with another woman, and it turns out she'd just gotten out of hospital after having a sex change! What a riot!" I felt like melting into the floor. I was hoping that none of her friends would notice her talking to me - I could just imagine her pointing me out to all of them and saying *I* was the one who had provided her with such a droll tale. One of my fondest memories, shot all to hell (1996, 290, *emphasis in original*).

After several years in "stealth" mode, Geri was enticed into revealing her past, to counter the anti-transsexual stance of many of the local feminists who were writing at the time. The expulsion of Nancy Burkhalter from the 1991 Michigan Women's Music Festival had revived the debate, and Geri decided that *someone* needed to argue the case for male-to-female transsexuals' claims to genderal

[50]This expression, as used by post-operative transsexuals, means "passing" as non-transsexual, and being completely secretive about one's past sexual embodiment. It is sometimes referred to as "going into the woodwork".

legitimacy *as women* (and, in her case, as lesbians)[51]. As well as mounting a strong case for inclusion and genderal-legitimacy for transsexuals, Nettick's book also includes a list of contacts and technical information for transsexuals themselves.

2.1.50 Paul Hewitt (Female-to-male, UK)

A Self-Made Man, 1996

Paul Hewitt was born Martine Hewitt in 1967. He has an "identical" twin sister, Karen, who despite almost identical genetic makeup, and childhood socialisation, has not shown any evidence of female-to-male transsexualism. Paul tried to cope with hir gender-anguish by vigorously pursuing sports. Unlike many of the female-to-male authors, Paul also tried to cope with hir gender-anguish by "trying harder" within a female role[52]: "I have tried desperately hard in the past to accept my female body, even resorting to super-femininity in an effort to to convince myself I was female" (Hewitt, 1996, 69). He goes on to relate that this project ultimately failed, because this "female" persona had no substance:

> The problem was that I was dressing my body, not me. Deep inside I felt no better than that awful sticky stuff you scrape off your shoe. I felt hollow and doomed. I was feeding off the compliments as a tapeworm feeds off its hosts, greedily, desperately and parasitically. I kept my red lipstick carefully outlined, worn as my painted-on smile. I had made myself, my body, into a diversion. While I flounced around, masquerading as a walking,

[51] Female-to-male transsexuals often face the reverse problem: They continue to be claimed by radical feminists (and lesbian theorists) as "female" long after they have joined the ranks of men.

[52] For the male-to-female proto-transsexuals, coping with gender anguish by pursuing hyper-masculinity is much more common than the corresponding hyper-femininity amongst female-to-males. With the social sanction of a "butch" persona available to them, over-compensation of genderal role-play, such as Paul Hewitt's anguished attempts at hyper-femininity are comparatively rare.

Martine/Paul and Karen Hewitt

Same embodiment, same socialisation, but different genders?

Figure 2: This picture of the "identical" Hewitt twins at age five is offered up by Paul as evidence that he had displayed a male gender identity since early childhood

> talking, flirting feminine icon, no one would guess my real identity (Hewitt, 1996, 70-71).

After a period of identifying as lesbian, s/he sought hormones and a mastectomy and lived as a man from then on. His story is written in the form of a diary and recounts the day-by-day process of self-discovery and transition into manhood. Paul's "identical" twin sister remained supportive throughout his transition. Although little is said about Karen's feelings of engenderment during her twin brother's change, it must have posed some challenges to her own sense of identity. Paul's story raises the issue of what is the *essence* of transsexuality: Why, with so much shared genetic and social background, did these two siblings express opposing gender identities[53]? Paul argues that these differences in engenderment were apparent from early childhood. Figure 2 illustrates the striking difference in gender-presentation, even when the twins were aged five. I draw on Paul's story when I discuss the substance of core gender identity in Chapter 8.

2.1.51 Tracie O'Keefe (Male-to-female, UK)

Trans-X-u-all, 1996

Tracie O'Keefe was born in the early 1950s (birthname not given). S/he was committed to a mental institution at age 11, because of her expressions of femininity were read as schizophrenia. When s/he was released four years later, s/he drifted into prostitution before attempting suicide. While recovering from this attempt at self-destruction, s/he read the publicity about April Ashley's "sex-change", and from then on, hir own life-course became clear to hir:

[53]This case suggests that *whatever* organic or social process forms core gender identity (CGI), it must be very small, discrete and binary in substance, because there is so few possibilities for extensive or diffuse variation. I discuss this further in Chapter 8.

> [I]t was the first time I had realised there just might possibly be life beyond the nightmare of living in someone else's body. . . I could see out of their eyes, hear out of their ears, but I just could not feel anything, except despair and pain - the pain of being a child in a body of the wrong sex, terrified of growing up to be a man. I knew the only way to survive would be to grow into a woman. By hook or by crook, I saw that I had one choice of action, and it would be a difficult and long, arduous journey, but I had no choice if I wanted to live (O'Keefe & Fox, 1997, xxv).

Traci had hormonal and surgical treatment and, when re-embodied female, she "married[54]" men on two occasions. She trained as a psychotherapist, specialising in gender issues. She now identifies as bisexual, and lives in a lesbian relationship with her co-author. Her guide-book addresses medical, social and political issues for transsexuals, and contains many short biographies of transsexuals, including her own.

2.1.52 Brandon Teena (Female-to-male, USA)

All S/he Wanted, 1996

Brandon Teena was born Teena Brandon in 1972. By the age of 18, s/he was living as a man:

> "But Teena wasn't Teena anymore. Secretly, she stomped around the house in briefs, examining herself in the mirror. With two pairs of socks down her pants, she could easily pass for a boy. It gave her a thrill just thinking about it" (Jones, 1996, 50).

[54]Because the *Corbett vs. Corbett* judgement would have been in force by this time, *neither* of these marriages would have had any legal standing in the UK.

S/he engaged in petty crime, fraud and forgery, and hir arrest led to hir exposure and imprisonment as a female. Nevertheless, s/he had several "heterosexually"-coded relationships with women. S/he befriended a former boyfriend of hir then-current female partner, and when he discovered hir embodiment in 1993, he and an accomplice raped Brandon. The local police were unsympathetic when Brandon reported the crime. A week later, the rapists returned to murder Brandon and two of hir companions. I have included Brandon Teena in this study because, at age 20, s/he was diagnosed as being transsexual, and had s/he lived longer, s/he would most probably have sought hormones and genital surgery. During hir brief adult life, s/he passed reasonably successfully as male, even without surgical or hormonal intervention.

2.1.53 Lady Colin Campbell (Intersexed, "male"-to-female, UK)

A Life Worth Living, 1997

Lady Colin Campbell was born George Ziade, into a wealthy family in Jamaica in 1949. S/he had an intersexed condition and was raised as a boy. As a child, hir effeminacy and self-identification as a girl led hir parents to conclude that s/he was mentally ill. S/he was forced to undergo a period of aversion therapy and intense socialisation into "maleness" by a psychologist, which was eventually abandoned, when it became obvious that this attempt to coercively re-socialise hir was futile. Soon after s/he reached puberty, s/he fled from her family to the UK. S/he adopted a female role, and had genital surgery at age 21, despite the initial resistance from hir family. As with other intersexed authors of the later period, the author regards her physical transformation as a "natural" and low-key event[55]. After surgery, she reflected:

[55]Having been born in Jamaica (rather than the UK) it was possible for her to have her birth certificate amended to show her birth-sex as female. If she

> The sense of relief I had experienced when I opened my eyes in that hospital and realised that no one could ever get me to live as a boy again was beyond profound, My mind could not help wandering back to the truly remarkable life I had just left behind. Now that I was free of it, part of me viewed it with incredulity. Had I really lived through all that? It was a healthy affirmation that the past was past (1998, 100).

After working as a model, author, and socialite, she married into the British aristocracy, becoming Lady Campbell. However, her husband turned out to be a violent alcoholic, and they had an early, and acrimonious divorce. Although her divorce initially compromised her standing amongst the British social elite, she remains well-connected with the aristocracy, and devotes far more of her autobiography to tales about her socialising than she does to her gender-role transition earlier in her life. Co-incidentally, both she, and another "male"-to-female intersexed author (Dawn Langley Simmons) have both published several biographies of members of the British Royal family. S/he has adopted two Russian orphan boys, and continues to work as a writer and model.

2.1.54 Katherine Johnson (Male-to-female, Canada)

Prisoner of Gender, 1997

Katherine Johnson was born Douglas Johnson in 1948. Hir mother died when s/he was aged three, and both Katherine and hir sister were cared for by a grandmother, an aunt, or by orphanages until hir father re-married. Hir display of "sissy" behaviour led to taunting from hir peers, which added to hir alienation. S/he

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had not been able to do so, her entry into the ranks of the British aristocracy would have been rather more difficult, as April Ashley had experienced earlier (see 2.1.18 on page 102, above).

started petty criminal activities at an early age, and found cross-dressing to be a solace:

> I first got into trouble with the law at the age of nine and it was at this time that I undertook my first experimentation with cross-dressing, "borrowing" some of my sister's underclothes. Being as deeply disturbed as I was, I discovered that wearing her underwear had a strangely soothing effect on me (1995, 9).

Hir criminal activities increased when s/he became addicted to heroin at age 14, and s/he spent most of hir teenage years in reformatories and then adult prisons. The lack of privacy in the exclusively male environment aggravated hir gender dysphoria and made rehabilitation almost impossible. Of hir 30 years in the Canadian prison system, 13 were spent in isolation, which s/he contrived by committing deliberate infringements of prison rules (to gain some privacy within the all-male environment). S/he attempted suicide on several occasions. One of hir coping strategies when not in solitary confinement was to act as a sexual partner for a male "protector".

On one of hir brief periods of release from prison, s/he obtained female hormones and started to live as a woman. When s/he was re-arrested for bank-robbery, s/he was forced to return to a male role, and was refused access to hormones by the prison authorities. In frustration, s/he amputated hir penis, but this was surgically re-attached in the prison hospital. During hir long sentence, hormones were periodically offered, and then denied to hir. Again, in despair about hir fluctuating hormonal balance, s/he castrated hirself, and was successful this time (s/he flushed hir removed organs down the toilet to prevent forcible re-attachment). S/he engaged in lengthy Quasi-legal argument with prison authorities over recognition of hir transsexual condition, segregation from male prisoners, and access to hormones and female clothing.

In 1992, the author was released from prison, and went to live with hir boyfriend (a former fellow prison inmate), who died shortly afterwards. S/he was approved for genital surgery and was awaiting funding through the public health system as hir story closes. The book also contains a sustained indictment of the Canadian prison system, and how the author believes it handles the welfare of transsexual prisoners.

2.1.55 Jennifer Spry (Male-to-female, Australia)

Orlando's Sleep, 1997

Jennifer Spry was born John (Spry?) in 1946. S/he indulged in secret cross-dressing during hir childhood. As s/he found hirself attracted to females, hir gender-identity issues could not be resolved within a gay male framework. As with many other male-to-female transsexuals in denial, s/he attempted to dispel hir unease with manhood by simply trying harder to fit into the "male" stereotype. S/he became very interested in exotic cars, and took up sailing and heavy drinking. S/he married an American woman and moved to the USA. Despite being in love with hir wife, and adopting a child, s/he was still deeply troubled with the role of husband and father. The breakthrough in resolving hir gender dysphoria came when s/he recognised the implications of the distinction between gender identity and sexual orientation. When s/he saw the possibility of life as a transsexual lesbian, s/he pursued a change in hir sexual re-embodiment. After genital surgery, she returned to Australia. In the concluding section of her autobiography, she mentions some of the difficulties that she faced when being public about being a lesbian transsexual; confusion amongst family and heterosexual friends; animosity and rejection by some lesbian essentialists.

2.1.56 Alexandra Highcrest (Male-to-female, Canada)

My Life on the Stroll, 1997

Alexandra Highcrest was born Alex(ander?) in 1953 (hir family name is not confirmed). After leaving home to live in Toronto in the 1970's and, while still living as a male, s/he "innocently" ended up being paid for sex with a gay man. S/he took up regular sex-work as a transvestite and "worked" for twenty years. S/he obtained approval for genital surgery in 1993[56], but no details of hir surgery (if any) are given. The autobiography is mainly concerned with hir working life as a prostitute and the political issues surrounding sex-work in Canada.

2.1.57 Patrick Califia (Female-to-male, USA)

Sex Changes, 1997

Patrick Califia was born Pat(ricia?). For many years, s/he identified as a Sado/Masochist lesbian, as a way of circumscribing hir mixed feelings concerning hir gender identity:

> I became a sort of psychic hermaphrodite. If I was going to live in a female body, I decided that I had to embrace (as much as this was possible for me) my tits, my cunt, and my femininity. . . I did not want to give up male apparel or the sexual fantasy of sometimes being a man. But I knew that if I went too far in that direction, it would drive me crazy. It's wonderful to fuck someone in male persona. I have a strong psychic connection to my phallus, but I also have to get away from the male mode sometimes because it's not real, I don't have a cock, and

[56]At this time, s/he briefly obtained work as a waitress, to satisfy the psycho-medical gatekeepers at Toronto's Clarke Institute of Psychiatry that s/he was capable of working in a traditional "female" occupation: She remarks on the irony of this "female" vocational requirement "like prostitution isn't?" (1997, 232).

> I have to be able to love and cherish my own body if I am going to have any sort of a happy life (Califia, 1997, 50).

Califia locates hir choice of embodiment at the time of writing the above quotation in the realm of "the sexual". A substantial part of hir genderal dilemma stems from unease about sexual performance, and s/he is far more candid about hir sexuality than most of the other narrators. Perhaps significantly, this sexually-charged discussion is offered up as part of hir justification for *not* changing hir sexual embodiment and social sex at the time.

In 2000, Califia "came out" as Patrick, in a male guise, after he entered into a *gay male* relationship with another female-to-male, Matt Rice. Although the article which announced the birth of their son[57] was also written by Califia, he does not offer the same *sexual imperative* for proceeding with his transformation as he had expressed previously. The sexually active persona which he had adopted as a coping mechanism, while he was female-bodied seems more subdued in retrospect:

> I investigated sex reassignment in my twenties, but was discouraged by the poor quality of genital surgery and terrified of the isolation. I wasn't sure I could separate the effects of misogyny from gender dysphoria. So I tried to be a different kind of woman, a sexually adventurous gender-fucking dyke who enjoyed every possible male prerogative. But it just wasn't enough (Califia-Rice, 2000).

The post-transformation Califia offers up mundane accounts about his occupation of "the ordinary" with his partner to validate his claims to manhood, even where the totality of their circumstances are far from ordinary, that is, two gay-male *social* fathers, one of whom is the *actual* mother of their child:

[57]The genetic "fathering" was provided by several of their gay male friends contributing to a melded pool of semen, so as to ensure anonymity of paternity.

> Our mornings follow a set routine that any parent with a high-needs baby would recognize. We stagger out of bed, sleep deprived and anxious. Our eight-month-old son has reflux" (Califia-Rice, 2000).

Even where the *location* of the claim to gendered space may be similar to that of the non-transsexed, the *mechanics* of making that claim may still be different for transsexuals.

2.1.58 Denise Tilling (Male-to-female, NZ)

To Thine Own Self Be True, 1997

Denise Tilling was born David Tilling in the UK in 1938. S/he had a difficult childhood, feeling alienated from hir male peers at school and under-achieving academically. David preferred the company of the girls, despite the discouragement of hir peers and teachers:

> There was little interaction between the boys and the girls at Naunton Park. The boys had their groups of varying macho attitudes. The girls were looked upon as something of a lesser kind, not to be associated with in any way. They seemed to float around in groups and there was always a lot of subdued whispering and giggling. How I envied them! The other boys were unable to understand this whispering and giggling so relegated it to subhuman behaviour to be avoided at all costs. My friend Toby and I were exceptions to the rule. We preferred to play with the girls notwithstanding the open contempt shown us by our male contemporaries. Toby did it because he just loved girls and still does to this day. In my case I yearned to be one of these girls. So being close to them acted as a salve to my confused inner being (1997, 6).

David started cross-dressing in hir mother's clothes, and although this practice provided temporary relief, it left hir even more confused about hir identity: "It was 1950 and I did not understand my compulsion any more than most other people did at that time. I felt inflicted by some sickness that I alone could cure myself" (1997, 8). In an attempt to dispel hir gender-confusion, s/he seized upon one of the most "macho" professions open to hir[58] and went to sea as an apprentice merchant seaman, and eventually worked hir way up to ship's captain. Although ship-life did impose some constraints on hir cross-dressing, s/he still engaged in it, whenever possible. S/he also resorted to heavy drinking to cope with the pressures of command, and of hir gender-anguish. David arranged to become New Zealand-based seaman, because s/he had been accepted into the Christchurch cross-dressing "scene". S/he married three times, again hoping that trying harder to fulfill a conventional "male" role would subdue hir compulsion to cross-dress, but each attempt ended in divorce. Because of hir unease within hir series of heterosexual marriages, s/he explored the possibility that s/he may be a gay male, before accepting that s/he was transsexual. After hir retirement, s/he started to live as a woman and had genital surgery. She currently lives alone on the South Island's West Coast.

2.1.59 Traci Fellows (Male-to-female, Australia)

A Fellow No More, 1997

Traci Fellows was born Barry Warren in 1956. S/he engaged in secret childhood cross-dressing and identified as a gay male in hir teens. S/he became involved in transvestic revues on a social level. S/he entered into a relationship with a "conventional" gay male, who forced hir to choose between either pursuing hir goal of living

[58]Hir career-choices were somewhat limited by hir poor scholastic achievement.

as a woman, or having an overtly "male/male" homosexual relationship with him. When hir lover died, s/he resumed hir desire of sexual re-embodiment. Traci transitioned to a female persona on the job and received support from hir colleagues and family. She continued in the same employment after having genital surgery.

2.1.60 Riki-Anne Wilchins (Male-to-female, USA)

Read My Lips, 1997

Riki-Anne Wilchins was born Richard Wilchins in 1952. Autobiographic details are scattered through out her book, which focuses on her radical gender-theorising. As a child, s/he coped with hir gender-anguish by learning how to mimic acceptable "male" behaviour. However, s/he had adopted a lesbian identity prior to her genital surgery at age 28. She was one of the instigators of "Camp Trans", outside the gates of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, which was a response to the expulsion of another transsexual, Nancy Burkhalter, from the 1991 event. Riki's gender-legitimacy as a woman, and as a lesbian, appears to be still under challenge, largely as a result of her own genderally-disruptive behaviour. Her high public profile as a transsexual activist, and her provocative writing on gender would undermine any easy occupation of "the ordinary" within the gender landscape.

2.1.61 Samantha Kane (Male-to-female, UK)

A Two-Tiered Existence, 1998

Samantha Kane was born Sam Hashami, into a Muslim family in Iraq in 1960. As a child, s/he was convinced that s/he was female, until the realities of adulthood forced hir to accept the social consequences of hir male embodiment:

> Ever since I was a child, I'd felt trapped inside the wrong body. I wanted to be my sister - playing with dolls

> and dressing up in girl's clothes. I thought I would grow up to be a woman, and I was convinced of this belief - I thought the male genitals that I had were only temporary. But my parents had to convince me that my sex was permanent and that I would grow up to be a man (Millar, 1998, 16).

While still in Iraq, the adolescent Sam tried to cope with hir gender-anguish by adopting a hyper-masculine persona in public, and secretly cross-dressing in female clothing. At 17, s/he moved to the UK to study, where s/he later married and was successful in business. However, hir gender-anguish became increasingly unendurable and s/he attempted suicide. After this incident, s/he accepted that hir gender identity issues could not be ignored. S/he entered a gender clinic and had genital, and other, unspecified surgeries. She regrets that she has been unable to gain access to her two children after her transformation.

2.1.62 Georgina Beyer (Male-to-female, NZ)

Change for the Better, 1999

Georgina Beyer was born George Bertrand in 1957. Hir parents divorced when s/he was 5 years old, and George was raised within hir mother's Maori extended family environment from an early age. Hir mother re-married, and when George's cross-dressing was discovered, s/he was sent to boarding school to dispel hir "sissy" behaviour. And, at least on a superficial level, it was partially successful:

> I never engaged in dress-ups at Wellesley. It was inappropriate. In that all-male environment, with its strong emphasis on good rugged sports and school pride, I conformed to the social climate. However, on those occasions when I was able to go home for holidays, I still

> did it. I managed to suppress my urges to dress as a woman until the opportunity presented itself. There was no opportunity at Wellesley. My parents may well have believed that Wellesley had indeed made a man out of me (1999, 36-7).

After hir mother and step-father divorced, George re-entered the public school system, where s/he discovered some relief from hir gender dysphoria in acting: " I loved acting. It was as if I could leave my male body, which I so desperately wanted to do, and become someone else" (1999, 46). Nevertheless, s/he left school as soon as s/he was permitted to do so, at age 16. George moved from hir home in Auckland to Wellington, with an expectation of entering drama school, but s/he was not accepted as a student because of hir age. Forced to find another way of supporting hirself in Wellington, s/he drifted into casual stage work and gay male prostitution. George was introduced to the trans-vestite/sexual scene (including Carmen's International Coffee lounge, see 2.1.26 on page 111, above) and a solution to hir gender-anguish presented itself. S/he never doubted that the transsexual "project" was the appropriate course to take, and s/he leapt at it with a surety unmatched by most of the other transsexual autobiographers:

> My decision to live as a woman came no more than a few weeks of the revelations at the nightclub. Once I knew it was possible, I knew it was the only way for me. In order to prove to myself and others that I was serious about it, I destroyed everything that belonged to George. I burnt it all - every item of male clothing and accessories. It was like an exorcism. I was 17 years old and my new life was lying ahead of me. I had no regard whatsoever for the consequences. Overnight, George became Georgina (1999, 56).

Georgina lived as a woman from then on, and started taking female hormones soon afterwards. She worked as a stripper and prostitute in Wellington. Hir mother refused to acknowledge the validity of Georgina's transformation, and insisted that "George" appear in male-mode whenever s/he visited (the mother carried this attitude to her grave, with an insistence that "he" attended her funeral, or be excluded from her will). Georgina developed an addiction to drugs, which increased hir need to engage in sex-work. S/he overcame hir addiction and appeared in several acting roles in New Zealand- produced television dramas and documentaries.

Georgina travelled to Australia in 1984 for genital surgery, but her autobiography gives few details of the mechanics of her transformation. After being gang- raped in Sydney, she returned to New Zealand, and resolved to remove herself from the sexual marginality that she experienced prior to her transformation. S/he moved to the Wairarapa, became involved with training unemployed youth in drama, before being encouraged to enter local politics. Despite considerable resistance from the conservative establishment within local government, she was elected to the Carterton District Council, first as a councillor, and then as Mayor (which is almost certainly a World-first for an openly transsexual person). In the 1999 NZ national elections, she became the first elected overtly transsexual parliamentarian, as MP for the seat of Wairarapa. Along with the world-wide publicity over the novelty of her position, she may have have initially faced resistance from within the institution of parliament. Although she did announce in early 2000 that she would not seek re-election to parliament again because of unspecified behaviour in the House, she has recently reconsidered her position, and now intends to stand at the next election.

2.1.63 Deidre McCloskey (Male-to-female, USA)

Crossing: A Memoir, 1999

Deidre McCloskey was born Donald McCloskey in 1947. Stylistically, this autobiography is unusual: The body of Deidre's story is written in the third-person, past-tense; with an explanatory subcommentary in first-person, present-tense (the author does not explain why she has adopted this writing device). S/he crossed-dressed in secret during hir childhood and seized upon every publication on the transsexual phenomenon[59], but s/he concluded that as a heavily-built six feet tall male, s/he would never be able to become convincingly re-embodied as a woman. S/he married, as a male, and pursued a career as an academic economist, and while continuing to cross-dress in private, s/he overcompensated with an image of hyper-masculinity in public:

> He [Donald/Deidre] learned in graduate school to be a tough-guy economist, as tough as professors get, anxious in America about their masculinity. Later he had a ferocious professional reputation, developed in a dozen years of harsh seminars as a faculty member in economics at the University of Chicago. . . Overcorrection seems common. At his second gender convention in 1995 he met a man who volunteered himself for three terms of combat in Vietnam, trying to cure himself. Manly warfare worked no better than Prozac or purging[60] or economics seminars or football up to the Super Bowl (1999, 10).

Soon after hir marriage, s/he confessed hir desire to cross-dress to hir wife, and joined several transvestite clubs. The couple maintained what appeared to be a conventional and happy marriage for over 20 years. In 1995, shortly after hir two children had left home,

[59]Including the stories of Christine Jorgensen and Coccinelle (see above).

[60]For secret cross-dressers, "purging" refers to the cyclical ridding oneself of all "female" clothing and accessories, in the hope that they can cure themselves of the compulsion.

s/he had an "epiphany". S/he accepted that s/he was transsexual, and decided to seek sexual re-embodiment as a woman. When s/he announced, in general terms, hir intention to transition to colleagues and family, s/he received a mixed reaction, disbelief, support and hostility. However, when s/he announced hir specific intention to seek *cosmetic* surgery to "feminise" hir facial features, hir younger sister (a psychologist) had hir twice committed to mental institutions, claiming that Deidre's expression of transsexuality was in reality, symptomatic of a manic-depressive person[61]. On both occasions, Deidre was able to convince the committing magistrate that she was sane, and was discharged.

Deidre proceeded through hir transition to social womanhood rapidly[62] and deliberately[63] and was warmly accepted by the majority of hir colleagues (despite having presented an aggressive, hyper-masculine approach to hir academic work before transition). After genital surgery in Sydney, Australia[64], Deidre continued in her profession as economist.

2.1.64 Jason Cromwell (Female-to-male, USA)

Transmen and FtoMs, 1999

Jason Cromwell was born Jeannie Cromwell in 1952. At 17, s/he read a magazine article about transsexuality and recognised

[61]No genital surgery was planned at this stage. That the sister's claim had sufficient standing for Deidre to be involuntarily incarcerated *twice* within a short period of time is an indication that the notion of transsexuality-as-pathology persisted into the 1990s, at least amongst some psychologists.

[62]Although it is usually not clear at what point in time a transsexual has "crossed" from one social engenderment to the other, Deidre had genital surgery only one year after the *apparently* hyper-masculine Donald announced to the world that s/he was transsexual.

[63]Unlike many of hir transsexual contemporaries, Deidre had sufficient financial resources to proceed through transformation at such a rapid pace.

[64]One of the reasons for travelling to Sydney for surgery was that her chosen surgeon, Peter Haertsch did not follow the "Harry Benjamin Standards", which insists on up to two years living in a "real-life" test in one's new gender-role (see 7.2.1 on page 313 for a discussion of "gatekeeping" and professional standards).

that s/he was female-to-male transsexual hirself, rather than lesbian. Jason had a bilateral mastectomy and hysterectomy, but abandoned completion of his phalloplasty after an "unsuccessful" first-stage surgery. He is an activist on female-to-male issues, and has published several books on the topic. He has felt uncomfortable with the requirements of the gatekeeping process for female-to-males, which assumes that a desire to have penile construction *defines* a "real" female-to-male: "I was once again not really a transsexual because I was not obsessed with having genital surgery, which more than anything else, based on what I had seen, would only result in mutilation" (1999, 5). Given the current state of phalloplastic techniques, this reluctance to proceed with surgery is perhaps understandable, as it does not provide a passport to a semblance of "the real" as a man, in a way that a surgically-constructed vagina is a readily understood marker of sexual commitment and function for a male-to-female. Society would feel more comfortable, nevertheless, if a female-to-male transsexual had a *marker* of masculinity which was comprehensible within the "everyday" understandings of gender (EUG), even where the possessor of such a compromised phallus derived only limited internal gender-legitimation (ISG), or only a glimmer of raw sexual gratification from it.

2.1.65 Max Wolf Valerio (Female-to-male, USA)

The Joker is Wild, 2000

Max Wolf Valerio is an Amerindian who recognises the subversiveness of "changing sex", while at the same time distancing himself from being reduced and objectified to little more than a vehicle for that subversion. He takes no political responsibility for his re-embodiment, but instead, he *demands* it of the wider society:

> Being transsexual is not a unilateral political movement, a religion or cult group. It is not my job to ed-

> ucate society or change it to some utopian, and possibly dystopian, glob of multi-gendered thingness. I believe that transsexuals must continue to fight for our civil rights, for affordable, competent health care, for the right to live as ourselves with respect and dignity (Valerio, 2000).

2.2 Summary

There is no readily-identifiable pattern which emerges from the above autobiographic summaries, which would suggest a socially-constructed "cause" of the transsexual condition. While *almost* all of the stories seem to be directed at substantiating the author's claims to gender-legitimacy in their achieved gender, there seems to be little evidence of an underlying political discourse directed at the wider construction of gender[65]. The early authors needed to negotiate a far less accepting psycho-medical establishment than is the case today. Usually, requests for sexual transformation would be re-interpreted as deviance (an attempt to "legitimise" an unconscious homosexuality) or mental illness (delusion of being something that was *impossible* in a "gender-follows-sex" model). Despite articulating a "healthy" gender (even if located within an inappropriately sexed body) the early transsexuals risked rejection, aversion therapy, imprisonment, or being committed to mental institutions[66]. Their narratives reflect this, and their arguments for genderal legitimacy are often re-inforced with somewhat spurious claims of "intersexuality"; as if a claim to genderal legitimacy based on purely "mental" issues was likely to be mis-interpreted (I discuss this early approach further at 4.5 on page 212).

[65]Bornstein, Feinberg, Rothblatt and Wilchins are the exceptions to this observation. They may represent persons who are simultaneously transsexual *and* gender-subversive. The transsexual "condition" seems to exist independently of sexual orientation, upbringing and other social factors.

[66]Deidre McCloskey had this experience as late as 1996 (see above).

Chapter 3

The Stories

3.1 Possible Reasons for Writing Transsexual Autobiographies

Public disclosure of one's status of being (or having been) transsexual is unlikely to lead to an improvement in the material aspects of their lives[1]. Disclosure may lead to loss of employment, friendship, and compromise personal safety, so why have so many transsexual authors published their life-stories?

3.1.1 As Social Indicators:

They are markers of contemporary attitudes to sex and gender, at many levels- psycho-medical, linguistic, or social. The language available to the authors to describe a condition which has existed even prior to modern hormonal and surgical techniques for transsexual treatment has not been static. While the unease of being transsexual may have remained relatively constant over time, the way that the authors saw themselves in relation to the sexual land-

[1]Except where a transsexual's past is exploited for entertainment purposes. Carlotta, in particular, incorporates her "sex-change" into her stage act (see 2.1.38 on page 123).

scape has changed. The language available has on one hand constrained the authors, but the existence of a transsexual discourse has changed the language of *all* discourses on sexuality and gender in its several forms. Thus, Stoller's "Sex and Gender" (1968) gave the authors who came afterwards an articulated separation between sex and gender, yet Stoller's work was based, to a large degree, on observing transsexuals themselves.

3.1.2 For Public Education:

They all serve an educative function of the transsexual condition and some narrators appear to have overtly set out to do so, by providing a human story of sex/gender transgression, biology and the performative aspects of gender. There is, in most of the autobiographies, an almost patient, leading of the reader by the hand through a story which is, and forever will be, a totally foreign experience for anyone but a fellow transsexual. However, several texts are aloof, and offer few concessions to the reader. The exceptions, Jan Morris's Conundrum (1974) and Georgina Turtle's "Over the Sex Border" (1963) present the author as a "special case", not only unlike the non-transsexual reader, but distinctly superior to, and different from, "ordinary" transsexuals:

> I am one of the lucky few. There are people of many kinds who have set out on the same path, and by and large they are among the unhappiest[2] people on the face of the earth (Morris, 1974, 154).

or when she offers a claim of a 1-10% "success" rate for reassignment, which is markedly different than the rate claimed by psycho-

[2]While the other transsexual authors who have published are not necessarily a more reliable reflection of the transsexual population at large, most of the stories in this sub-genre proclaim that the author's transformation brought them some degree of happiness, fullfilment, etc.

medical research[3]:

> For every trans-sexual who grasps the prize, Identity, ten, perhaps a hundred discover it only a mirage in the end, so that their latter quandary is hardly less terrible than their first (Morris, 1974, 158).

Neither Morris' snobbishness and flowery language, nor Turtle's now risible pseudo-scientific explanations of sex/gender transgression would leave many non-transsexual readers with a feeling of, "There but for fortune go I.....".

The educative function is important in eventually bringing about an acceptance of transsexuals as "ordinary" persons. Responding to the body of transsexual-hostile literature within the feminist movements, Geri Nettick observes:

> I didn't see how anyone could really get into a discussion of transsexuality as an issue when the feminist movement had yet to deal with the reality of our lives; to date, the movement had oppressed us by objectifying us as totally abstract entities. Having been depersonalized, we had to be repersonalised before the issues of our lives could be honestly be discussed (Nettick, 1996, 298).

I am not surprised that genderal reactionaries such as Raymond have seized upon Jan Morris' book to quote from[4], because the author has chosen to depersonalise herself.

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[3]Walters and Ross claim that a follow-up survey of their patients showed an 80% success-rate, measured against a broad range of criteria (1986, 147). I would argue for an even higher rate of "effectiveness", if these end-results were compared with the hypothetical situation of offering the same patients no treatment at all.

[4]Raymond may have a valid point when she criticises *Morris'* celebration of the "compensations" of womanhood as exchanging one stereotype for another (1979, 86-90), but she overlooks that other transsexual narrators do *not* use Morris' florid language. Furthermore, Morris' language, when describing a "stereotypical" womanhood is not dissimilar to several genres of writing by, and for *non-transsexual* women (e.g. Mills and Boon publications).

3.1.3 As Guide-Books:

The autobiographies and other stories by and/or about transsexuals have served as guide-books to other transsexuals, and many autobiographers mention the effect that earlier writers had on their own discovery of their sexual identity (see 3.2). Although, of course, the first male-to-female (Lili Elbe) and the first female-to-male (Michael Dillon) had no such guides. Thus, Roberta Cowell read Dillon's book "Self" (1945) and realised that sex-change was possible. As a consequence of Roberta's discovery of the book, they met and had a rather one-sided relationship for some time. Many authors read either the newspaper accounts of Christine Jorgensen's transformation, or her subsequent book "A personal autobiography" (1968). Perhaps in keeping with her esoteric tastes, Jan Morris was awakened by the hard-to-find "Man into Woman", the story of Lili Elbe, published in 1932. Morris's own book received much publicity and even a degree of respectability when it was published in 1974, and many authors acknowledge that this book was instrumental in their own self-discovery. Renee Richards' "Second Serve" also served as a guidebook for some authors. There is a single mention of Georgina Turtle and another for Roberta Cowell as an information source. Because the first Australian or NZ autobiography was published rather late[5], the Antipodean authors were also affected by overseas, rather than local accounts. Now, there is such a proliferation of sources of information on transsexuality, that such a discrete situation of happening across a single book on the topic which then changed a proto-transsexual's life is far less likely.

Perhaps significantly, the books that affected the lives of transsexuals who then went on to write autobiographies are few, and generally those which were well publicised, rather than those which delivered great insights into the transsexual condition. Nancy Hunt's "Mirror Image" (1978), or Mario Martino's "Emergence" (1977) give,

[5]Carmen Rupe's autobiography was the first, published in 1988.

in my opinion, a far more rounded account of the transsexual condition than those of either Christine Jorgensen (1968) or Jan Morris (1974), yet *none* of the later story-tellers acknowledges the work of Hunt and one one narrator mentions Martino, so perhaps the important thing was to find a book which told *a* story of transsexuality, not necessarily to find a book which told the story well, or in a manner which matched the reader's own circumstances.

Even in these times of information overload, and the loosening of the rigidity of at least some of the gender programs, the story of a transsexual who has actually found themselves, stayed sane, and made it past the gatekeepers, may still serve as a guidebook:

> Transsexuals are a notoriously well-read population, primarily because their success in obtaining the medical treatments that they seek depends on the ability to convince doctors that their personal history matches the officially sanctioned etiology. In a context where telling the right story may confer legitimacy upon ones demand and the wrong story can foil ones chances for sex change, the autobiographies of those transsexuals who have successfully maneuvered within the strict protocols of the gender clinics constitute guide-books of no mean proportion (Hausman, 1995, 143).

I do not believe that Hausman's critical tone is justified, when she questions the veracity of the narrative of transsexual "condition", as it is often presented to the gatekeepers. If, unlike Hausman, one accepts that transsexuals are capable of exercising *agency*, then they are simply offering the most effective story which will entitle them to the treatment that they desire. In 7.2.1 on page 313, I criticise the "unreality" of the psycho-medical gatekeeping process and the notion of a "real life test". The transsexual patient who exercises agency to negotiate a barrier controlling an overly-narrow range of acceptable gender-presentations would still need

to *interpret* and *adapt* any biographical material to fit their own circumstances, before their own case would be credible. The guide-books are used as a *tool* in resolving transsexuality, not a *cause* of the condition. Many of the authors mention that their exposure to the first publicity about trans-people, such as Christine Jorgensen, made their previously unfathomable gender-anguish *comprehensible* as a named condition, which was capable of resolution through physical and social transformation.

3.1.4 As Political Instruments:

They have served to politicise gender transgression. Kate Bornstein's "Gender Outlaw" epitomises a book which is both autobiographical and politically gender-transgressive:

> In living along the borders of the gender frontier, I've come to see the gender system created by this culture as a particularly malevolent and divisive construct, made all the more dangerous by the seeming inability of the culture to *question* gender, its own creation (Bornstein, 1995, 12, *emphasis in original*).

Unlike many of the authors, Bornstein is not prepared to blend in to the existing sex/gender construct and uses her movement *within* the "sex/gender" landscape to criticise that very structure. Bernice Hausman sees Bornstein's stance as contradictory:

> Those who, like Bornstein, take up positions as public transsexuals in order to question binary gender and the cultural imperative that we all be either men or women see themselves as transgressing binary gender. The question is, are subjects who change their sex in order to make their bodies match some kind of internal experience of self defined as gender really able to question the

> system that so clearly demarcated their choices? (Hausman, 1995, 199).

Is Hausman implying that non-transsexuals do not also have some kind of internal experience of self defined as gender? While transsexuals may have a different investment in *private* gender[6] (ISG), I question whether they are they any less fitted to question the *public* gender (SGL, GRB), which does not seem substantially different to the lived gender (ISG) of non-transsexual theorists? Again, I believe that Hausman's comment is symptomatic of her refusal to recognise *agency* on the part of any transsexual.

Riki-Ann Wilchins is a trans-activist who rejects the value of the "conventional" transsexual autobiography as a *political* instrument:

> It is high time we stopped writing our hard-luck stories, spreading open our legs and our yearbooks for those dreadful before-and-after pictures, and began thinking clearly about how to fight back. It is time we began producing our own theory, our own narrative (1997, 25).

Given the difficulty faced by many of the earlier autobiographers in producing a case for their legitimate engenderment *within* the existing gender landscape, radicals such as Wilchins would seem to have set themselves an even more difficult task. However, I argue in 5.4.1 on page 255 that such "radical" discourses may actually serve to *maintain* the existing gender-order, by offering to map out a *new* "Terra Incognita" in which to consign gender-deviance. Furthermore, if "gender" as set out in my Chapter 8 is based on a series of social understandings and transactions undertaken by the population as a whole, what does Wilchins mean by new "gender-theory"? I argue that any person is gendered only to the extent to

[6] I will argue in Chapter 8 that while the *location* of their sense of engenderment may be the same as for non-transsexuals, they may not have reconstructed the same naive *terms of occupation* of that gendered space.

which they are mentally and physically equipped to *engage* with public notions of engenderment. Is a politically based *refusal to engage* with these notions "gender" at all?

3.1.5 As a Confessional:

They have served as a confessional of an early life lived dishonestly. Many authors describe their early lives as being, in some way, "dishonest". Mark Rees makes a global observation:

> The transsexuals who deny their condition are not being true to themselves. This denial can take the form of aggressive masculinity or femininity and perhaps marriage, which usually breaks up, causing distress to spouse and children. If we get as far as acknowledging our condition, but cannot live in our rightful role, we despise not only ourselves but also the society which imprisons us in it. Countless transsexual people have referred to their pre-treatment state as living a lie. It is impossible to be truly ourselves while trapped in the wrong gender role (Rees, 1995, 179-180).

Or Bornstein's comment that the "lying" extends into, and beyond the transition process:

> I was told by several counsellors and a number of transgendered peers that I would need to invent a past for myself as a little girl, that I'd have to make up incidents of my girlhood; that I'd have to say things like "When I was a little girl...." I never was a little girl; I'd lied all my life trying to be the boy, the man that I'd known myself ***not*** to be. Here I was, taking a giant step toward personal integrity by entering therapy with the truth and self acknowledgment that I was a transsexual, and was

> told, "Don't ***tell*** anyone you're transsexual". Transsexuality is the only condition for which the therapy is to lie (Bornstein, 1995, 62, *emphasis in original*).

What Bornstein fails to acknowledge in this protest is that a congruent history is *expected* as part of laying a claim to "the ordinary". It is as much of a *re*-construction as genital surgery, and no more dishonest. Techniques for genital re-construction may *facilitate* social legitimation, but the resultant genital flesh is not "real", in any essential sense, so why is this surgery any more *"honest"* than re-working one's history? For male-to-females, any of the available techniques for vaginoplasty do not replicate a vagina from analogous tissue, they construct a *facsimile* from skin which is not an equivalent of a "natural" vaginal material (for penile inversion technique, the analogue of clitoral skin is inverted and re-located in a site within the body which is some distance from its "appropriate" location; For bowel re-location, tissue from an area which is in no way coded as "sexual" is used to line the neo-vagina). It could be argued, however, that female-to-male metoidioplasty represents an *augmentation* of a "real" penis, that is, the clitoris (a penile analogue) which usually enlarges under the influence of testosterone, is de-hooded and freed from surrounding tissue and ligaments. If Bornstein chooses to accept a status of something *other* than "ordinary" womanhood, which demands congruency of *both* embodiment *and* history, then her claim to be a "Gender Outlaw" seems to be her only other option. Her stance still begs the question "Why is re-constructing one's body "honest", in a way that re-constructing one's history is not?" Either way, her claim in her above quote, to have "taken a giant step toward personal integrity" seems inconsistent, except as irony.

3.1.6 As a Cathartic:

They provide a catharsis of past hurts and uncertainties. Almost every book refers to the pain of gender dysphoria: Not surprisingly, because without the unease, why would people face the further pain of transformation? But is the pain mentioned to justify the transformation, or is the writing about the pain part of a healing process itself? I question why some of the books have been written at all, if this was not the purpose. I will mention only a few accounts, some of which express something else than a straightforward distress with embodiment or social location. Katherine Cummings talks of the hurt that she caused others:

> The day I decided not to commit suicide was one of the saddest days of my life. Having chosen to live, I was miserable and apprehensive, because it meant that I had decided by default that despite having been born male I was going to live the rest of my life as a woman. I knew that this would be an agony for my wife and children, who had no idea that I was transsexual. I knew that there would be grief, and attempts to explain, and feelings of betrayal. I had to find the right words to tell the children that although they may no longer have a conventional father, they would always have two loving parents (Cummings, 1993, 1).

Raymond Thompson was a person who had become quite familiar with the prison system, and so, perhaps unsurprisingly, s/he saw hir own pre-operative embodiment as another form of imprisonment within an unowned "female" body and its functions:

> Alongside the fear of being found out I was ever more uneasy with my body, I couldn't stand the bits that didn't belong to me. I felt as if I was in a prison of flesh and bones. . . . The layer which I really needed to take off was

> what could only be described as a second skin. But no matter how uncomfortable it makes you feel, you cannot get it off. I yearned for the pure relief you get from ripping off some really uncomfortable layer of clothing, except I couldn't because the last layer was me (Thompson, 1995, 165-166).

Claudine Griggs expresses weariness with the "freakhood" of transsexuality, when s/he compares the public voyeurism concerning road accidents with hir own condition:

> Transsexualism is like a bad accident on the other side of the freeway. No matter how horrible it may be for the people involved, bystanders must inevitably slow down to take a gander. Its not malicious; its just a kind of horrific show that's too good to pass over. They think, What a mess! I'm glad I'm not involved, and step forcefully on the accelerator to speed past once they've had a good look. Real tragedies remain, however. Those affected must pick up broken lives and carry on, if they are able, occasionally noting the glances of those who drive by (Griggs, 1996, 163).

Mario Martino, an ex-nun, was devastated by the hostility of a priest when he was refused permission to marry his female partner in a Catholic church:

> The rejection of my own Church - preacher of love! - still cut too deeply (Martino, 1977, 229).

As s/he wrestled with adolescent gender-socialisation at school, Nancy Hunt was repelled by hir embodiment as male, but s/he is almost boastful of having eventually transcended both:

> I had survived the annealing fires of manhood. And I had defied them. Through all those bitter years, each night as I lay in the dark and listened to the distant train whistle, I dreamed of being a girl, free of the barbarous demands of masculinity. ... Secret dreams aside, I was locked in an undoubtedly male body ... dreaming of sex but with myself as the girl, my partner blanked out because I so loathed the male body, even my own (Hunt, 1978, 59-60).

Paul Hewitt was as alienated by the "realities" of hir female embodiment as was Raymond Thompson, but s/he manages to inject some humour into hir sense of "imprisonment" in a foreign body:

> I want to be a real man. Am I to be confined inside this foreign body with breasts forever? A female android, I mechanically sashay about, while, inside, the man stomps around this soft white body like a headless chicken shouting: 'Let me out, you bastards!' (Hewitt, 1996, 9).

Mark Rees was similarly repelled by hir embodiment. A comment by hir mother, intended to be a positive confirmation of hir passage into adulthood as a female, is re-read as a negative confirmation of the loss of the notional masculinity which Mark allowed hirself prior to the onset of puberty:

> One of the most traumatic happenings was the start of periods. . . You're a woman now, she said almost proudly. To her it must have been an immense relief, confirming that I was normal, but few words have brought me such pain (Rees, 1996, 16).

Despite the *physical* realities of a female embodiment, Mark nevertheless proceeded to acquire as much of a *social* masculinity as

s/he could as a teenager. As part of his catharsis, Mark later regretted the difficulty that hir adolescent resistance to hir parent's gender socialisation had caused for them:

> What of my mother? Years later she said that she'd not realized how bad my situation was. I cannot help wondering if this is an example of denial. She just couldn't face looking at it. I was undoubtedly causing her considerable concern. I'd grown out of my tomboy stage but was becoming more masculine, in spite of my puberty. She was clearly perplexed and worried, her concern often manifesting itself as anger. I wasn't 'normal', I was awkward and, as my ambiguous appearance began to provoke comments, her response was that I invited such remarks. Mom couldn't understand why I was so unfeminine, hating women's clothes, walking like a man, and wanting a man's job. It seemed as if she and my father regarded my behavior as being deliberate, that I was trying to be awkward. One day she blurted out that she had once asked the doctor if I were changing sex. I wondered at the time if that were an attempt to frighten me into femininity.
>
> Doubtless Dad would have been aware of all the upheaval, but his shore leaves were short and infrequent. I never really knew what he felt, but it saddened me terribly that my parents had to put up with me as I was, that I wasn't a successful young man, of whom they could be proud. I wasn't able to convince them that it wasn't 'cussedness' which drove me, but something which was natural behavior to me. My mother often accused me of stubbornness-in many areas of my life- and mentioned to Miss Coward that I was so. 'Not stubborn, Mrs Rees, but determined' (Rees, 1996, 14-15).

Even after surgery, the authors are still living in what are substantially the same bodies, but the *meaning* which attaches to these altered bodies is quite different. Before celebrating their new embodiment, the pain associated with the old may need to be addressed, and the autobiographies may provide such a vehicle.

3.1.7 As Titillation:

Some provide titillation: They attempt to shock by telling of sexual prowess and/or name-dropping. Two antipodean books contain make references intended to shock, rather than mounting a case for inclusion within "the ordinary". Carmen's "*Carmen, My Life*" published in NZ in 1988 , and Carlotta's "*Carlotta: He Did It Her Way: Legend of Les Girls*" (1994), published in Sydney. Both books are written, with the help of ghost writers, by transsexuals who have enjoyed a high public profile as showgirls. Both books boast of sexual prowess and outrageous behaviour, often lapsing into parody. Many public figures are named in both books, although few details of the association with the authors are given. When Carmen hinted that s/he had knowledge of some sexual irregularities of New Zealand parliamentarians, s/he was summoned to appear before the Parliamentary Privileges Committee, but no sanction was imposed upon hir. Carmen devotes a chapter to a peripheral discussion of this incident (1988, 175-181) but no substantial indiscretion by any parliamentarian is revealed.

3.1.8 For Publicity:

Some are written to publicise the authors' activities in show-business. The same two authors above used many other forms of publicity to further their stage careers and, no doubt, the autobiographies added to their already notorious lifestyles. Christine Jorgensen's and Hedy-Jo Star's careers would probably have been enhanced

by the publication of their stories as well. Carmen's appearance before parliament generated much public interest:

> And there they all were, my fans and supporters, my adoring Wellington public, plus no doubt a few of the timid curious types you find at any free show. . . The media were present in force, all the radio, TV and newspaper people. . . I tried to take it all in. I gave the photographers the poses they wanted. I waved to workers who had greeted me so wonderfully and out of the corners of my eyes I noted that at every window of Parliament House people seemed to be either gawking down at me or were pretending to be cleaning their windowsills (Carmen, 1988, 177).

Other autobiographers, such as Caroline Cossey would have preferred to remain anonymous, and their narratives only appeared *after* their exposure in the press.

3.1.9 As Rebuttal:

Several are framed as a rebuttal to (mis)representation in the media, often addressing a now long silent accuser. Christine Jorgensen's "*Personal Autobiography*" (1968) appears to be largely a response to publicity that would have dogged her since the news of her transformation broke 15 years before. Without access to the original publications, it is often difficult to follow many of the possible slights that she is addressing. This leads to some bizarre counter claims that seem to have little to do with the transsexual condition:

> I had never worn, or wanted to wear, feminine clothing while I retained evidence of my masculinity. Although I was entitled in the eyes of the medical experts, I didn't

> wear female clothing until my legal status as a woman was established on my passport, approved by the United States State Department. I merely wanted to correct a misjudgment of Nature, so that I might physically and legally become the person I felt I was intended to be (Jorgensen, 1968, 173).

She might have been trying to counter accusations of being a misguided transvestite, but such avoidance of cross dressing would run counter to the current model of real life tests.

Caroline Cossey has written two books, "*Tula, I Am a Woman*" (1982) and "*My Story*" (1991). In both cases, this has been her response to being exposed by the British tabloid press. The first exposure ruined her career as a model, the second outing led to the annulment of her marriage. Her self-exposure in these books had been forced upon her:

> As time has gone by and I have become accustomed to interviews, articles and public curiosity, I have grown to accept the idea that my transsexuality does fascinate some people. But at that time I was in no way prepared for exposure. It should have been my choice to discuss my sexuality when and if I felt ready to do so. The News of the World had taken that choice away from me. I felt raped, and was overwhelmed by fears and feelings that I hadn't experienced for years - an awareness that I was different, a freak, someone who could never hope to lead any kind of normal life. My long struggle to achieve normality and acceptability seemed to have been for nothing (Cossey, 1991, 132).

3.1.10 As an Open Letter:

They may serve as an open letter to family members who have refused to communicate since the transsexuals transition. Katherine Cummings "*Katherine's Diary*" (1993) ends abruptly after she describes the pain of her divorce and the somewhat farcical church annulment that followed. Katherine says that neither her former wife, or one of her two daughters will communicate with her, and the latter part of the book contains statements which apparently could not have been communicated to the ex-wife in any other way:

> I spent a long time hoping that Diana would realise my love for her was unchanged and that I did what I did from desperation and despair. I spent even longer moving back step by step to my offer of a total return to life as a man, only to find that Diana was no longer interested. Presumably by then she had established a relationship with her current paramour. If she chooses to throw in her lot with another there is nothing I can do to prevent it but I will not allow her pious but immoral suitor to trample on my memories with impunity. Nor will I step aside gracefully to conform with his primitive superstitions. I will probably lose but I will not surrender. I will not allow myself, like the victims of 1984, to be made into an unperson (Cummings, 1993, 230-231).

3.1.11 For Fund-Raising:

They may be part of a fund-raising venture to pay for surgery. Paul Hewitt's book, "*A Self-Made Man: The Diary of a Man Trapped in a Woman's Body*" (1995) is part of his efforts to obtain money for his mastectomy, which he eventually obtained by travelling to Belgium, after the British health authorities frustrated his attempts to obtain surgery on the National Health system.

Julia Grant's "*Just Julia*" (1994) flows on from a series of television documentaries, including a mini-series showing her surgery. The television production company funded the surgery.

3.1.12 As Adventure:

They may have elements of a ripping good yarn. Whilst I do not wish to trivialise the pain that Jan Morris must have suffered as a transsexual, if ever a "Boy's Own" adventure on a "change of sex" were to be written, this is the autobiography that it would probably resemble most closely:

> The time had come, I thought, to move a stage further. I had reached the frontier between the sexes, and it was time for me tentatively to explore life on the far side (Morris, 1974, 109).

Her comparison of her sense of re-embodiment with that of her participation in the successful 1953 Everest expedition is rather different from the everyday experience of engenderment:

> Now when I looked down at myself I no longer seemed a hybrid or chimera: I was all of a piece, as proportioned once again, though in a different kind, as I had been so exuberantly on Everest long before. Then I had felt lean and muscular: now I felt deliciously *clean*. The protuberance I had grown to detest had been scoured from me. I was made, by my own lights, normal (Morris, 1974, 131, *emphasis in original*).
>
> Had it perhaps all been worth while, now to be entering, forty-five years old, a new and spring-like adventure such as few people had ever known? Thirty-five years as a male, I thought, ten in between, and the rest of my life as me. I liked the shape of it (Morris, 1974, 136).

Although Morris did not need to exercise the same degree of agency as some of the other narrators because of her relatively priviledged position, she reflects on the lengths that she might have been prepared to go to, in order to obtain transformation:

> It is only in writing this book that I have delved so deeply into my own emotions. Yet nothing I have discovered there had shaken my conviction, and if I were trapped in that cage again nothing would keep me from my goal, however fearful its prospects, however hopeless the odds. I would search the earth for surgeons, I would bribe barbers or abortionists, I would take a knife and do it myself, without fear, without qualms, without a second thought (Morris, 1974, 155).

Needless to say, some of the female-to-male stories do read like a "Boy's Own" adventure, because they are just that. Even before commencing testosterone, Paul Hewitt manfully rose to the challenge ahead:

> Now I must transform the body I have so it fits as closely as possible my image of myself. I have not yet had the benefit of male hormones, but allready my transformation has begun. Paul the warrior, Paul the brave, Paul the passion, Paul the power. I cannot tire of hearing my own name. Martine feels like a stranger now. Nothing I have been taught has prepared me for this unique path. I have only my gut instincts to rely upon. This is a journey into the unknown (1996, 43).

After completion of his surgery, Raymond Thompson claimed *agency* in the process of occupying gendered space as a man:

> I would have to build the physical foundations that I should have built in childhood and adolescence. All the

> things that I yearned to do as a young man - boxing, swimming and playing contact sports - would have given me the confidence in my physical abilities, but now I had to start from scratch. I needed to know that my body was working for me, not against me as it had always done (1995, 310).

Both of the statements by Hewitt and Thompson express a notion that they have taken an active part in negotiating their passage into manhood. These statements should counter the dismissal of female-to-males by Raymond as "tokens", who are "assimilated into the transsexual empire in much the same way that women are assimilated into other male-defined realities - on men's terms" (1979, xxi). Raymond's objection is only sustainable if one discounts all such declarations by transsexuals as lacking objectivity. Furthermore, if one accepts, *prima facie*, that female-to-males *are* gendered male, then they *are* being "assimilated . . on men's terms", that is, they are becoming their "own" men.

3.1.13 As Rite-of-Passage:

The story-telling may be part of the transsexual rite of passage - an announcement that the transsexual has arrived in the gendered landscape. There are many announcements of passage in the texts:

> Even on my worst days - tired, lonely, sick, scared - I look at myself in the mirror, and I am happy. I now see in that reflection a mirror image of the person that I have always been, no longer distorted by the flickering candle-heat of society or the crazy lens of masculinity. For better or for worse, at last I am me, a woman, an honest person. By right of suffering and endurance and the Circuit Court of Cook County, I am Nancy. (Hunt, 1978, 263).

> I found the oldest gift of heaven - to be myself (Jorgensen, 1968, 332).
>
> I am no longer a man searching for himself. My search ended in finding that man I always knew myself to be. And so it is that I presume to qualify the theory: Anatomy is destiny (Martino, 1977, 271).
>
> In my lives, I've crossed the unknown, that mystical world in abstract creation, the void between masculine and feminine - a place I call hell - and I've managed to maintain myself. I created, I create, I shall create. I believe I've truly travelled the greatest voyage and lived to tell about it (Conn, 1974, 335).
>
> My childhood dream of waking up, transformed painlessly and instantly into a boy, had been replaced by a long rocky road, but a road leading to the same conclusion (Thompson, 1995, 309).

Even when his transition is only partially complete, Paul Hewitt can pronounce his arrival in his gendered space, and reflect on the price that he paid to get there:

> Life is treating me very well now, thank you. I've sweated for it, I've cried for it, I've even prayed for it. And now its almost here. I sit just one large willy away from paradise.... This is not the end, it is just the beginning (Hewitt, 1996, 303).

While Western society does not have the same formal ceremonies[7] marking a passage into gendered adulthood that many indigenous cultures have practiced, it does not mean that there is no border to adult sex/genderal legitimacy. The sexual and genderal expression of children, the very old and the disabled are constrained and

[7]Except in vestigial form as 21st birthday celebrations, the legal status of "age of consent", and the notion of "becoming a woman" at the onset of menstruation (or perhaps when losing one's virginity).

their legitimacy as sexual/genderal agents is policed to serve similar ends to that applied to transsexuals. The naive occupation of gendered space *demands* a distinction between "ordinary" and "non-ordinary" sexual/genderal attributes and performance. The rite-of-passage declarations articulated by many of the transsexual authors seems to address either an actual past challenge to their gender-legitimacy, or an expression of an internal self-policing of the sex/gender border. The authors would have to have had a notion that at one time in their past they were outside the borders of sex/gender legitimacy before they would have a necessity to declare their "arrival". The consequences of public disclosure could be severe and the need to generate such a declaration would need to be compelling, to take the risk of undermining their recently acquired, relatively precarious "faux-innocent" occupation of their new social engenderment.

3.2 Connections Between the Narrators

The early transsexuals faced a lonely gender-landscape and were ill-informed as to how to traverse it. With the growth of the internet and the partial de-pathologisation of the transsexual condition, there is an active sense of "community" amongst transsexuals, and access to information on the condition is readily obtainable, even if the veracity of some of the material is sometimes questionable. For the early transsexual authors, their only visible "peers" were usually members of the gay/lesbian communities. However, the reception of these early transsexuals by these "gay" groups was mixed, and the disparity between their identities meant that few insights into the transsexual "condition" could be gained from such encounters. Nevertheless, some of the early authors did meet, or had at least heard of other transsexuals. Often knowledge that they were not alone lifted their despair and provided them with

confidence and the knowledge that hormonal/surgical transformation was possible.

3.2.1 Cowell/Dillon

In the early 1950s Roberta Cowell read Michael Dillon's book "Self" (1946) and made contact with him, even though he did not identify himself as a female-to-male transsexual in his work on sex/gender theory. The couple had a largely one-sided relationship for some time: Michael was smitten by Roberta, but s/he was lukewarm towards him.

3.2.2 Jorgensen/Hunt/Various

Many of the middle-period authors were alerted to the nature of, and solution to, their condition by the publicity surrounding Christine Jorgensen's "sex-change" and she and the Danish doctors involved in her transformation were deluged with hundreds of pleading letters, seeking information and support:

> No news event has ever shaken me like the Christine Jorgensen story. Other transsexuals were similarly affected, I later learned. The poor woman was inundated with desperate letters But there was still no practical help for any of us (Hunt, 1978, 75).

Despite the publicity surrounding Christine Jorgensen being generated within the USA, about a transsexual who happened to be a US citizen, there were probably no transformations of this type[8] being performed within the USA at the time (even the Danish government banned treatment of foreign transsexuals after the Jorgensen case). Thus, the effect of the publicity about Christine's "sex-change" would have been both the agent of enlightenment and of frustration for her American peers.

[8]Genital surgery on intersexed people was available.

3.2.3 Martino/Jorgensen

Mario Martino was one of the many transsexuals for whom Jorgensen's story proved enlightening for their own condition. Mario, a female-to-male transsexual, was able to synthesise the story about the male-to-female transformation of Christine so as to apply the concept as a solution to hir own gender-anguish (1974, 162).

3.2.4 Turtle/Jorgensen

Georgina Turtle read the story of Christine Jorgensen with horror, fearing that the publicity surrounding Christine's transformation would undermine what she felt was her more "legitimate" claim to being a "real" woman, as distinct from a transsexual[9]. Both of these authors' make claims to be intersexed, rather than transsexual, and Turtle's hostility may reflect the prevailing attitudes to sexual/genderal legitimacy in the UK in the 1960s (Turtle was one of the last UK-born authors to succeed in having her birth-certificate altered from male to female, before the *Corbett vs Corbett* judgement made such amendments impossible).

3.2.5 Rupe/Jorgensen

Prior to hearing about Christine Jorgensen, Carmen Rupe had grounded hir "female" gender identity in the unrealism of wanting to be a nun (it is not clear why Carmen thought that aspiring to be a nun would have any more prospect of success than the broader category of "woman"). Perhaps the "extra-ordinariness" of the nuns matched Carmen's "extra-ordinary"expectations about hir engenderment:

> When I was at primary school the nuns at the nearby Taumaranui Convent fascinated me. . . . One day,

[9] I discuss the claims of the early authors to being "intersexed" at 4.5 on page 212.

> as Mother and I were walking past their school yard, I turned to her and said, "That's what I want to be when I grow up, Mum!"
>
> "What's that Trevor?" she questioned.
>
> "I'm going to be a nun".
>
> "But Trevor, boys can't be nuns".
>
> I knew then that I would have to try some other way to join the opposite sex (Carmen, 1989, 29).

The publicity generated by Christine Jorgensen brought to Carmen a prospect of a genderal "reality" which had previously been unimaginable:

> Christine Jorgensen was making headlines then as the first public sex-change star and my mind was a whirl. No need to be a nun, now I could really become a woman. (Carmen, 1989, 40).

3.2.6 Ashley/Coccinelle

April Ashley worked at the same Paris nightclub as Coccinelle and managed, with some difficulty, to obtain the name of Coccinelle's surgeon in Casablanca (in the early 1960s, information on surgeons who were prepared to do this type of work was not readily available).

3.2.7 Morris/Elbe

Jan Morris gained an insight into hir condition from reading Hoyer's 1932 account of Lili Elbe's transformation, "Man into Woman", although s/he had a fascination with mythological accounts of sexual fluidity beforehand. Subsequently, Morris' book was widely read, and like Christine Jorgensen, Jan received many letters of enquiry from her transsexual peers.

3.2.8 Hunt/Morris

Nancy Hunt wrote to Jan Morris shortly after publication of her book, "Conundrum" (1974) seeking advice and support, but did not receive a reply.

3.2.9 Johnson/Brown

Chris Johnson and Cathy Brown met each other prior to their transformation. Even though they were not yet fully capable of articulating their transsexuality, they both recognised that they had an unusual hold on engenderment. They married, and had a child before both embarking on transformation of their sexual embodiment.

3.2.10 Rees/Turtle

Mark Rees wrote to Georgina Turtle following reading the publicity surrounding the latter's transformation while Mark was hospitalised for his "homosexuality". Georgina's reply was not encouraging, and perhaps as a result, Mark delayed seeking effective psycho-medical assistance for almost a decade. As with Mario Martino, Mark was able to abstract the *male-to-female* account to apply to his own female-to-male anguish, despite the discouragement that he subsequently received:

> Another patient lent me a copy of the News of the World and thus enabled me to discover that I wasn't unique. In that issue, Georgina Turtle, formerly George, had written her life story. With changed gender pronouns, it could have described how I felt. It was wonderful to learn that I was not unique but the article was of little help otherwise (Rees, 1996, 35).

3.2.11 O'Keefe/Ashley

While in hospital, following a suicide attempt, Traci O'Keefe read the story of April Ashley and cause of hir own despair was instantly recognisable: "Stunned into silence once again, it was the first time I had realised there just might possibly be a life beyond the nightmare of living in someone else's body" (O'Keefe & Fox, 1996, xxv). Having gained an insight that transformation of sexual embodiment was possible, s/he was thenceforth committed to seeking this solution to her gender anguish.

3.2.12 Rutherford/Jorgensen/Cowell

Erica Rutherford was misled by the protestations of "intersexuality" made by two early authors, Christine Jorgensen and Roberta Cowell and assumed that whatever was causing hir own gender-anguish, it was substantially different to these authors. Unlike some of the other narrators, Rutherford did not gain enlightenment about hir condition from the early publicity about transsexuality:

> I read newspaper accounts of Roberta Cowell in England, and Christine Jorgensen in the United States. I even read Cowell's book, but it revealed little information that could help anyone else. In both cases I was left with the impression that the writers were physically ambiguous and their situation did not apply to mine (Rutherford, 1993, x)

3.2.13 McCloskey/Cummings

Deidre McCloskey and Katherine Cummings were friends from the time that Katherine spent working in the USA. Deidre selected the same Australian surgeon as Katherine had used almost a decade previously and received support from Katherine around the time of her surgery.

3.3 Statistics of the Autobiographers

While the sample size of 64 narratives, spread over seventy years, is probably too small to draw any meaningful conclusions about the lived experience of transsexuality, the wide range of *social* environments into which these narrators were born support my belief that transsexuality is *not* "caused" by a social pathology. When considering *what* these "statistics" represent, I am aware that the personal profiles of the transsexuals who actually publish their stories may reflect only a small sub-set of the wider transsexual population. Nevertheless, *if* they are staking a similar claim to the "legitimate" occupation of the same part of the gendered landscape as the non-transsexed, then that discourse of legitimation might still be representative. In other words, even if only a select few transsexuals write their histories, because the "terms-of-occupation" of gender are set by the non-transsexed, the process by which all the genderally marginalised negotiate this environment may be comparable.

3.3.1 Geographic Location

The geographic location of the authors included in my study is limited by my own criteria, which only includes biographic material published in English. Notwithstanding this limitation, a hypothetical, "cross-cultural" representation of what Western society regards as "transsexual", even if it was based on all available publications of transsexuals world-wide (and in other languages) would still be skewed because:

- The notion of the gender-dysphoric *individual* would be different (or perhaps absent) in non-western cultures;
- Access to surgical/hormonal transformation is relatively expensive, and usually subject to some sort of culturally-based

constraint to availability. Not all proto-transsexuals could afford to avail themselves of such transformative services, and there may be strong social sanctions preventing them either pursuing re-embodiment, or legitimising their new engenderment;

- Even where a non-western transsexual did achieve re-embodiment, they may not to be able to publish their stories, because of social sanctions or because of the difficulty in expressing the notion of gender-legitimacy within their own social and linguistic framework (this "project" was difficult enough for the early western biographers, see 4.4 on page 210).

The geographic distribution of published works in English is as follows:

New Zealand, 4
Australia 4
United Kingdom 7
USA 43
Canada 4
France 1
Germany1

These numbers neither reflect the proportions of transsexuals within each country, nor of the effect that that these publications have had within a western transsexual discourse. While I am confident that I have located *almost* all available publications, the accessibility of these works to a New Zealand-based researcher varied. Only one of the Canadian works was mentioned briefly by a US-based author[10]. The existence of the other three only became apparent when I enquired about them from within Canada. New Zealand is, on a population basis, over-represented in the proportion of published autobiographies, however, it should be noted that

[10]Erica Rutherford's "Nine Lives"(1993) is mentioned by Jay Prosser (1998, 108-9), but he does not identify her as Canadian.

two of these works were self-published[11], and the other two stories were about transsexuals who already had a substantial public profile within New Zealand[12]. None of the NZ publications were ever cited by overseas transsexual writers. Only one of the Australian writers, Katherine Cummings, was cited outside[13], but she had spent a substantial part of her adult life in USA and established contacts within the transsexual community there. Many of the UK authors[14] address the problem of their government's non-recognition of their changed sex/gender status[15] and it is unlikely that several of the UK stories would have been written, if the authors did not encounter such difficulties[16]. All of the works which are of suspect veracity were published in the USA[17].

3.3.2 Family

The family background of the authors varied from dysfunctional (Ashley, Grant and Morgan [all fathers violent and alcoholic, raised by mothers]); to professional (Richards [both parents doctors], Cowell [father military doctor] McCloskey [father academic]); to aristoc-

[11]Adrianne Clarke (Holland, 1992) and Denise Tilling (1997).

[12]Both Carmen Rupe and Georgina Beyer had a relatively high public profile as "entertainers" and both had contested elections (Carmen unsuccessfully ran for the Wellington Mayoralty in 1977 and Georgina Beyer was Mayor of Carterton at the time of publication of her story (1999)).

[13]Her autobiography has been reviewed by Jay Prosser (1998, 86-88), and her long-standing friendship with Deidre McCloskey is mentioned in the latter's autobiography (1999, 195-96).

[14]Ashley, Cossey, Rees, Lloyd, Thompson, Hewitt. Turtle, who had her birth certificate changed before the *Corbett vs. Corbett* judgement, uses the difference in her status as part of her argument for genderal legitimacy

[15]Since the *Corbett vs. Corbett* judgement in 1970, the United Kingdom still refuses to alter the birth certificates of surgically- transformed transsexuals. They are unable to marry in their achieved sex and several have had their marriages annulled (April Ashley, and Caroline Cossey).

[16]April Ashley's divorce/annulment (*Corbett vs. Corbett* 1968-70) was a high-profile trial, which formed the present-day UK policy towards transsexual's legal status. Caroline Cossey and Mark Rees both (unsuccessfully) sought to have their government's policy overturned by the European Commission.

[17]McClain, Fontaine, Morgan.

racy (Dillon).

Prior to their transition, only two of the female-to-males married men and had given birth to children (Petric Smith and Peter Stirling) Chris Johnson married a non-transsexual male, but remained childless until s/he re-married hir male-to-female partner (Cathy Brown) and they had one child prior to bodily transformation (while they still remained fertile in their birthsexes). Patrick Califia's partner, Matt Rice, who is also female-to-male, gave birth to a child *after* his transformation (mastectomy and hormone treatment). Many of the male-to-females married women and some fathered children (Cowell, Morris, Fry, Conn, Hunt, Richards, Lloyd, Castle, Rutherford, Cummings, Bornstein, Rothblatt, Spry, Tilling, Kane, McCloskey, Perkins).

3.3.3 Education

The schooling system is often an unhealthy place for the gender dysphoric. Some of the authors felt uncomfortable with the gender-conditioning they experienced at school, or faced taunting as a result of their gender-expression being at variance with their embodiment (Jorgensen, Fry, Martino, Hunt, Conn, Ashley, Cossey, Clarke, Rees, Thompson, Nettick, Spry, Tilling). Others sought to cope with their gender anguish through academic over-achievement. Educational attainment by the authors varied from no scholastic certificates (Ashley, Grant, Morgan, Thompson) through to that of a medical doctor (Richards) and PhD level (McCloskey).

Chapter 4

The Narratives

While the motivation for writing the stories varied between authors[1], the understanding of sex and gender at time of writing also affected the way the stories were presented.

4.1 The Historical Development of a Transsexual Narrative

The first documented account of surgical transformation of a transsexual was published in 1932 (Hoyer). The portrayal of the medical professional involved, The Professor, is that of a largely benevolent, but completely over-bearing, miracle-worker, or medical adventurer. The patient, Lili Elbe, is his creation, his child, and she submits herself to him completely:

> By a single glance the Professor awoke her heart to life, a life with all the instincts of a woman (Hoyer, 1932, 165).
>
> There could be no past for her. Everything in the past belonged to a person who had vanished, who was dead. . . Now there was a perfectly humble woman, who was

[1]See 3.1 on page 155.

> willing to obey, who was happy to submit herself to the will of another (Hoyer, 1932, 170).

Lili's transformation is described as a "special case", with no immediate prospect of being repeated. Furthermore, the author makes a rather dubious claim of intersexuality to justify her transformation: If Lili was "untidy" before the intervention, then surgery could restore the "natural" order of things. Therefore, Lili is a curiosity, not a threat to the existing sex/gender order: an heroic participant in a scientific experiment.

News of Christine Jorgensen's transformation broke in 1952, and although she was by no means the first post-operative transsexual, her story received intense coverage. There was no clear distinction made between sex and gender at the time, and the disparity between Jorgensen's explanation of her condition, and that of the physicians responsible for her treatment is as wide as conceivably possible. Christine, like many of her contemporaries, borrowed the explanation of "intersexuality":

> I was an individual belonging to the highest degree of intersexuality; male organs in a female body (Jorgensen, 1968, 173).

Christian Hamburger and Georg Sturup, Jorgensen's doctor and psychiatrist, on the other hand, considered that Christine was a repressed homosexual and a transvestite. Hamburger performed surgery on Jorgensen to give her the external genital appearance of a woman, but he refused to construct a vagina, on the grounds that by doing so, he would be legitimising homosexuality. The Danish team pathologised Jorgensen's mind, and granted her little more than a skin-deep transvestism.

Jorgensen had her initial transformation too early to engage in the modern transsexual discourse prior to surgery. She was, in all

probability, neither an intersexual, a transvestite, nor a homosexual. Twenty years later, she may well have discovered, and embraced, transsexual essentialism (see 5.2 on page 242).

The granting of specific recognition of transsexuality as a disorder in DSM-111 of 1980 was the successor to Hamburger's attitude that transsexuals were either transvestites who were not satisfied with cross dressing, or that they were homosexuals in deep denial who chose a particularly insidious way of circumventing the taboos surrounding same-sex intercourse. Sandra Bem notes:

> Ironically, this first official pathologising of gender identity disorders appeared in the same DSM in which, for the first time in psychiatric history, there was no official pathologising of homosexuality. Perhaps this was no coincidence. Perhaps the psychiatric establishment still believed so completely in the pathology of gender nonconformity that if the politics of the times would not allow it to express that belief through homosexuality, then it would instead express it where and how it could (Bem, 1993,106-107).

4.2 The Nature and Reliability of Transsexual Autobiographies

Autobiographies, of whatever sub-genre, are of limited veracity: Their inherent subjectivity limits their usefulness to academic study. There are also some limitations that seem almost specific to the transsexual autobiographic sub-genre:

4.2.1 Anonymity

Some of the authors wish to remain anonymous, or to protect family or friends, so their accounts are modified to avoid identification.

4.2.2 The Nature of the Transsexual Condition

Unless the separate concepts of sexual embodiment, gender role and gender identity are unpacked, the transsexual "condition", particularly in the pre-transition, pre-operative state, could be seen as an embodied "lie":

> I didn't want to pretend; I wanted to be. And there lay the heart of my dilemma: I could no longer endure pretending to be something I was not. Deceit is a tiring occupation, and despite all biological evidence to the contrary, despite my military record and my Yale degree, despite my swearing and my mustache, I knew my masculinity was fraudulent. If I were ever to make peace with myself, I would have to confront not the hairy, balding, tweed-clad facade that I presented to the world, but the person who lived inside - myself, Nancy, a woman (Hunt, 1978, 262).

When viewed from a standpoint of the seamless "naturalness" of the everyday construction of sex/gender, a person claiming to be a woman (man) trapped in a man's (woman's) body may *appear* to be either "lying", or mentally ill. The autobiographical discourse on transsexuality gives primacy to gender identity over physical embodiment to assert that this contradiction between mind and body *can* be a painful "reality". This allows their conviction that core gender identity is the "self", to be redeemed through hormones/surgery to appear, by these lights, to be a "rational" decision.

While Garfinkel's schema for gender (1967, 122-128) will accommodate many variants of "normal" gender *expression*, there is no legitimate place for the transsexual condition[2]. As this schema

[2]There may be, however, provision for transvestism: Apparently, gender transgression is acceptable in this model if it is temporary and is not taken se-

only allows for two gendered states, the transsexual is denied the possibility of any "gender" *outside* the dichotomy, and they are forced to have a "legitimated" gender *within* the dichotomy (which cannot be other than the one appropriate to their birthsex). Therefore, the only way that the transsexual claim of "being trapped in the wrong body" can be sustained within this model of engenderment is *as if it were a lie.*

4.2.3 Legitimisation

There is usually a large investment in a transsexual establishing and legitimising their achieved sex/gender in an often hostile landscape, so some of them may be reluctant to disclose information which would undermine their claims to legitimacy as re-embodied women/men. Although there may be several methods of reinforcing a legitimate, re-constructed sex/gender, one of the simplest, and most frequently used, is to claim that the transsexual was "really" a woman/man all along[3]. This claim may be sustained by suppressing any hint that they owned, or were in any way comfortable with any aspect of their birthsex[4]. Many of the autobiographies have silences which may point to some ambivalence about their former embodiment. Raymond Thompson is resolute in denying any ownership of womanhood. He is unable to refer to, or to own, the bodily changes to his female body at puberty or to menstruation directly:

---

riously. Society "insists that such transfers be accompanied by the well-known controls that accompany masquerading, play-acting, party behaviour, convention behaviour, spying and the like" (Garfinkel, 1967, 125).

[3]This approach also introduces an element of "objectivity" into their claims: that they were absolutely alienated/lost/repelled by their birthsex. The alternative, "qualitative" approach, that is, to argue that, on balance, the TS leads a healthier/richer/more productive life in their acquired sex/gender appears to be "subjective" and less easy to defend. The *justification* for the evoking of "objective" medical science may need to be articulated as also being "objective" in form.

[4]There are exceptions: eg, Morris, Martino, Rees, Valerio, Rothblatt, and Bornstein.

> As I was getting into adolescence, the feelings of discomfort intensified. Because my body was becoming more and more alien to me as I developed, there was an urge to rip off my own skin, for lack of better description. The frustration and anxiety were tearing me to bits. I couldn't stand what was happening to me. . . . The other aspect of puberty, the word for which I cannot bear to mention in relation to myself, also started. I coped with it by blocking it off from my mind, and dealing with it in a mechanical, unconscious way. . . . Strangely enough, as these changes in my body made me feel uncomfortable in the extreme and very embarrassed, I didn't feel that they were a reflection on my maleness. I felt I wasn't responsible for them. I wasn't supposed to be there, in that body, so it wasn't my fault (Thompson, 1995, 55).

4.2.4 Lying as History

My repeated use of the term "lying" in the following section is not meant to be wholly derogatory. As transsexuals' experiences of sex/gender are often outside the articulated "normal" construction of sex/gender, there is often no easy, *truthful* way of expressing their conviction of being within "normal" (if trans-located) gendered space. If the *terms* of occupying sex/gender are "natural" and therefore not requiring an explanation, or at most, only a simple explanation; then there is no *truthful* way of presenting the transsexual condition. Transsexuals are often vulnerable to violence, ridicule and loss of employment, so a degree of deception may be necessary simply to acquire normal levels of personal security. "Lying" to psycho-medical gatekeepers could be seen as the transsexual evoking *agency* in order to negotiate an overly rigid and stereotypical sex/gender model. Therefore, the authors have usually come though a process where "lying", for a variety of reasons,

is commonplace.

4.2.4.1 Do They Lie to Themselves while in Denial?

Although the transsexual condition itself may appear to be a "lie" while the proto-transsexual is in total denial, because of the natural assumption that gender follows birthsex, the situation becomes reversed upon transition. When gender identity gains primacy, discordant gender role and sexual embodiment become the falsehood. Not only do transsexuals often describe their pre-transition state as living a lie, but many of them spend years denying their gender dysphoria to themselves:

> The transsexuals who deny their condition are not being true to themselves. This denial can take the form of aggressive masculinity or femininity and perhaps marriage, which usually breaks up, causing distress to spouse and children. If we get as far as acknowledging our condition, but cannot live in our rightful role, we despise not only ourselves but also the society which imprisons us in it. Countless transsexual people have referred to their pre-treatment state as living a lie. It is impossible to be truly ourselves while trapped in the wrong gender role (Rees, 1995, 179-180).

While in denial, they may marry, and adopt hyper-feminine or hyper-masculine gender-roles and occupations.* Paul Hewitt, a female-to-male, describes his attempt to act out a feminine role of a stripper:

> I have tried desperately hard in the past to accept my female body, even resorting to super-femininity in an effort to convince myself I was female (Hewitt, 1996, 69).
>
> The problem was that I was dressing my body, not me. Deep inside I felt no better than that awful sticky

Footnote *

Milton Diamond (1996, 61-82) describes this process as ``self-testing". Presumably, those who feel the need to adopt a ``hyper-gendered" role are addressing (and possibly testing) some sort of internal conflict over their engenderment, even if they cannot clearly identify it as such at the time.

> stuff you scrape off your shoe. I felt hollow and doomed. I was feeding off the compliments as a tapeworm feeds off its hosts, greedily, desperately and parasitically. I kept my red lipstick carefully outlined, worn as my painted-on smile. I had made myself, my body, into a diversion. While I flounced around, masquerading as a walking, talking, flirting feminine icon, no one would guess my real identity (Hewitt, 1996, 70-71).

4.2.4.2 Lying About Sexual Function

While pre-operative, transsexuals are effectively denied the opportunity to function as "normal" sexual agents. They face a dilemma of either being open about their compromised genitalia, and thereby having sex as "abnormal", or of pursuing a "normal", social relationship, but using *"the lie"* to avoid any sexual contact until after surgery:

> The relationship developed, and I could feel myself once again caught up in a web of deceit. As we saw more and more of each other, Claudio became increasingly amorous. He was never overbearing but naturally when he got close he would want to express his desire for me. I felt like a goalkeeper fending off the shots. . . I tried to stop seeing him. But he would become upset and bewildered, and I missed him terribly. Finally I told him that I was waiting for an operation, and was unable for the time being to make love. It was as close to the truth as I dared get. *There was no possibility of telling this man the whole truth* . . . I was playing a dangerous game. If I can just buy a little time I thought, I can get to Casablanca, have the operation, and then he never need know (Cossey, 1991, 87-88 *emphasis added*).

Transsexuals may need to "lie" to people around them subsequent to their self-identification as "transsexual", and often during transition, because the "truth" would place them *further* from their goal of "gender-in-the-ordinary". If their goal was, in fact, "the real", then such misrepresentations would be dishonest; they are not "real" women or men, in absolute terms. However, such deceptions can be a pragmatic way of attaining *terms-of-occupation* (i.e., as "ordinary") in their claimed gender which are similar to those of the non-transsexed.

Initially, a transsexual's circle of confidants may be quite small and, with hindsight, the unfolding "public" image of the author may appear to be one of conscious, deliberate "deception". Such "deceptions" involve (mis)representation of one's body and history as being something other than "the real". This process is often successful because the "ordinary" construction of gender *assumes* "the real", but does not demand ongoing verification of that reality.

4.2.4.3 Physical Deceptions

Physical aspects of "deception" involve *covering up* anomalous gender-markers: beards, penises, body-hair (MtoFs); concealing surgical work-in-progress on penile construction and binding of breasts (FtoMs):

> How I longed to be a guy who could walk about without a shirt and feel not shame, but pride, in showing off his body. Had society sanctioned women's doffing their clothing, I would still not have been happy with my female equipment (Martino, 1977, 44).

Physical attributes can be *added* as well. Some male-to-females enhance their often limited breast development with prostheses, or padding. Female-to-males often use some form of padding in their

underwear to simulate their missing, or underdeveloped phallus[5] (this is known as "packing").

4.2.4.4 Social Deceptions

Social "deceptions" may include reconstruction of work-history, social affiliations and education. Denial of a past work-history appropriate to the other sex/gender can lead to dislocation and demotion:

> They offered me my choice of two secretarial positions ... but the pay was terrible. ... it sounded unspeakably dreary. ... I found that there was a limit to what I would endure in my adopted sex. But with no admissible college record, employment history, or references, I could ask for nothing better. ... I would have to start at the bottom of the ladder, and at the age of forty-six, I would never get far above the first rung. Transsexuals routinely face this dilemma. With their surgery completed, just as they are adjusting to their new gender, they move to new towns, adopt new names, make new friends, start new careers (Hunt, 1978, 146).

4.2.4.5 Lying One's Way to Surgery, or Exercising Agency?

Transsexuals often appear to "lie" to psycho-medical professionals to gain approval for surgery[6]. The stories frequently recount

[5]While the degree of testosterone-induced clitoral enlargement varies widely, it would be most unlikely that clitoral enlargement alone could provide a convincing "bulge" in one's trousers. Of course, phalloplastic surgery would obviate the need for such packing.

[6]Stoller identifies "lying" as one of the three character manifestations of transsexuals (along with unreliability and inability to form lasting relationships). He claims that this goes further than falsification of personal history to obtain surgery, but to inconsequential fabrications unrelated to presenting as an acceptable transsexual . The "lying" does not usually concern their gender disorder or establishing their right to change sex. Instead, it will be on seemingly minor issues (1975, 110).

the difficulties faced in gaining approval from an almost exclusively male, relatively conservative, medical establishment. The transsexuals' agency in negotiating this obstacle includes presenting what appeared to be the diagnostically "correct" transsexual story prevailing at the time:

> It took a surprisingly long time - several years - for the researchers to realise that the reason the candidates behavioural profiles matched Benjamin's so well was that the candidates, too had read Benjamin's book[7], which passed from hand to hand within the transsexual community, and they were only too happy to provide the behaviour that led to acceptance for surgery (Stone, 1991, 291).

The apparent naivete of these doctors at this time suggests that they assumed that transsexuals were, as patients, powerless to the point where they *could not* exercise agency in re-working their narratives. However, the transsexuals often expressed *more agency* in defining the problem, and in controlling the discourse, than did the doctors involved:

> Transsexuals are a notoriously well-read population, primarily because their success in obtaining the medical treatments that they seek depends on their ability to convince doctors that their personal history matches the officially sanctioned etiology. In a context where telling the right story may confer legitimacy upon one's demand and the wrong story can foil one's chances for sex change, the

[7]Benjamin's book, "The Transsexual Phenomenon" (1966) was widely used as one of the standard references on transsexuality. The naivete of psychomedical professionals in not believing that TS had sufficient agency to also use this resource in constructing their stories, led, for some time, to Benjamin's work being lauded as a very useful *predictor* of the transsexual condition.

> autobiographies of those transsexuals who have successfully maneuvered within the strict protocols of the gender clinics constitute guide-books of no mean proportion (Hausman, 1995, 143).

Amongst the pre-operative transsexual community, the autobiographical guide-books served to counter the perceived "dishonesty" of the psycho-medical gatekeepers, in setting overly-rigid, stereotypical, and outdated criteria for the acceptable candidate for surgery. Jane Fry's story recounts how her repeated attempts to obtain treatment *as a transsexual* were misinterpreted as a mental illness:

> The minute that I mentioned to the doctor that I felt that I was female, it automatically was put down as a psychiatric problem. After that everything that was wrong was considered part of that. They didn't even have to look at me- it was all in the records (Fry & Bogdan, 1974, 121).

In a situation of relative powerlessness in the face of a conservative medical establishment, the only agency left to the transsexual candidate may be "the lie". However, because of the imbalance in power within this relationship, there was still the danger that the "lie" might prove to be counter-productive:

> During their long waiting period prior to surgery, many act out with suicidal gestures, aggressive behaviour and approaches to gender clinics under false names. This conduct invites a clinical appraisal of maladjustment and a prolongation of the waiting period, which in turn elicits further behaviour disturbances (Walters & Ross, 1986, 46).

The effects of these "lies" may remain as an artefact in the wider, post-operative, transsexual population, even long after need to "lie" to gain access to the means of personal transformation has passed. Furthermore, the accepted behaviour and appearance required by psycho-medical professionals may effectively *be* a "lie", that is, the standard woman (man) being sought may be a rigid, unrealistic, and outdated fabrication by an almost exclusively male establishment:

> I resented the need to take the test and I resented the need to hide my resentment or run the risk of being rejected as an unco-operative patient. I smiled politely and took the test. . . I suppressed my frustration and answered the questions as accurately as possible within their foolish constraints. When I protested at the stupidity of some of the statements and pre-World War II attitudes of others my criticisms were brushed aside (Cummings, 1993, 216).

4.2.4.6 Lying as a Counter to "The Unreal"

Often the clinicians are perceived by transsexual "patients" as basing their measure of what constitutes a woman (or a man) on sexual orientation, or on the superficialities of gender-role performance (GRB). This "unreal" filtering is seen as ludicrous by some transsexuals, who have probably concluded long before they sought treatment, that their dysphoria was not primarily centred on these aspects of *performative* gender (GRB). Carlotta found the "real-life" test to be alienating, inappropriate, and even funny:

> They made me go through a two-year period of psychological testing before they approved the operation. This was far worse than the surgery. Absolute crap. I found it all so antiquated, and really dirty. They were asking me

> the most repulsive questions. They put sensors on my head. and one on my weenie, and then they'd show me slides of nude women and men, and even some of dogs doing it to one another, to see if I had any reaction. I ended up ripping all the sensors off and storming out of the room. Eventually they made me attend a series of consultations with a clergyman, a couple of doctors and a social worker, and they told me to walk up and down in front of them. I was in drag so I paraded up and back, up and back, like some catwalk model, then I stopped and said, This is ridiculous, either I do it here or I go overseas and get it done there. Next minute the head doctor came in and said that he was going to do me next week (Carlotta, 1994, 67-68).

After two years of subjecting the patient to testing, predicated on her being the *passive* sufferer of gender dysphoria, it is curious that the gatekeeper capitulated when Carlotta articulated *agency* (by threatening to go overseas for surgery). It appears that the gatekeeping process focussed on sexual orientation, and the superficialities of gender-role play (GRB), so as a credibly reliable process of filtering out "unsuitable[8]" candidates for surgery, the two year ritual would have failed, as homosexual transvestites[9] would probably have passed the test (as described by Carlotta) with greater ease than "genuine" transsexuals.

Given the perception of disbelief by some transsexuals of the legitimacy of the gender model used by psycho-medical professionals, their trust in "professional judgement" would be undermined, and "lying" may be the only discourse which appears to offer the

[8]The definition of "suitability" for surgery, and the prospects of "success" afterwards is subjective, and the criteria are more often set by the gatekeepers than the "patient" (see my discussion of the "success" of the process at 7.2.2 on page 315).

[9]Ironically, transvestites are one of the groups that the screening process is *supposed* to filter out as "unsuitable" (DSM-IV, 302.85).

possibility of attaining their goal. Lewins calls this situation "gate keeping" and "game playing":

> Gatekeeping is the patterned perception by transsexuals that the Clinic controls their access to surgery. The consequence of this perception for some is that they feel they must present themselves so as to conform to an image Clinic staff consider appropriate. Appropriate characterises those responses and behaviour which are most conducive to gaining a recommendation for surgery. The other side of the coin is game playing, which is the contrived and artificial behaviour Clinic staff perceive among transsexuals, who behave that way because of their gate keeper image of the clinic (Lewins, 1995, 93).

The dynamics of the gatekeeper/patient relationship not only *fosters* dishonesty, it diminishes any prospect of "therapy". Transsexuals, who are presenting to a "professional" with a dual gatekeeper/therapist role, are frequently driven to misrepresent themselves:

> If [the doctor] thought you showed any sign of mental instability or immaturity, he would delay things for anything up to three years. Every transsexual has to go through this psychiatric procedure in order to get their letter of referral. Without it no surgeon in this country can operate. Consequently the possibility of establishing any atmosphere of trust within which serious counselling can take place is very limited. To me at the age of twenty this meeting with Dr R was just another hurdle I had to jump. I needed to convince him of my suitability for surgery. All the areas in my life that had caused me pain or bewilderment had to be suppressed. Any fears that I might have for my future were left unspoken. Dr R

> might be able to impress upon me that I could never become 100 per cent female. But what he couldn't do was prepare me for my life as a transsexual (Cossey, 1991, 89).

If psychiatrists acting as *gatekeepers*, are effectively disqualifying themselves as *therapists*, then their part in the process is questionable[10]. Perhaps "experts" in Drama, or a random selection of the "patient's" peers, might be more appropriate gatekeepers.

4.2.5 The "True" Transsexual?

Post-operative transsexuals have been *successful* in displaying the accepted version of the transsexual "condition". That is, the medical establishment has filtered out the otherwise gender-dysphoric individuals who do not conform to the notion of a stereotypical "female", or "male". Although I do not accept Raymond's sweeping claims that male-to-female transsexuals are moulded into a *parody* of femaleness by a *wholly* exploitative, patriarchal empire, many of the autobiographies recount a more subtle form of coercion to conform to a narrowly-defined concept of "femininity". There is some dispute whether successful male-to-female transsexuals *must* adopt a stereotypical form of hyper-femininity (Raymond, 1979, 91), to become "acceptable" to the (usually) male gatekeepers involved in gender reassignment (i.e., whether transsexuals must occupy a circumscribed gender space (GRB), or risk being excluded from the program). Some studies purport to show higher femininity scores for M-F transsexuals in psychological tests[11]. The

[10]As an *unqualified* peer-support contact for transsexuals over the past five years, I have listened (with some alarm) as several of my contacts discussed serious personal concerns with me, which they felt unable to raise with their psycho-medical gatekeepers, in case these matters jeopardised their prospects of obtaining approval for surgery.

[11]For example, see Burnard and Ross, 1986, 62.

validity, or even the relevance of these tests, when applied to transsexuals, is questionable. Bolin reports that:

> Individuals who are selected out of programs because they do not score highly on femininity indices are eliminated from the data on transsexuals, although they may in fact be transsexuals. Thus, the evidence that transsexuals are more feminine than genetic women denies the variation in the transsexual population because of bias in the process that selects for surgery the hyperfeminine transsexuals or those savvy enough to score femininely on identity indices (1988, 109).

4.2.5.1 The "Lying" Continues after Surgery!

Often after surgery, transsexuals may still need to "lie" to survive. Bornstein claims that this "lying" is encouraged by therapists as part of the social normalisation:

> Once we get to the doctor, we're told we'll be cured if we become members of one gender or another. We're told not to divulge our transsexual status, except in select cases requiring intimacy. Isn't it amazing? Transsexuals presenting themselves for therapy in this culture are channeled through a system which labels them as having a disease (transsexuality) for which the therapy is to lie, hide, or otherwise remain silent (Bornstein, 1995, 62).

Deception can exact a toll on personal integrity that may be almost as oppressive as the original reason for the fabrication (the now-resolved, "gender-dysphoria"). Bornstein points to the dilemma of forgoing personal history in order to pass as "ordinary":

> Passing emphatically equals membership, and passing includes all the privileges of gender membership. There

> is most certainly a privilege to having a gender. Just ask someone who doesn't have a gender, or who doesn't pass. When you have a gender . . . You know what clothes to wear. You have heroes and role models. You have a past. . . Transgendered people, particularly post-operative transsexuals, are not allowed any history beyond their current gender - were not supposed to reveal our transgender status or our other-gendered past. Denied the opportunity to speak our stories, transsexuals are denied the joy of our histories (Bornstein, 1995, 127).

Whether this chronic state of "deception" over perhaps 20, 30, 40, or more years can ever be fully transcended is unclear. Perhaps some of the autobiographies represent a catharsis of a dishonest past, and thereby achieve a new level of "reality", or perhaps the long-practiced habit of misrepresentation cannot be broken, even after the need to do so no longer exists. It may be that just as the narrators have had to think deeply about the social consequences of "sex" and "gender" to be able negotiate the normal construct (which denies their legitimate existence), their *pragmatic* use of "lying" in a system which denies them agency and honesty may help them be scrupulously truthful. Some autobiographers claim that their transformation has made them honest, at least in the terms under which they are admitted into gendered space:

> The truth was that the world was accepting me far more readily as a woman than as a man, and this despite four decades and more of the most arduous exertion to establish my male self (Hunt, 1978, 134).

4.2.6 Post-Surgical Elation?

Most of the autobiographies were written fairly soon after surgery, so the accounts of occupation of their achieved sex/gender may be

tinged with transitory elation. Even if the autobiographers were capable of making a sober assessment of their new occupation of gendered space, they would not have had time to acquire a substantial personal history of being re-embodied (nor would much time have passed from when they were a "patient", and granted only limited agency while they were awaiting approval for SRS by the psycho-medical gatekeepers).

Many of the transsexual histories appear to be the end-point in a rite-of-passage from birthsex to achieved sex, and are published within several years of surgery (which suggests that the writing commenced very soon after transformation). Of the stories written some time after surgery, none are of the confessional/rite of passage type. They seem to have been written for a different purpose.

Michael Dillon's autobiography (22 years lapse between surgery and completion of story) has *never* been published, so, despite a sympathetic biography by Hodgkinson, Dillon's motives for writing his story are not clear.

Christine Jorgensen's story (15 years lapse) was a rebuttal of 15 years of often hostile media speculation regarding her sexuality, her motives for re-embodiment, and the "authenticity" of her transformation. Much of the text directly addresses accusations that she was a transvestite, or a closeted homosexual. In pitching her story at the (mis)representation of her in the public domain, she often misses the opportunity to engage in the more personal narrative of other biographers of her time. After her story became public, Jorgensen was accused of being a "transvestite" by the press, and she responded with a barely-plausible claim that seems to run counter to the experimentation with clothing reported by every other transsexual autobiographer:

> I had never worn, or wanted to wear, feminine clothing while I retained evidence of my masculinity. Although I was entitled in the eyes of the medical experts, I didn't

> wear female clothing until my legal status as a woman was established on my passport, approved by the United States State Department. I merely wanted to correct a misjudgment of Nature, so that I might physically and legally become the person I felt I was intended to be (Jorgensen, 1968, 173).

Jorgensen's belief that her re-embodiment was driven by *legal* imperatives sounds extraordinary within the current understanding of transsexuality. However, the characteristics of the "medically acceptable" transsexual had only recently been articulated when the book was published (Stoller, 1968, Benjamin, 1966) so Jorgensen's expectation that her female *gender* (*both* ISG & SGL) would be *generated* by a change in the outward characteristics of her sex (and, in particular, the *legal recognition* of her "true" sex). Jorgensen was trying to establish her status as a "real" (if intersexed) woman, rather than as the "modern" understanding of a transsexual woman, so she may have exaggerated the physical imperative. She offers an explanation that she was the victim of a *physiological* "mistake"[12], who did her best to adapt her gender to conform to her "essential" sex (female), rather that actively choosing a life-course (transsexuality) that disrupted the existing sex/gender construct (EUG). If, however, Jorgensen's claim that she *never* cross-dressed were true, then she would have run a substantial risk that she would have felt dysphoric over her new socially -accepted gender identity (SGL) after surgery[13].

Caroline Cossey sought anonymity after her surgery. Her two books, (8 &17 years lapse) are responses to both being "outed" by

[12]Not that her gendered self was located in a "wrong" (ie, inappropriate) body, as in most of the later narratives, but that her body was "wrong", *per se* (damaged goods, i.e., intersexed).

[13]While I am extremely skeptical about the value of the currently mandated "real-life-test", I became even more concerned during my peer-support work with several unrealistic transsexual contacts who simply assumed that their manifestly unresolved *social* difficulties with their claimed gender would somehow miraculously disappear after surgery.

the media and her later efforts to obtain legal recognition of her achieved sex in the UK and EC courts. The publication and the timing of her stories were dictated by outside exposure. Her two books rebutt the sensationalism generated by the tabloid press, and her second book also seeks to draw public attention to the invidious legal status of her engenderment following the rejection of her appeals to the EC legal system:

> As I stood there, my past laid open for all to see, I struggled to stay silent. Once again I was being told that as a transsexual any marriage I entered into would be declared null and void. In the eyes of that judge and the law-makers of the country, I was a man. It made no difference that I looked, behaved, functioned and felt like a woman. As far as they were concerned, the evidence of their eyes and my soul made precious difference (Cossey, 1991, 218).

Given the social effects of this judgement, Caroline may have felt that she had very little left to lose by publishing her own story (see also 2.1.22 on page 106).

Likewise, Mark Rees' book (22 years lapse) followed *his* unsuccessful bid for legal recognition of his sexual status as a male, both within the UK and the EC jurisdictions. His public exposure started after the EC's Strasburg judgement, which removed any option of privacy for him:

> My details were there for all to see. Like it or not, I was exposed. My private life was now public property. It was especially ironic in view of the fact that one of the articles cited in my Appeal was 'Respect for private life' (Art.8) (Rees, 1996, 161).

Far from being euphoric, Rees' story expresses weary acceptance of his position, together with some anger: "Whilst I was angry that my

appeal had been rejected, there had come from it much which was positive, not least the awareness of the concern of many people" (1996, 163). His autobiography could be seen as a personalised extension of the legal exposure.

Carlotta (22 years lapse) wrote her story at the end of a long career as an entertainer in a "female impersonator" revue (at Les Girls, Kings Cross). Although she had surgery many years earlier, she exploited the public fascination with gender-transgression. This book is not an affirmation of genderal-legitimacy on the part of the author and, in fact, her success as a performer depended on the *fragility* of that "legitimacy". She claims that her surgery was "no big deal"[14], in fact, she speculates that her career as a "drag queen" was hindered by being post-operative (1994, 127). The focus of her story is primarily that of an entertainer who *incidentally* had SRS: She melds her often outrageous entertainment persona (where she refers to both herself and other transsexuals as "drag queens") with more matter-of-fact fragments from her personal life as a woman.

4.3 Policing Language: The Transgender/Transsexual Distinction

What is in a word? In the case of the two words "transgender", and "transsexual", their usage generates a presumption of either exclusion and victimhood, or legitimisation and agency. "Transgender" is often claimed by non- transsexuals to be a catch-all term to cover *any* person engaged in *any* form of gender-transgression. "Transsexual" is the term most often used by transsexuals themselves, and by the psycho-medical professionals involved with them.

[14] "People are much more fascinated by my sex change than I am. I keep telling them its just like having your tonsils out. No big deal" (Carlotta, 1994, 66).

4.3.1 "Trans-Gender" Labelling

This term implies that the "problem", or the "discontinuity", lies with having a *misplaced* gender, rather than a state of having a sexual embodiment which is in contradiction to one's sense of engenderment and selfhood. This stance of identifying an homogeneous notion of "gender" as both the "problem" and the "solution" re-enforces the assumption that gender is a socially constructed unity, while refusing to challenge, or coherently unpack, the essentialist beliefs about sexual authenticity. Furthermore, it implies that a *solution* lies within a re-working of one's engenderment, or perhaps of transcending gender itself. In doing so, this sub-discourse refuses to acknowledge the arguments of the transsexuals themselves that their gender (CGI) is the immutable core of their sense of selfhood. This "trans-gender" discourse is touted as being at the "cutting edge" of gender theory, yet on closer examination, it is more of a conservative police-action, banishing sex/gender variance to the frivolous margins of illegitimacy. By consigning transsexuals to the same category as casual transvestites and "gender-fuckers", the *site* of their gender-anguish is trivialised and their *solution* (permanent changes to their sexual embodiment and social status) is treated as illusory. For a transsexual (as distinct from other gender-transgressives) the existing "transgender" discourse offers a "ready-made" means of codifying their gender-anguish, while denying the validity of transcendence. *Compliant* transsexuals, such as Bornstein (1995), who accept the label of "transgenderists", have an audience amongst post-modern gender theorists, who have an investment in their participation as "gender-fuckers" (see 4.6.1.1 on page 224) safely marginalised *on the borders* of the gender-landscape.

4.3.2 "Trans-Sexual" Labelling

This term places the transsexual *problem* within a socially inappropriate sexual embodiment (see 1.2.1 on page 18). Their *solution* lies in changing this embodiment to a sufficient degree to allow gender-coded social transactions to take place within "the ordinary" and consistent with one's internal sense of engenderment (CGI, ISG). This stance, most commonly adopted by the transsexual narrators, challenges both the existing assumptions about the social construction of "gender", and of the fixity of the physical markers of sexual embodiment and authenticity. Although a *superficial* reading of the transsexual narrative appears conservative, it has effectively deconstructed the core assumptions about both sexual and genderal authenticity and stability. Until recently, there was no encouragement for proto-transsexuals to connect their gender dysphoria with alteration of their sexual embodiment. Even when Christine Jorgensen's story broke, or when rumours of the availability of genital surgery in exotic locations (such as Casablanca and Mexico) surfaced, there were few *sanctioned* channels for transformation within "the ordinary". Even today, such surgery is very expensive, quite dangerous, and with no guarantee of social or legal acceptance afterwards. Except for those few proto-transsexuals born into exceptionally supportive environments, arriving at a "solution", such as genital surgery required a *critical understanding* of the structure of "public" gender (SGL), and of how gendered transactions (GRB) take place in society, together with a high degree of resourcefulness.

At the surface, the "transgender" discourse appears to be "provocative". It identifies and names the gender "transgressions" and places them in a space comfortably *outside* "the ordinary". In arguing for a multiplicity and/or fluidity of genders, this discourse is declaring the existence of a *Terra Incognita* in which to consign the gender-variant. To accept the transsexual narrators' claims to genderal

legitimacy *within* "the ordinary" as valid, *demands* a re-working of the fundamentals of existing gender theory (EUG) and I have attempted to do this in my thesis.

4.4 Limits of Language

The language that is available to write the stories is limited, and probably limiting to the forms of discourse that are possible. Many authors' lives would have probably been quite unremarkable, had it not been for their transsexuality, yet they attempt to explain obscure concepts of sex/gender in a language that *might* be comprehensible to a wider audience. It may be almost impossible for them to put "reality" down on paper, whatever "reality" may represent to them.

4.4.1 The Loss of Innocence?

In the end, it is the intangible, personal history which stands between a transformed transsexual and "the real". The "real" is constructed on innocence and naturalness and, as a result of their transition, transsexuals know *far too much* about the construction of sex and gender to ever be "innocent" again. They know that the seemingly "immutable" assumptions about sexual embodiment can, in most socially relevant respects, be transcended. They also know that it is possible to *be* an "ordinary" woman or man in more than one way.

4.4.2 "Lying" or Agency?

To a large extent, what passes for "lying" could be seen as *agency* that is read differently from the other side of transsexual embodiment. A transsexual cannot *be* a transsexual without *agency*: S/he may be passively distressed about hir sexual embodiment

and/or gender role, but without invoking *agency* to locate themselves within the existing sex/gender construct, to prescribe a solution, and to actively participate in social and physical transformation, s/he would be little more than a victim of surgical/pharmacological technology (if, indeed, the lack of agency caused *any* transformation at all). Genital transformation without agency is not necessarily successful sexual/genderal transformation: Intersexed victims of non-consensual childhood genital mutilation are *not* assured of "natural" occupation of whatever sex/gender was forced upon them (often the intersexed person's anger may not be directed at the *technicalities* of the surgical outcome, but at the fact that *agency* was denied to them).

One aspect of Garfinkel's gender schema (1967, 122-128) is that it is not "natural" to change sex/gender-role (GRB). A "natural" woman/man *is* a woman/man precisely because they have exercised *no* agency in constructing their sexual embodiment and gender role. Nor is it "natural" to deeply question what "being" a woman/man is. Transsexuals "change sex" because they *do* exercise agency. On a personal level, they define for themselves what "being" a woman/man is, and they transcend a history of being embodied in one sex by actively defining, and then performing "gender", until the "naturalness" of the acquired sex supersedes the genderal inertia of their early history. There is no allowance for agency in the conventional construction of sex/gender, so the exercise of agency can be (mis)read as "lying". As an end-point, a post-operative transsexual approaches the "naturalness" of genetic women/men by *disavowing* agency. Agency transcends history, and then history transcends agency before the need for "lying" completely disappears.

4.5 Transsexed Intersexuals, or Transsexuals in Denial?

Many of the early accounts of "sex-change" contain claims of some degree of "intersexuality". Some of these claims appear dubious, in the light of current readings of sexual embodiment. However, I do not believe that these inconsistencies represent a simple case of the author consciously telling a falsehood to support her/his story of their physical transformation. Without the present-day language to describe the sex/gender distinction, the imperative for sex change would have been difficult for the transsexual author themselves to comprehend. Furthermore, as there was, before the 1970s, a public reticence to discuss *any* matter of a sexual nature *as a process of social validation*[15], a relatively simple, "physical", justification may have served as a shorthand for a more comprehensible, socially acceptable, explanation for the phenomenon.

It is probable that at least some of the authors were either genuinely intersexual, or were led to believe that they were, by psychomedical professionals, because the process of genital correction by hormones and surgery for "genuine" intersexuals had become accepted medical practice by the middle of the 20th century (Kessler, 1990; Hausman, 1995). Hormonal/surgical treatment of the *mental* condition of transsexuality had not reached the level of "acceptability" of the *physically* based aberration of intersexuality during the period covered by the early autobiographies (and the legitimacy of this form of treatment of "untidy" sexuality remains contested; see Fausto-Sterling, 2000, 45-77).

[15]Of course, "sex", as a subject of *prurient titillation*, has been part of the public discourse for long before the advent of the transsexual phenomenon.

4.5.1 Lili Elbe

With the exception of Lili Elbe, who, as the first "modern" transsexual, was a "special case", without a "community" of peers to own (or disown), all of the subsequent, pre-1970, authors, who claim some degree of "intersexuality" have taken relatively hostile positions towards the "legitimacy" of other contemporary transsexuals/transgenderists.

Lili Elbe's claim that her nose-bleeds were a trans-located menstruation (Hoyer, 1932, vi) appears implausible today. Physically, Lili, as Andreas, had been pronounced perfectly healthy and "normal" (but mentally unstable) by a series of earlier doctors (Hoyer, 1932, 18). However, when Andreas finally found a sympathetic doctor, he (the Professor) managed to pronounce that "I think you possess both male and female organs, and neither of them has sufficient room to develop properly" (Hoyer, 1932, 25) on the basis of an external, physical examination alone.

Lili's perceptions of the change in her mental state also *appear* "unrealistic" today, as the only alteration to her hormonal function would have been castration and perhaps a feeble, transitory, effect from the transplantation of ovaries[16]. Lili's altered "gender" is instantaneous and profound:

> There could be no past for her. Everything in the past belonged to a person who had vanished, who was dead. . . Now there was a perfectly humble woman, who was willing to obey, who was happy to submit herself to the will of another (Hoyer, 1932, 170).

Many of the post-1970, transsexually-identified autobiographers make limited claims to having a "reality" of belonging to the other

[16]Synthesised human hormones were not readily available at the time, but there may have been a small, residual hormonal content in the ovaries which would have quickly dissipated. This 1932 attempt at transplantation would have been, in the light of modern knowledge, unsuccessful, and may have contributed to Lili's death shortly after surgery.

sex/gender to their birth, in terms of identity, socialisation or spirit, but they do not claim a *physical* essence. Lili made the claim of being *essentially* a woman prior to surgery and, like the other "intersexual" biographers, she claimed that this "femaleness" (maleness for Robert Allen) had a *physical* basis:

> You must sympathize with me in my desire for maternity, to have a child, for I want nothing more ardently than to demonstrate that Andreas has been completely obliterated in me - is dead. Through a child I should be able to convince myself in the most unequivocal manner that *I have been a woman from the very beginning* (Hoyer, 1932, 275, *emphasis added*).

4.5.2 Robert Allen

Robert Allen's claim to have almost spontaneously changed from female to male cannot be fully tested, because he gives almost no detail of the process of the change. The closest that he comes to discussing his physical transformation is: "As the months went by I began to notice a great change in myself in the appearance of certain physical mutations the significance of which I was quick to perceive" (1954, 78). However, it is curious, given Allen's claim of *spontaneity* of his "sex-change", that that transformation coincided with his unspecified course of treatment by a doctor. Furthermore, the photographs of Allen show a person of a classically "pear-shaped", feminine physique, even after his transformation. He positions himself as someone who had always been *essentially* male, but that development of his primary sexual organs had been arrested until middle age[17].

[17]While this *was* also the path of embodiment of a later, more credibly intersexed author, Peter Stirling, he acquired a markedly masculine physique, and, unlike Allen, he does not take a hostile position against other gender-transgressives. Furthermore, Peter Stirling admits to a chromosomal arrange-

Allen's attitude towards the accounts of "sex-change" that would have been contemporary with his own, is one of revulsion to an offence against a "natural" order:

> Present indications lead one to believe that the degree of mental and physical degeneration is increasing. There seems no limits to the depths to which certain members of the community will sink. The line of demarcation must be drawn between those who have accepted nature and those who willfully provoke it. A surgeon's knife can remove but it cannot create (1954, 125).

In keeping with his evasive writing style, Allen does not discuss the specifics of any of the cases of the "public" transsexuals of his day directly. Despite his personal experience of sex/gender destabilisation, he remained an "essentialist" in respect of his peers, and he drew no comparison with his own life, and admitted to no flexibility in either the socially constructed aspects of gender (GRB), or in the genderal legitimacy (SGL) stemming from transsexual re-embodiment.

4.5.3 Georgina Turtle

Georgina Turtle's claims of "intersexuality" are medically specific, and her photographs show a body morphology which suggests *some degree* of intersexuality. What is surprising, however, is Georgina's *interpretation* of her intersexuality. She claims to have a chromosomal makeup of XO/XY mosaic (Somerset, 1992, 44) which would have given her a mixed, Turner's syndrome (functionally asexual) and *male* phenotype. Turtle's assertion that she was, on the basis

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ment which is not "essentially" male (XXY, or XX/XXY). Rather than dwelling on "essence", Stirling presents as someone who occupies gendered space as a male, because he is comfortable being one (i.e., not dissimilar to the terms of occupation of a "conventional" transsexual). Stirling did not resort to an "essential" argument, simply because he (or the later transsexual authors) did not need to.

of her chromosomes, a "true" woman is, therefore, not plausible. What her claimed chromosomal makeup *does* indicate is that she was not wholly, or "truly" male, and that, in practical terms, this condition would have made her transition to a constructed female embodiment easier than a male-to-female transsexual of normal XY chromosomal makeup. Turtle spent the first 34 years of her life as a male, and there is no reason to assume that the *terms* of her occupation of gendered space during that period would have necessarily been any different to any other male-to-female transsexual.

In her first book (1963), Turtle's treatment of "transsexuals" is erratic, varying from sympathetic to hostile. The book contains a collection of the "state-of-the-art" knowledge of genetics of the day and a mixture of largely unsupported opinion, and pseudo-science (the structure and impact of this book is discussed at 2.1.6 on page 89). She positions herself as a "real" woman, distinctly separate from the transsexuals that she discusses. She uses terms such as "trans-homo-sexual" to describe an *illegitimate* drive for re-embodiment, as driven by sexual fantasy; or "O-sexual" as a confused state of embodied bi-sexuality/asexuality: "Whilst O-sexuality symbolises the desire for castration and the acceptance of being rendered sterile the positive sexual qualities of both sexes remain, in contrast to the negative state of A-sexuality" (1963, 168). She discusses and categorises transsexuals as a "third sex", without considering the possibility that a transsexual *could* occupy gendered space as ordinary, and without recognising any parallels between their condition and her own.

4.5.4 Christine Jorgensen

Christine Jorgensen's statement that: "I was an individual belonging to the highest degree of intersexuality; male organs in a female body" (1968, 173) may have been a reaction to the sustained undermining of her legitimacy as a woman during the 15 years be-

tween her surgery and the publication of her autobiography. The statement "male organs in a female body" could be interpreted as "a woman trapped in a man's body"; that is, Jorgensen may have been refuting accusations of being a transvestite with a *metaphorical*, rather than an *organic* declaration of transsexuality. Several other "intersexual" authors claim that she was a transvestite[18], rather than a transsexual, but they may have meant that Jorgensen was not the *same sort of transsexual* as themselves, that is, Jorgensen used her "sex-change" to build a career as a stage performer[19].

4.5.5 Roberta Cowell

Roberta Cowell's claim that *because* s/he fathered two girls, this was an indication of her "*essential*" femaleness seems incongruous today: "completely normal males who seem unable to procreate male children may be the most complete type of sex reversal . . . both my children were female" (1954, 135). This belief may have stemmed from a misunderstanding of the then unfolding concepts of chromosomes, and her need to distance herself from the "other" transsexuals/ transgenderists who were gaining publicity at the time of her own exposure. Cowell projects the concept of intersexuality widely: "transvestites represent a high degree of psychological intersexualisation" (1954, 127), but she then discusses several cases of "transvestism" as *pathology* and conflates that phe-

[18]Both Cowell (1954, 123-4) and Turtle (1963, 33, 90-1) identify Jorgensen as a "transvestite", and imply that her condition was somehow different to their own.

[19]Jorgensen claims that as a consequence of the publicity that her transformation generated, she had no choice but to pursue that career:

> Once skyrocketed to prominence, there was no place to go and nothing else to consider but the entertainment world. It would have been impossible for me to live in anonymity in some rural, uninhabited area or remote cave. No matter how much I wanted to pursue it, and I did not, life as a social recluse was eternally denied (Jorgensen, 1968, 331).

nomenon with homosexuality (1954, 127-131).

The depth of Roberta Cowell's conviction that she was "intersexual" (and, therefore, *essentially* female) rather than what would later be known as "transsexual" is illustrated when she recalled a proposal of marriage during her relationship with Michael Dillon, a female-to-male transsexual: "as far as I was concerned, it would have been two females getting married"[20] (Hodgkinson, 1989, 87).

4.5.6 The "Intersexual" Discourse

All of the above inter/transsexual persons report an unease with social aspects of their gender from childhood onwards. This unease *precedes* the revelation of their "true" sex, so the feeling must have stemmed from an unarticulated perception that they were in the "wrong" body, rather than a reaction to their as-yet-unidentified "intersexuality". The substance of these accounts closely resembles the sex/gender dysphoria experiences by later autobiographers who identify as unambiguously "transsexual", rather than "intersexual", and will be examined as part of the narrative of a transsexual childhood (see 6.3 on page 264).

It seems more than co-incidental that, of the first seven published autobiographies concerning "change of sex", all are by people claiming *some* degree of intersexuality[21]. Whether, or not, the "intersexual" autobiographers were "transsexuals-in-denial" is now almost unverifiable, and the style of their narrative is peripheral to the modern transsexual discourse. Nevertheless, some useful inferences may be drawn from these early accounts:

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[20]Roberta Cowell's rejection of Michael Dillon's proposal of marriage on the grounds of in being equivalent to a *lesbian* relationship is particularly bizarre as, in 1951, *both* Cowell (pre-operative) and Dillon (post-operative) had *penises*.

[21]And, of the 57 autobiographies published afterwards, only three authors make claims of intersexuality (Peter Stirling, 1989, Dawn Langley Simmons, 1995 & Lady Colin Campbell, 1997). These later accounts are far more credible, as they offer up more substantial evidence, while not mounting a claim to gender-legitimacy based primarily on sexual "essence".

- That prior to the publication of milestone works on transsexuality by Stoller, Money, Green, Benjamin and others, an identifiably *physical* anomaly, "intersexuality", was a relatively acceptable justification for publication of stories about "sex-change" treatment, while a purportedly *mental* aetiology, "transsexualism" was not;

- That before the publication of psycho/social/medical literature on the sex/gender distinction, it was difficult to articulate the process of "sex-change" in terms other than that of the public understandings of "intersexuality";

- That before the sex/gender distinction was clarified, the "intersexual" autobiographers may have been only able to see their own sex/gender dysphoria in terms of a tangible anomaly, namely, "intersexuality";

- The vehemence of the border-keeping exercises by some "intersexual" autobiographers may indicate their underlying uncertainty of their *essential* sexuality. Their assertion of their "real" womanhood, or manhood, is offered as a "special case", distinctly different from other "sex-changers" that they dismiss as delusional or perverted;

- The similarity of the stories of the early lives of "intersexual" and "transsexual" biographers may indicate that either the "intersexuals" have misread, or misrepresented, their own condition, or that *both* conditions have a similar physical basis which may have similar effects on gendered socialisation from childhood[22].

[22]I am sceptical of this last possibility. I will argue in Chapter 8 that core-gender identity (CGI) is hard-wired (probably prior to birth). However, it is possible that there could be commonalities in the type of socialisation (a "freak-factor") which determined the way that sense of engenderment was *expressed* (GRB).

The three later accounts of" intersexuality" (by Peter Stirling, 1989, Dawn Langley Simmons, 1995, & Lady Colin Campbell, 1997) are more convincing, with a credible attached explanations of their medical conditions. Perhaps more significant than the probable authenticity of these stories is that the author s do not rely *solely* on "intersexuality" to position themselves in the sex/gender landscape. Unlike Allen, Stirling makes no direct claims of the "reality" of his maleness (see 2.1.28 on page 112).

The attitude of detachment from the "common" transsexual is not confined to people claiming to be "intersexual", although it is much rarer in the later narratives. Jan Morris takes a somewhat condemnatory position to her fellows:

> I am one of the lucky few. There are people of many kinds who have set out on the same path, and by and large they are among the unhappiest people on the face of the earth (Morris, 1974, 154).
>
> For every trans-sexual who grasps the prize, Identity, ten, perhaps a hundred discover it only a mirage in the end, so that their latter quandary is hardly less terrible than their first (Morris, 1974, 158).

Morris' position may stem from a different form of *essentialism* to that of the "intersexuals". Throughout her book, she alludes to her privileged position of class and learning. Rather than claiming an innate "reality" of *essentially being* of the opposite sex to that of birth, she claims a "special ability" to transcend the commonplace sex/gender landscape that is denied to many.

I have included the early, purportedly "intersexual" authors in my study of transsexual autobiographies, despite the difficulty of establishing the "reality" of their claims, because they recount many of the same personal and social adaptations to a condition which, *regardless* of its aetiology, involves genital re-embodiment. Com-

Footnote *

One of the ``middle-period'' authors, Caroline Cossey claims to have been diagnosed as XXXY (Cossey, 1991, 89). I did not include her in the ``wannabe'' intersexed category, as she mentions it only once, in a single sentence and it hardly forms a substantial part of her ``case'' for genderal legitimacy: She hardly needs it, given her sexual embodiment. I am skeptical of her claim, however, as a photograph taken of her prior to starting hormones (between pages 82-83, ``In London at sixteen'') shows her having a chest with no evidence of breast enlargement, which would be typical of even XXY (Kleinfelter's) adolescents, and despite several years of hormone treatment, she still required breast implants.

monalities between authors identifying as either inter- or transsexuals include:

- a shared childhood history of sexual/genderal unease;
- similarities in management of a personal history of incongruent sexual embodiment;
- a shared sterility after transformation[23]; and
- similar accommodations to compromised, gender-coded, personal appearance and sexual function.

These early "intersexed" authors may have been staking a claim to the same gendered space as later transsexuals, but the *way* that claim was articulated appears to be different. Despite the doubtful veracity of the substance of many of these early claims, given the contemporary understandings of sex/gender, the authors may have believed that this identification may have been the only way to achieve genderal "legitimacy" at that time.

4.6 The "Public" Transsexual

Gender is, directly, or indirectly, a *public* act. It is based on understandings about sexual function which are, in themselves, largely a *private* act. Although some transsexuals never pursue *sexual* encounters after their bodily transformation (and many probably accepted that their future sex-lives would be very limited even before embarking on surgery) public recognition of the validity of their *sexual* re-embodiment is still necessary for *genderal* encounters.

[23]With the exception of a later, and more credible intersexed woman, Dawn Langley Simmons, who did give birth to a baby after her transition from male to female.

4.6.1 Public/Private Woman/Man

Accounts of sex/gender transgression are threatening to the non-transsexed, because their own understandings of sex/gender legitimacy are predicated on such transgressions being literally *unthinkable* (Garfinkel, 1967, 122-128). Transsexuals often have an appreciation of social unease created when sexual embodiment is "untidy", and not readily apparent:

> People have to know who you are. You walk down the street and the first thing you do when you see a person is say to yourself, That's a male. That's a female. That's an older person. You categorize in your mind. One of the first things you do is to determine the sex - if you can't do that, it blows the whole system up. They don't even know where to start with you (Bogdan & Fry, 1974, 96).

Because the prospect of sex/gender destabilisation is threatening, it needs to be regulated. Regulation by "experts", such as psychiatrists, allows the labelling of the transgression as a "pathology". The justification for the psycho-medical resistance to requests for genital surgery by transsexual adults is questionable, or at least beyond establishing that the patient is mentally stable and sufficiently well-informed about the realities of living in a transsexed/socially relocated body. To a large extent, the professionals' work is already done. Many transsexual patients make contact with psycho-medical professionals *after* having personally defined their sex/gender incongruity and prescribed the solution to their problem. They seek prescriptions for hormones, and sanction for the genital surgery that they have *already* identified as the only outcome that will lead to a fulfilled life. The expectation in most other psycho-medical relationships would be for the professional to exercise agency in both defining the problem, and prescribing and managing a solution. After exercising agency to bring themselves

to the doors of the gatekeepers, transsexuals, as "patients", find that they are denied agency, or that that agency is re-interpreted by professionals as "lying", or manipulative behaviour.

Regulation of the threat posed to the existing construction of gender can also be effected by the controlling issues of privacy, and of public disclosure. Transsexuals (and intersexed people) often present a "special case", where notions of personal privacy are subordinated to the public's "need to know". Ironically, the curiousity is directed towards individuals who, for the most part, would prefer to live anonymously, in as "ordinary" lives as possible. On two separate occasions in her life, Caroline Cossey found that events that she regarded as "ordinary" (working as a model[24], and getting married) were somehow regarded as so newsworthy that her right to privacy was ignored:

> As time has gone by and I have become accustomed to interviews, articles and public curiosity, I have grown to accept the idea that my transsexuality does fascinate some people. But at that time I was in no way prepared for exposure. It should have been my choice to discuss my sexuality when and if I felt ready to do so. The News of the World had taken that choice away from me. I felt raped, and was overwhelmed by fears and feelings that I hadn't experienced for years - an awareness that I was different, a freak, someone who could never hope to lead

[24]At the time of her exposure, Caroline had so successfully integrated herself into "the ordinary", that she was astounded that her past had any news-value at all:

> I had lived and worked as a woman for six years when I began to make it as a model. For all that time I had been treated by everyone who met me as a woman. I was foolish enough to believe that my past was my business and no one else's. It ceased to matter to me that I had been born a boy, and I couldn't imagine it would matter to anyone else (Cossey, 1991, 110).

> any kind of normal life. My long struggle to achieve normality and acceptability seemed to have been for nothing (Cossey, 1991, 132).

4.6.1.1 Giving the Audience What it Wants

The careers of gender-transgressive performers such as Kate Bornstein and Carlotta may depend on giving their public the comforting re-assurance that transsexuals are *distinctly* different to themselves. Given the growing public awareness that transsexuals, as a social class, exist within Western society, "professionals" of various guises are needed to describe them, to differentiate them from "the ordinary", and to circumscribe an area on the gender landscape where such "deviants" can be isolated. While the psycho-medical gatekeepers give the changing of one's sexual embodiment a label of a tightly-controlled process which is only used to address a pathology when all other remedies fail, transsexual "entertainers" allow the public to deflect challenges to their own naive occupation of gendered space. The entertainers *give permission* to their audience to be able to avoid taking the transsexual condition seriously, or to keep it well *outside* the bounds of what they understand as "ordinary". The "entertainment" is in the transgression. As an entertainer, Kate Bornstein claims ownership to a long tradition of transgression on the margins:

> My ancestors were performers. In life. The earliest shamanic rituals involved women and men changing genders. Old, old rituals. Top-notch performances. Life and death stuff. We're talking cross-cultural here. We're talking rising way, way, way above being a man or woman. That's how my ancestors would fly. That's how my ancestors would talk with the goddesses and the gods. Old rituals (1995, 143).

Bornstein's conflation of gender-variance and mysticism indicates the placement of her performance *outside* the "ordinary" and reduces her gender transgression to "the unworldly". While Bornstein attempts to place her own engenderment *above* the "ordinary", and into the spiritual (and out of a direct challenge to the existing gender-order) Carlotta, in contrast, reduces her engenderment to *beneath* the "ordinary", as an embodied joke:

> I spent the rest of the night sending myself up, joking about my body, and they loved it. The point with me is, the sex change has meant nothing to me, and I think even a lot of my closest friends don't understand that. That's why I can send myself up on stage, and send my sex change up as well. It's part of my act. I never take it that seriously (Carlotta, 1994, 117).

Until now, "public" transsexual entertainers have performed the valuable "social-service" of condemning *themselves* to the margins of engenderment. Georgina Beyer's acceptance as a MP in New Zealand may signal a change in the public expectation, as she is currently *representing* the wider public, *as*, and *for*, the *"ordinary"*. The acceptance of her as *representative* of the "ordinary" was not automatic, and probably not comfortable for some political observers. During the first year following her election to parliament, the media-description of her has changed from Georgina Beyer, *the transsexual MP*, to the same range of genderally unqualified descriptors as are applied to other parliamentarians. She has *become* the Member for Wairarapa by no longer *being* the transsexual MP.

4.6.1.2 What May be Missing from the Narratives

While the number of published life-stories by transsexuals is substantial for such a small and marginalised group, this narrative is

not necessarily representative of all transsexuals, or of the transsexual "condition". The early accounts say very little about sexual performance or desire (of any orientation). The first "conventional" life- story by a transsexual lesbian did not appear until 1996 (Geri Nettick) yet even though the overly-rigid psycho-medical gatekeeping process of the early years may have diminished the number of proto-lesbian transsexuals obtaining surgery, they were sufficiently numerous for Janice Raymond to devote a chapter, *Sappho by Surgery* in her anti-transsexual book, *The Transsexual Empire* (1979, 99-119). While there have been been four stories published by lesbian-identified male-to-female transsexuals, there have been no complete stories by female-to-male gay-identified men (apart from a fragmentary account by Louis Sullivan, 1990). Despite the absence of a narrative by gay-transmen, they do exist: Devor's study of female-to-male transsexuals reports that fifteen participants (40.5 percent) of her sample had had some interest in sexual relations with men after their bodily transformation[25] (1997, 497).

4.6.1.3 "Unthinkable" Aspects of Engenderment

Until Patrick Califia, there was no mention of a desire amongst female-to-male narrators of an inclination towards Sado-Masochism or Bondage & Discipline, and none of these writers has disclosed a desire to cross-dress in female clothes, although my own observation of transmen indicates that such sexual preferences are fairly commonplace.

Given the portrayal of transsexuals in pornographic literature and internet web-sites, any claim to "the ordinary", within the "conventional" transsexual narrative may be compromised by any discussion of sexuality, particularly where it panders to pre-existing expectations of deviance.

[25]This figure seems remarkable because of the mechanical difficulties faced by most post-operative transmen; i.e., a lack of a convincing and/or functioning penis.

4.7 Narrative Style and Content in Social Context

The narrators, as survivors, were addressing at least some of the everyday understandings of gender (EUG) amongst their non-transsexual contemporaries. Even if the essence of "gender" remains inaccessible by way of language, we may be able to infer something about it by the the type of case for genderal legitimacy that these authors mounted at the time.

4.7.1 The "Heroic" Period

Lili Elbe's 1932 transformation took place at a time when "sex" and "gender" were conflated, and when it was assumed that there were fundamental differences between the sexes that could only be bridged by a unique, and near-miraculous transgression of the natural order of sexual/genderal difference. Her un-named, "German friend" declares:

> This bridge, Lili, will go much farther into the past tha[n[26]] you have any suspicion of today. In fact, across that abyss which separates man from woman. That is the remarkable thing about your fate, the unique thing that slumbers within you, namely the emotional bond between the two sexes. This presentiment in your blood, which pulsates through a woman's heart as it formerly pulsated through the heart of a man, rises now and again through the mists of ambiguity into a penetrating insight (Hoyer, 1932, 261).

Her transformation is assumed to be at an organic level. Her heart changes sex, as well as her secondary sexual characteristics. While

[26]The original text has the letter "t" at this point, which is almost certainly an error in translation

her transit of "that abyss" is all-embracing, it is not presented as a threat to the existing gender-order: It is a one-off event which promises "penetrating insights", rather than destabilisation of that order. This approach, along with the use of geographic metaphor has some similarities with this study. The "German friend" continues with the metaphor: "This new country, Lili, this new corner of the soul, is lying dormant within you, and whether you like it or not, it will go on expanding" (Hoyer, 1932, 261). My preferred interpretation of this passage would be that the speaker meant that Lili's *occupation of gendered space* would become stronger as she acquired a personal history as a woman. An alternative, and perhaps less credible explanation might be that the speaker had remarkable prescience in anticipating that Lili's transformation was to be the first of many.

4.7.2 Into the Unknown

Not only did the *mechanics* of Lili Elbe's transformation represent "the unknown", but the gendered landscape which she negotiated was also largely uncharted. "Lili, you have described yourself as a bridge-builder, who is building a bridge from the solid bank of today. And you said yourself that you did not know whether the other bank was the past or the future" (Hoyer, 1932, 260). How would she know for sure that she had arrived? And *where* had she started from? While contemplating her new circumstances, appropriately enough, during *spring* in Copenhagen, she identifies a sense of loss for a contiguous, innocent history of the sort that recurs in later narratives:

> At length it dawned upon her that what was affecting her so painfully was a void in her life, something unfulfilled that in all probability never could be fulfilled. . . Lili felt her body thriving. But she felt how this mysterious craving within her for something to which she could

> give no name became ever more clamant and insistent (Hoyer, 1932, 258).

The gendered landscape within which Lili had re-located herself may have been, as far as the superficialities of everyday life went, an appropriate, and benign place to occupy, but her pioneering journey had no sense of scale or direction to use as a reference. The authors who followed her had at least a rough sketch of the terrain and, with the later separation of the notions of "sex" and "gender", they had the means of understanding their journey and terms of occupation, within the notion of "the ordinary" (EUG). Lili Elbe's necessarily "unique" status was both a way of at least partially comprehending her condition within the historical understandings of sex/gender, and a factor in undermining her occupation of "the ordinary".

4.7.3 Confronting Raymond's "Transsexual Empire"

Most of the transsexual autobiographers do not directly address Raymond's attack on transsexuals. Perhaps the most significant effect of Raymond's work would be what was *not* said. The public portrayal of the transsexual "condition" moved from the novel and flippant newspaper accounts of around the time of Christine Jorgensen's transformation (late 1953 onwards) to a more hostile environment generated by "radical" feminist essentialists, such as Raymond in 1979. Perhaps as a result of Raymond's scornful dismissal of transsexual lesbians in her chapter "Sappho by Surgery", a "conventional" autobiography by a transsexual lesbian was not published until 1996, by Geri Nettick[27]. Presenting a case for genderal legitimacy based on identification and performance as a lesbian and feminist was dismissed by Raymond's claim that: "The

[27]Bornstein's "Gender Outlaw" was published in 1995, but rather than being a "conventional" autobiography, this work confronts the wider discourse surrounding transsexuality and gender. Bornstein supports many of her arguments with biographical fragments, including some pertaining to her lesbian identity.

transsexually constructed lesbian-feminist is the man who indeed gets to be "the man" in an exclusive women's club to which he would otherwise have no access (Raymond, 1979, 110-111). When Geri Nettick summoned the courage to find a co-author to help her with her autobiography, "Mirrors", Beth Elliot promised to: ". . . [P]ut her 'best sarcasm' into debunking the 'great, ominous, transsexual threat to the lesbian way of life"' (Nettick, 1996, 279).

Other transsexual authors have addressed more than just Raymond's hostile position towards themselves. Riddell sees Raymond's arguments for exclusion of transsexuals as proscriptive and divisive for *all* women. Referring to "The Transsexual Empire", she laments that:

> Although I have had to challenge its attacks on transsexual women, its dogmatic approach and its denial that female experience is our basic starting point are a danger signal of trends emerging in the whole women's movement (Riddell, 1996, 189).

Wilchins compares Raymond's genderal policing to that of the patriarchy that she purports to oppose (see 8.1.2 on page 362).

Stone also sees something fundamentally "*unfeminist*" in Raymond's argument, describing her language as a metaphor for a displaced racism. Stone refers to: "Raymond's stunning 'All transsexuals rape women's bodies' (what if she had said, e.g., 'all blacks rape women's bodies')" (Stone, 1991, 298).

On her web-site, "Doctor Becky" Allison attacks Raymond's book on the grounds of its malice and the poor quality of its argument:

> The book is a disjointed rant, with much misinformation, inaccurate conclusions, and blind prejudice which leads to complete intolerance. I feel dirty after reading it, and I wonder what sort of bad experience Raymond had at the hands of a transsexual person to inspire such venom (Allison, 1998, 1).

Perhaps Allison's anticipation that Raymond would have had to be *directly* injured by a transsexual misses the point. To an essentialist, transsexuals may be loathed for what they *represent*. The transsexual narrative runs counter to notions of sexual/genderal essentialism, of the wholly social construction of gender, and in the case of Raymond's work[28], of a well-developed sense of *victimhood*, suffering and colonisation of "feminist identification, culture, politics and sexuality" (Raymond, 1979, xx).

4.7.3.1 Daly

Perhaps not surprisingly, Mary Daly, who was Raymond's PhD supervisor and one-time lover, takes a similar stance to her pupil. "Transsexualism is an example of male surgical siring which invades the female world with substitutes" (1978, 71). As with Raymond's attempts at delegitimisation, Daly also needs to ignore or dismiss the existence of female-to-male transsexuals. No transsexual narrator directly refers to Daly, but her discourse may have added to the contestedness of the gendered space through which the writers negotiated.

4.7.3.2 Millot

Millot takes a psycho-analytical approach to transsexual accounts and does not allow for agency or pragmatism of their occupation of gendered space. Her essentialist stance re-works Freud. Again, no transsexual story-teller cites her work. It would be almost impossible to take Millot seriously *and* write (or even seriously evaluate) a transsexual autobiography, "conventional", or otherwise. "To be a transsexual, said Gabriel, is to refuse to ask oneself questions. Is a transsexual's only relationship with the truth that of wishing to know nothing about it?" (Millot, 1990, 143). Such a claim almost defies response by the autobiographers, *as narrators*.

[28]also see my comments on Greer at 1.8.2 on page 49.

4.7.3.3 Greer

Greer has also been dismissive of the validity of transsexual's claim to genderal legitimacy. In her "Female Eunuch" (1971) she exploits the publicity surrounding the contemporary case of April Ashley to compare April's legally-pronounced "invalidity" as a transsexed woman with what she saw as the invalidity of wider female "condition" of her time (see 1.8.2 on page 49). She re-visits the transsexual phenomenon in her 1999 publication, devoting a chapter to describing transsexuals (and also persons with intersexed conditions) as "Pantomime Dames" (1999, 64-74). None of the transsexual narrators have directly referred to either of these works.

Chapter 5

Transsexual Embodiment and Agency

The process of permanently changing sexual embodiment is what distinguishes the Western transsexual phenomenon from other cultures' adaptations to gender-anguish (although the Hijras in Northern India, and the now-largely historical Skoptsy sect in Central Europe experienced castration as part of their initiation process, no *re*-construction of genitals was attempted). Re-embodiment is both the goal of a "true" transsexual and a diagnostic tool: If a proto-transsexual presents to a psycho-medical gatekeeper and does not express an unequivocal desire for bodily transformation will probably be deemed not to be "transsexual". This is particularly problematic for female-to-males because, if they are realistic about the cost and quality of phalloplasty, they may conclude that they will not strive for such surgery. Where this reluctance for surgery is read as a lack of commitment to their expressions of male engenderment, they may be denied further treatment of the sort which they *do* desire, such as hormones and chest reconstruction.

5.1 Owning Body-Parts: MtoF and FtoM

The *significance* of gender-coded body parts varies between male-to-female and female-to-male transsexuals. The autobiographies dwell on the discomfort with some aspects of embodiment prior to transition and the joy of acquiring and owning other sexual characteristics as a result of surgery and hormones. This narrative of "embodiment" is mediated by the *significance* of various body-parts as markers of genderal legitimacy, the practicalities of the surgical and medical techniques available to the narrator, and the preparedness of the psycho-medical gatekeepers to utilise them.

5.1.1 Female-to-Male Embodiment

All of the female-to-male transsexuals express a discomfort with their breasts and menstruation prior to their transformation. Almost no direct mention is made of a loathing of having a vagina, but rather the authors express a discomfort with female embodiment as a whole. Before transition, Califia describes this bodily discomfort as "misogyny" (1996, 5) but this may not be apt: I believe that the transmen are expressing *their* distaste with being embodied female *themselves*, rather that necessarily hating female embodiment, *per se*.

Compared to the male-to-female authors, there is comparatively little difficulty expressed in the female-to-male narratives of re-learning, or accepting gender-coded social skills (in this case, "male").

5.1.1.1 Breasts

The removal of their breasts is usually celebrated by transmen as their transition into social manhood (because of the surgical techniques used, the change in genitalia does not have the same clear-cut significance as a rite-of-passage, as it does for male-to-females). Mario Martino was joyous at their removal:

> Are they off? I tried to look down at the massive pressure bandages covering my chest. Yes! Now I had a chest as opposed to breasts. I felt wonderful - and immediately dozed off. When I next opened my eyes the same question: Are they off?" (Martino, 1977, 184).

He claimed to have a "chest" (which he had all along, of course), rather than "breasts"; the difference now was that his chest was an unqualified marker of manhood.

Paul Hewitt's feelings towards his breasts was that of malevolence and alienation:

> My boobs are a major problem. I am binding them up with a vengeance. . . They are shrinking a bit, but I can view them only with contempt. I think of them as cartoon breasts which someone has stuck on my ribcage for a sick joke. I am absolutely desperate for a mastectomy - so desperate that I understand why others actually mutilate themselves. . . I don't think that I can survive another summer with these fleshy protuberances (Hewitt, 1996, 208).

Paul Rees took Hewitt's loathing of his breasts somewhat further, by actually inflicting violence on them: "In the privacy of my room I pummeled my hated breasts with fury" (Rees, 1996, 16). His elation after their removal was of a similar order to the other "new" men:

> Immediately after the surgery I'd been bound up, then by the time the dressings were shed I had become accustomed to having a flat chest. In a way it were as if my breasts had never existed. . . . I did feel that something alien had gone from me and I was becoming more normal" (Rees, 1996, 117).

His mastectomy had given him access to "the ordinary" by the excision of something which he had regarded as "alien".

Raymond Thompson, who has difficulty in even writing the words for the female body-parts that he was born with, saw his mastectomy as a way of being more comfortable with himself, both physically and socially:

> The idea of being able to be lightly dressed and feel cool filled me with relief and joy. Very soon after the operation that feeling disappeared. It was as if I had always looked and felt like I was now, as if I had become what I already was. It was like shedding an annoying and uncomfortable garment and being back in my own self (Thompson, 1995, 177).

The *site* of body-anguish that Thompson experienced when embodied female was located at his skin surface. With post-surgical hindsight, the surficial nature of that pain is metaphorically reduced to "an annoying and uncomfortable garment" and discarded.

5.1.1.2 Menstruation

For the female-to-male writers, menstruation, along with developing breasts, usually bring a tomboyish childhood to an abrupt close. As well as providing social sanctions on appropriate sexual performance (or the lifting of the assumption that it did not exist prior to puberty) and increased pressure to conform to accepted forms of "female" gender-expression, these developments provide tangible reminders of the realities of sexual embodiment. Raymond Thompson describes his experience of menstruation as so alien, that he cannot even name it:

> The other aspect of puberty, the word for which I cannot bear to mention in relation to myself, also started. I

> coped with it by blocking it off from my mind, and dealing with it in a mechanical, unconscious way. . . . Strangely enough, as these changes in my body made me feel uncomfortable in the extreme and very embarrassed, I didn't feel that they were a reflection on my maleness. I felt I wasn't responsible for them. I wasn't supposed to be there, in that body, so it wasn't my fault. (Thompson, 1995, 55).

Mark Rees resented the onset of menstruation because of what it *signified*:

> One of the most traumatic happenings was the start of periods. . . You're a woman now, she said almost proudly. To her it must have been an immense relief, confirming that I was normal, but few words have brought me such pain (Rees, 1996, 16).

While menstruation is not a *visible* impediment for a fully-clothed female-to-male presenting as male, the narrators are, nevertheless, devastated by its onset. As a signifier of entry into functional adulthood, menarche provides a more clearly defined marker of "femaleness" than the development of flesh-bound secondary sex characteristics around puberty (one has either started menstruating or one has not, unlike breast development, which takes place over a continuum). While having breasts (particularly large ones) presents visible difficulties for someone passing as a male, and a mastectomy may be required before any *realistic* social transition can occur, the removal of a female-to-male's internal organs primarily addresses the nagging reminder of femaleness at a personal level that menstruation *represents*.

5.1.1.3 Genitals

The aspiration for the possession of a penis by female-to-males is problematic, because the existing medical technology is far from "perfect", where perfect is taken to mean convincing and functional in the way that genital surgery for male-to-females has developed at present. The female-to-male narrators are not, therefore, facing a choice of acquiring something which is wholly "natural", or which holds out the prospect of an untroubled entry into "the ordinary". Raymond Thompson, when choosing between which of the limited range of functionality that his prospective phalloplasty could offer, opts for *everyday* function:

> "Do you want a penis for sex or to be able to urinate?" he then asked me. It had never occurred to me that there would be a choice. . . It was one or the other; both were not possible. . . I need to be able to relate to my body, and for it to be functional and that involves urinating in a normal way. This is for me, to enable me to live with me. I am not having this operation for anybody else, its purely for me (Thompson, 1995, 260-261).

Mario Martino recognises the value of his constructed penis as a sexual instrument, despite the shortcomings of surgery:

> So today I'm happy with what I have: a respectable phallus - three-fourths perfect. . . And, by night, my new organ - for all its being less than perfect - is still deeply stimulating to both me and my mate, both psychologically and physically (Martino, 1977, 263).

Given that *any* female-to-male would have had to accept, even prior to surgery, that his phalloplasty would be compromised in appearance and function, a "three-fourths perfect" penis may have been somewhat easier for Martino to accept than a similar type of damage to the *innocent* engenderment of a "genetic" male.

5.1.2 Male-to-Female Embodiment

Male -to-female transsexuals often express a loathing for their penis for what it *represents*: i.e., a signifier of maleness. They also express a dislike of their penis and those physical characteristics which compromise their ability to "pass" as women, such as facial/body hair, baldness, voice, and physical build. None of them regret the *absence* of menstruation, *per se*, but some grieve for the absence of fecundity as women.

5.1.2.1 Breasts

Unlike their female-to-male counterparts, not all of the male-to-female transsexuals dwell on their *lack* of breasts prior to transformation, or of the size or prominence of them afterwards. While some authors have had breast implants, others seemed content with smaller than the mean size, hormonally-induced "natural" breast development. Many do not discuss their breasts at all, so it is not clear whether they have had implants. One of the few accounts of celebration over the acquisition of breasts is that of Caroline Cossey. Perhaps her career as a model, and her otherwise very passable embodiment increased the significance of breasts to her as markers of sexual/genderal legitimacy:

> Gingerly I touched the side of my breasts to see if they felt either hard or unnatural. Because of the padding it was impossible to tell. . . . [after dressing removal] . . I stood there silent with wonder. In the reflection I saw the woman I had always believed myself to be. My breasts were perfect - soft and gently rounded, they seemed in no way artificial (Cossey, 1991, 51).

Prior to genital surgery, an indecisive Renee Richards had hir small, hormonally-induced breasts removed, in an attempt to re-enter

manhood by re-marrying. Hir reaction to the mastectomy was quite different to that of the female-to-male narrators above:

> For one thing, I had to grapple with my personal reaction to the surgery. Sure, I was trying to be a man and had agreed in principle that the breasts should go, but I suffered a real depression once they were gone. The feeling that I was an amputee was hard to shake (Richards, 1983, 265).

This last attempt at "maleness" failed (along with the marriage) but s/he does not mention having breast implants as part of hir much-delayed (re)entry into stable female embodiment.

The asymmetry between between the *significance* of breasts to male-to-female and female-to-male transsexuals as markers of genderal legitimacy may be explained as follows:

- For female-to-males, a mastectomy may represent the *removal* of tissue which they regard as "alien", whereas for male-to-females, breast implants may be regarded as the *addition* of something "alien" (while still being a *symbolically* "natural" marker of womanhood);
- For female-to-males, the difficulty of using surgical modification of one's genitals as a *discrete temporal marker* of transition into manhood may make a mastectomy a more useful defining moment for "becoming a man";
- For female-to-males with large breasts, binding one's chest is "unnatural" and uncomfortable (as well as not always convincing). For male-to-females, even completely flat chests can be augmented with padding.

In both cases, genderally-inappropriate, untransformed chests can cause far more problems when the transsexual is unclothed, when

nothing short of surgery will suffice for *either* group. Even after chest reconstructive surgery, most female-to-males face an ongoing problem of extensive scarring across their chests[1] of a pattern that appears quite unusual for a "genetic" male. The scarring associated with breast augmentation for male-to-females would be identical to that of similarly "underdeveloped" females, who had also opted for augmentation.

5.1.2.2 Genitals

Male-to-female transsexuals describe their penis as the most hated *symbol* as their embodiment, and not surprisingly, they usually celebrate its removal as the point of their full transition into womanhood. Nevertheless, the absence or presence of a well-concealed penis is not visible in everyday social interaction[2] and the discomfort stems from what the penis *represents*.

5.1.3 Parallels with Intersexuals' Experience of Embodiment

How might the transsexuals'experience of the (re)construction of sex/gender relate to other constructions of sexual embodiment and gender? Discourses by outsiders on transsexuality and intersexuality largely express their proxy concerns about *their* gender, which remains largely unexamined. The *overt* "professional" discourses on the "intersexed problem" extend beyond the verbal, into erasure, "normalisation" (or genital tidying) and pathologisation of sexually anomalous bodies, while discussion of transsexuality *re-*

[1]The extent of scarring depends on the skill of the surgeon, and on the amount of breast tissue which is excised.

[2]The possession of a penis is not seen a problem by transvestites. Their constrained, and sometimes fetishistic notion of being "female" is limited to the superficialities of clothing and gender-coded performance. Their genital arrangement and the legitimacy that this may, or may not, generate is not part of this abstracted representation.

sists granting primacy to gender identity over sexual embodiment. Both discourses deny individual agency of "the patient". Transsexuals and intersexed people have, nevertheless, constructed gender transgressive understandings, which inevitably threaten existing sex/gender constructions, and generate sometimes contradictory reactions on the part of psycho-medical professionals and the wider public.

While the "untidiness" of both transsexual and intersexed persons are treated by psycho-medical professionals, the *terms* of the intervention are quite different. In the case of adult transsexuals, the psycho-medical process is to act as gatekeeper, to delay, to pathologise and to control the transsexual condition. For the pediatric professionals and guardians of intersexed children, the prospect of an ambiguous sexual embodiment is often so horrific that the "condition" is frequently erased at an early age without, of course, the consent or agency of the child involved[3]. While the interventions on intersexed infants is pro-active, "radical" and non-consensual, the usual reaction to adult or adolescent transsexuality is of skepticism, resistance and conservatism.

5.2 Is There a Transsexual Essence?

When it comes to theorising about transsexuality, there seems to be a whole series of understandings constructed by *some* non-transsexuals of the transsexual condition, which are usually complex, abstract and involving an allegation of conspiracy, or of deficiency on the part of the transsexuals themselves, or of some other individuals or groups within society. Right-wing feminists such

[3]Ironically, the sexual embodiment of transsexuals who are in the process of a "real-life-test" is also sexually ambiguous. If the transsexual patient is deemed by the gatekeepers to be "unsuitable" for genital surgery at this stage, then they would be in a similar state of physical ambiguity to that which those professionals treating intersexed children are so vigorously trying to erase *without* their consent (and without the "real-life-test"deemed so necessary for transsexuals).

as Raymond claim that patriarchy uses transsexuals as dupes in a plot against "real" women[4]. Hausman suggests that although transsexuals *appear* to be active, they are passive players in a discourse that serves both the medical establishment and the normal construction of sex/gender[5]. Stoller blamed absent fathers for somehow maiming the identity of transsexuals (1968, 326). Bem[6] argues that transsexuals are the victims of an overly-rigid gender-role dichotomy. Billings and Urban claim that "the phenomenon not only reflects and extends late-capitalist logics of reification and commodification, but simultaneously plays an implicit role in contemporary sexual politics" (in Ekins & King, 1996, 114). These interpretations represent a discourse of how *non-transsexuals' constructs of "normal" sex/gender* are threatened by an anomaly such as transsexuality.

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[4]"Many women see the transsexual who claims to be a lesbian-feminist as the man who has paid the ultimate price of manhood in a patriarchal society - giving up his balls" (Raymond, 1979, xiv)

[5]"Transsexualism is gender's alibi - seeming to prove its facticity in the demand to be recognised as the other sex, yet demonstrating the impossibility for any subject to authentically or finally "be" a sex" (Hausman, 1995, 140). I will argue in Chapter 8 that the notion of "authenticity" is more important in respect of "gender", rather than of "sex", and that an *acceptable* (rather than *authentic*) sexual embodiment is a tool in facilitating this genderal legitimisation.

[6]Bem states, "In a less gender-polarizing culture, after all, it would matter much less if the individual's personality and behaviour did not cohere into a tightly gender-polarized package that matched her or his biological sex" (111, 1993). I would argue that her statement is conjectural, and according to the gender-model that I propose in Chapter 8, it is the social *validation* of one's sense of gender-legitimacy (SGL) within a socially *comprehensible* gendered landscape that is far more important than the number or intensity of any of the many manifestations of the *trappings* of gender-role behaviour (GRB). I would expect that even in Bem's hypothetical "less-polarised" world, there would be sufficient notions of genderal "difference" remaining to make any transsexual as uncomfortable with the social consequences of their sexual embodiment as they are in the "real-world". Taking her conjecture to its limits, if, in a hypothetical *totally* gender-undifferentiated world, where there were *no* grounds available to legitimise one's conviction of engenderment, I would argue that *everyone* would probably be transsexual.

5.2.1 Contesting Agency

Other gender theorists also appear to be blind to the possibility that transsexuals could have agency. As with Raymond (1979, 176), Eichler regrets that when transsexuals attempt to resolve *their* anguish by hormones and surgery, they are wasting a "radical" opportunity to destabilise the existing sex/gender construct:

> Transsexuals are people who suffer so deeply from the sex structure that they are willing to endure terrible pain and loneliness in order to reduce their suffering. This group of people would - potentially - be the most potent group of people for pressing for changes in the sex structure, because their aversion to their "sex-appropriate" roles is apparently insurmountable. By declaring them, by surgical fiat, as members of the other sex, this change potential is diverted and becomes as conservative as it could have been revolutionary (Eichler, 1980, 88).

In this passage, Eichler mis-reads the transsexual "project" and assumes:

- That the cause of the anguish, and also the "end-point" in the transsexual project is gender-coded role-play (GRB), rather than genderal legitimacy (SGL)[7];
- That the transsexual population have some sort of special moral responsibility to deny their own sexual/genderal fulfillment for a potential "greater good";
- That this potential "greater good" would be somehow more fulfilling for *either* the transsexed, or the non-transsexed "normals".

[7] I discuss this "error" of mistaking the outer, visible *part* of of "gender" for the *whole* in Chapter 8.

Of course, in one sense, the transsexual project is inherently *conservative*, because it is directed at occupying gendered space *as "ordinary"*. While the *location* of the end-point of the transsexual project may appear to be "conservative", the process of getting there is not, if one acknowledges the personal agency involved. I question why the prerogative for genderal "revolution" should be limited to transsexuals alone. Armchair gender-theorists, such as Eichler and Raymond are free to *personally* engage in whatever project of gender-destabilisation they chose. For example, a non-transsexed person (such as Eichler or Raymond) could commit a "radical[8]" act of gender-destabilisation by transforming *their own* bodies in the way that transsexuals do. They would then be "self-made-transsexuals", with the same, or even greater, "potential" to change existing structures in the way that they wish to impose on their "objects-of-study".

Gender-essentialists deny transsexual agency because their problematising of "gender" as being "oppressive" depends upon it. By arguing that transsexuals are lacking in agency almost irresistibly leads to the assumption that they are "victims" of the rigidity of the existing gender-construct. In this "victimhood" model, they had neither the power to resist developing their "condition", nor the agency to resolve it. Transsexual autobiographers rarely attribute their "condition" to conspiracy-theories; their own celebration of agency would be undermined if they dwelt on causation (although there is often some bitterness when they recount their difficulties in transcending their condition, see 3.1.6 on page 164 and 3.1.13 on page 174).

[8]As they would also have exercised the *agency* in their own transformations which they refuse to acknowledge in "real" transsexuals, they would be much more "radical".

5.2.2 Agency *As* Essence

Is it possible that transsexuals are *not* dupes of the social construction of gender, of language, of patriarchal medical empires, or of late-capitalism? Could it be that they have sufficient self-knowledge and agency to define and control their own condition? Whilst conceding the necessary access to modern medical technology, are transsexuals capable of defining an identity for themselves which is anything but an aberration of the normal? I believe that there is evidence in the narratives of a transsexual essentialism: That all transsexuals, not just the surprising number of transsexual academics, have a special understanding of sexual embodiment, gender identity and of the social construction of gender roles, which can only come from the lived experience of being transsexual[9]. This understanding leads to a relatively straightforward discourse which is both internally consistent, and surprisingly consistent across the autobiographies. The shared understandings include:

- That the "self" is gendered, that is, it is based on a *recognition* of one's gender identity (ISG);
- That, at its core, gender identity (CGI) is fixed and resistant to any amount of coercion to change;
- That gender identity (CGI & ISG) has primacy over sexual embodiment and gender-role (GRB), and this primacy is almost irresistible;
- That where one's sexual embodiment is not the same as one's

[9]I am not claiming that the transsexual condition *generates* any special ability to rationalise such matters, but it is probable that those proto-transsexuals who do not have at least a reasonable capacity for critical self-insight, do not manifest themselves as *recognisably* transsexual. It is likely that such proto-transsexuals have either suicided, or have diverted their gender-anguish into another, probably destructive form. Only the *survivors* of the condition are in a position to write autobiographies that are recognisable as "transsexual".

gender identity, resistance to the primacy of gender identity will lead to miserable, unfulfilled lives;

- That sexual embodiment and gender-role performance can, to a large extent, be changed sufficiently to be able to live as "ordinary" members of the other sex;
- That sexual "authenticity" is illusory: it is possible to be an *ordinary* woman/man without being a *real* woman/man.

None of these "understandings" delegitimise the non-transsexed from their occupation of gendered space: In most cases these understandings are simply *irrelevant* to anyone who is not transsexual (or intersexed). For transsexuals, this "essence" stands in the place of the "natural", naive assumptions made about "ordinary" engenderment, and as such, may threaten the comfortable, naive *terms of occupation* of gendered space that the non-transsexed enjoy. Apart from the early autobiographies, where the necessary language was not available to frame a legitimate *transsexual* essence[10], I have found no counter-understandings in any of the biographical texts. Non-transsexuals can live their lives without ever critically addressing any of these propositions. In fact, the "normal" construction of gender usually [11] *precludes* any more than a superficial examination.

5.3 Pursuit of "The Ordinary"

For transsexuals to occupy "The Ordinary" within gendered space, some acknowledgement of their *agency*, and of the *validity* of their sexual re-embodiment is necessary to stand in place of "The Real", as the basis of their genderal legitimacy. Only in those early accounts, which make some form of a claim of "intersexuality" (see

[10]The early authors appropriated an "intersexed" essence, because of the difficulties in articulating their own, see 4.5 on page 212.

[11]As articulated by Garfinkel, 1968, 122-128

212) does the transsexual narrative attempt to extend the occupation of gendered space into "the real", that is, by making a claim of *sexual* authenticity underpinning genderal legitimacy. The three accounts which I believe are fictional also exaggerate the "real" in the form of physical attractiveness: All of these narrators make claims of being very beautiful and convincing as women, which, given the limitations of hormonal and surgical transformation for male-to-females, is uncommon, although not impossible. In contrast, the one author who *was* sufficiently attractive to work as an actress and model, Caroline Cossey, is far more modest about her physical attributes in her writing. The early authors needed to claim "the real" because, at the time of their transformation, genderal notions of "the real" and "the ordinary" were conflated. "The real" (or hyper-real) descriptions of sexual/genderal authenticity is a characteristic of transvestite fiction[12], and it is also grounds for suspecting the veracity of "transsexual" works by Fontaine and McClain.

5.3.1 Occupying Sexed/Gendered Space as "Ordinary"

Arguments advanced by transsexuals for gender-legitimacy based on pragmatism, affiliation and the pursuit of happiness make a claim to occupation of gendered space as "ordinary", or "legitimate" rather than as "real[13]". Their claims are generally not centred on "scientific" evidence or of statistics, bodily measurements or ac-

[12]Ackroyd comments on this characteristic of the sub-genre: "It would be easy to be ironic or dismissive about this kind of writing, but its over-elaborate femininity is a melancholic reminder of how deeply the sexual stereotypes are ingrained within our culture" (1979,23).

[13]However, as they frequently assert that their gender identity (CGI) has primacy over their birthsex and childhood socialisation, they are effectively claiming that their *core gender identity* is "real" (and immutable and enduring), despite other re-workings of their bodies and social roles. This notion of "reality" lies outside the usual, "natural" assumptions made about sex/gender authenticity, and is not identified in Garfinkel's work (1967, 122-128).

counts of sexual attractiveness or prowess[14]. The "ordinary" may be expressed in terms of "wholeness" or "congruence", without the tensions, contradictions, and pain of their early life:

> I realised that the very root of the transsexuals need for role re-assignment is the universal, but usually unacknowledged, striving for wholeness (Rees, 1995, 179).

There is a contradiction in having the transsexual narratives serve as a justification for occupation of "the ordinary". Non-transsexuals also occupy "the ordinary", but without having to offer up such accounts of genderal introspection. Whilst the stories may represent an attempt to sanction an unqualified[15] occupation of gendered space, they cannot provide an "innocent" occupation of engenderment.

5.3.2 Occupying Sexed/Gendered Space *Without* "The Real"

The autobiographies describe the "ordinary", rather than "the real" occupation of gendered space, yet many of the critics of the phenomenon insist on subjecting the narratives to reality-testing. Raymond's (1979) "reality-testing" approach[16] becomes an exercise in

[14]Ironically, the transvestite literature frequently *does* offer up this type of "evidence". Transvestite story-telling often includes overly-detailed descriptions of clothing, body measurements [even when they are "fake", such as clinched-in waists and false breasts]. The actual number of occasions where the transvestite story-teller "passed" is recounted in detail. Apparently, a veneer of "reality", perhaps for only a few hours per month is important. This suggests that casual cross-dressers are never making more than a transient, ritualised bid for "the real".

[15]That is, if their narratives generate a wide-ranging acceptance of their genderal legitimacy, then they have acquired a genderal status which is similar to their peers, who do not have to mount such a process of validation.

[16]Raymond's denial of legitimacy of transsexual's sex/gender dysphoria leads to her "Suggestions for change" (1979, 178-185), which proposes to have them to seek counselling/consciousness raising treatment to eliminate the thing that they consistently identify as the core of their being, i.e., their gender-identity.

border-keeping and exclusion, which fails to effectively engage with the discourse on sex and gender in the texts because of a variety of reasons.

The later autobiographies do not dwell on the writers absolute *authenticity* of bodily sex, or of an *essentialness*[17] of womanhood or manhood. Therefore, a "reality-testing" process would attempt to read into the transsexual narratives something which is either absent from, or peripheral to their discourse. There is little evidence of "patriarchal conspiracy" within the autobiographies and many stories recount how the psycho-medical establishment strongly *discouraged* the authors' attempts to obtain SRS[18]. Caroline Cossey tells of an encounter with a "gate-keeping" psychiatrist who attempted to test her resolve, or to dissuade her from surgery. He shows a mis-reading of Caroline's desire for surgery as a pursuit of "the real", while Caroline, as a patient claims a more pragmatic reason for bodily transformation:

> "You do understand, don't you?" he said over and over. "You'll never be a true woman".
>
> I began to feel irritated. What was a real woman in any case? Of course I understood that surgery could never make right the great confusion I had experienced as a child, but it could help me function in the world I lived in, it could help me to live the life I wanted for myself, it could enable me to express my sexuality. . . . unless you have known what it is to live with your body and mind at

Raymond's prescription runs counter to the wishes of the transsexuals themselves, and it is offered in the absence of any evidence of its effectiveness. An unproductive circularity is set up, where a conspiracy is contrived between "patriarchal" medicine and patients, who, by their actions, disqualify themselves from agency in defining, or resolving the problem of gender dysphoria.

[17]I discuss the possibility of a transsexual essentialism at 5.2 on page 242.

[18]Morris, Rees, Richards, Hewitt, Grant, Thompson, Conn, Hunt, Ashley, Fry, Johnson, Brown and Martino are examples of transsexual autobiographers who were turned away by psycho-medical practitioners on at *least* one occasion. Many subsequently travelled overseas to obtain surgery.

> war, I don't think it is possible really to understand the sense of torment that I was experiencing.
>
> "No matter what surgery we perform", he continued, "we can never transform your sex".
>
> I was determined not to get rattled. This was a gate that I had to pass through and here was the man who could open that gate. (Cossey, 1991, 90).

The texts describe micro-scale adjustments of living in gendered space, which Raymond obscures by an over-riding, macro-scale denial that they had any right to occupy that space as women under *any* terms: "Transsexuals are *not* women. They are deviant males" (1979, 183, *emphasis in original*).

Essentialists, such as Raymond, presume to know what is, or is not, "normal" in absolute terms. Transsexuals would fail almost any rigidly-defined, sex/gender "authenticity" test, because they are not *identical* to the "normal" woman/man. However, the problem of *defining* "normal" as a set of criteria for admission to everyday gendered transactions is insurmountable, as all genetic women are not identical, and nor are men. Garfinkel has described a set of "natural" assumptions about sex/gender (1967, 122-128) which make everyday transactions possible (and comfortable) in gendered space for almost all of the participants. As Garfinkel's account of "Agnes" illustrates, presenting *as if* one was "normal" will almost certainly generate acceptance by one's peers *as* a normally sex/gendered person.

By defining "normal" tightly, many people of differing cultures, races, socialisation and genetic variations would be excluded from the sex/gender category that both they, and the society around them had previously regarded as "real", or "normal". This approach is not only iniquitous to those excluded from "the real", but even those fortunate few who qualified as "normal" would be forever constrained by the restrictive criteria, with its implied threat of dele-

gitimisation if they stray from the norm. Raymond's approach not only assumes that there is only *one* way to be a woman (or man), but it also polices the boundaries of what are the permissible limits of woman(man)hood.

Other gender theorists, such as Rothblatt (1995, 19) propose the abolition of "gender" (and even "sex") as a defining category for humans. By setting the criteria of "woman" or "man" so wide that every possible natural variation of sex/gender is accommodated, so many transsexuals would also be included as "real", that the exercise in border-keeping would become meaningless. While Rothblatt, as a transsexual hirself, may see the prospect of personal transcendence in this proposition, it is unlikely to gain acceptance by either the wider public, or of other transsexuals, who appear to be driven by a need for *gender-legitimisation* in their perceived gender, rather than an abandonment of the legitimisation *process* which caused them so much anguish while they remained in their birthsex.

The processes of gatekeeping, or of exclusion produce very little understanding of either "gender", or of transsexuality for any of the participants. Transsexuals could be failed on a single criteria: chromosomes, fecundity, internal organs, or congruency of personal histories. As a rigid concept of "the real" demands 100% authenticity, the examination need not proceed further. The aspects of their lives where they may, in fact, be successful: Social/sexual function, body morphology, gender identity count for little, for they have been pre-emptively delegitimised as "real" women/men on other grounds.

Sexual/genderal gatekeeping is only possible because because it is limited in scope to those who are perceived as belonging to, or coming from, the *periphery* of the gendered landscape. "The centre" is occupied by those whose genderal legitimacy *appears* to be above challenge. The assumption that any "natural" person *could* be challenged, or denied legitimacy of sex/gender in what is still

a rigidly sex/gender dichotomous society is inequitable on a personal level and potentially dangerous for the wider society, as no-one would be assured of a *comfortable* occupation of their engenderment. A discourse which re-inforces the distinction in genderal legitimacy between the centre (unchallengable) and the periphery (challengable) is, in some ways, a valuable public service. Many "public servants", ranging from psycho-medical gatekeepers, to essentialists such as Raymond[19], to "transgender" stage performers are engaged in this process (see 4.6.1.1 on page 224).

5.4 Sex/Gender as Fluid, Or as a Rigid Binary?

So, what have theoretical notions of sexual or genderal fluidity got to do with agency, or the mechanics of social and physical re-embodiment? The argument for genderal fluidity is the *countervail* of the transsexual "project". While some theorists[20] advocate "fluidity" in sex and gender, they do not validate the recurring themes of the transsexual narrative[21]. The "fluidists" confuse the *expression* of gender identity (GRB) with the *substance* of gender identity (CGI). The intractability of core gender identity, which is not addressed in "real-world" by the fluidity"solution[22]" *is* supposed to be *the* trans-

[19]While Raymond accuses the psycho-medical gatekeepers of being re-enforcers of the existing gender order (1979, 70), I include her as a fellow "public servant" with the professionals who "manage" the transsexual condition. While the psycho-medical gatekeepers maintain the centre/peripheral gender-order by *regularising* the entry of selected transsexuals into "the centre", Raymond maintains the same centre/peripheral gender-order by steadfastly *refusing to legitimise* any transitions from the periphery to the centre.

[20]Fausto-Stirling, Bem, Rothblatt, Bornstein.

[21]Primarily, the themes celebrate *agency*. They argue for recognition that anguish over one's location within a fundamental genderal binary is a *valid* impetus for change, and alteration of one's sexual embodiment as a *valid* "cure" for that anguish.

[22]That is, to deny the significance of genderal "difference" and/or to accept a gendered status *outside* the now-destabilised binary.

sexual problem. The "fluidity" prescription does not acknowledge the probable significance of the process of gender *legitimation* in constructing a sense of selfhood. Building on my earlier comments at 5.2 on page 242 on the fluidity advocated by Sandra Bem (111, 1993), I would counter-hypothesise that in a world where "gender" differences had no *meaning*, I believe that everyone would suffer a similar anguish to that currently experienced by transsexuals who cannot socially legitimate their convictions of engenderment. However, in such a hypothetical situation, if notional "gender" was not available as a vehicle for constructing a sense of "selfhood", it is highly probable that *another basis* for constructing a social dichotomy would arise in its place. Compared to the notions of "sex" or "gender", the *alternative* grounds for binary "differentiation[23]" are much less stable, or readily comprehensible.

The accounts of most of the transsexual authors contain an insistence that gender identity (CGI) *cannot* be transcended, subverted, held in multiplicity, or disregarded[24]; and this genderal immutability is what causes them such pain, that they are driven to take steps which are *unthinkable* within a "natural" understanding of the gender landscape. On a personal level, the success of their sexual re-embodiment is measured not in terms of how *subversive* it is, but on how much it allows the post-operative person to live *within* the existing binary. For a theorist who has conflated, or confused genderal expression (GRB) with core identity (CGI), these transformations may well *appear* to be subversive, but viewed from within a transsexual life-experience, bodily transformation is more likely to be a pragmatic, and desperate solution to an otherwise resolvable problem. Despite her own exploitation of the notion of

[23]Grounds such as race, culture, intelligence, ability, age, class, etc. While many of these attributes *are* used to construct social dichotomies, their borders are not as stable, or as almost universally comprehended as that of notional "sex", or its cultural extension, "gender".

[24]Many of the authors spent years trying to assuage their gender-anguish by attempting some, or all of these devices, before accepting their transsexual condition.

"gender-transgression" as a vehicle for entertainment, Carlotta's weary sense of pragmatism hardly reads as "subversive": "For all those people who continue to ridicule us and believe that we choose to be what we are, sorry, but you're wrong. I've lived this life. I know" (1994, 74).

5.4.1 Post-Modern Discourses

Post-modern discourses by those writers with an investment in gender-dysphoria and its resolution differ from those safely sited within "the ordinary". As a non-transsexual gender-theorist, Hausman confuses the transsexual "project" as one of establishing a specifically transsexual identity located within its own distinct, and distant part of the gender landscape, rather than, as I will argue in Chapter 8, transcendence into a non-marginal identity of "ordinary" maleness/femaleness. While she correctly distinguishes the "transsexual" project from the "homosexual" project, she nevertheless treats the two phenomena as *equivalent* expressions of marginal identity politics:

> It is transsexualism's special *conceptual* and *material* relation to medical discourse and practice that distinguishes it from homosexuality. Thus, while transsexuals suffer from any public and private indignities that make their social position like that of lesbians and gays in important way - with regard to housing and job discrimination, living in a "closet", passing, being subject to violent attacks, etc. - transsexuals must seek and obtain medical treatment in order to be recognised *as transsexuals* (Hausman, 1995, 3 *emphasis in original*).

The end-point for most transsexuals (as distinct from both homosexuals and transgenderists) is to *cease to be* transsexuals; that

is, to become "ordinary" women and men. The end-points for homosexuals are *not* equivalent: Issues such as recognition, elimination of discrimination, respect, safety, "ordinary *but* homosexual" may be their goals. Transsexuality, now that hormonal and surgical transformation is possible, can be regarded as a means to an end, rather than a passive response to the availability of medical procedures defining an ongoing condition[25]. After transformation, the formerly gender-dysphoric individuals remain transsexuals[26] only as far as they need to manage their *histories* of being born into the other sexual embodiment; which may extend to negotiating the constraints on the legal and social recognition of their gender-legitimacy. To an outsider, the notion of a threat to the existing sex/gender landscape posed by any genderally marginalised group may be of similar weight, but it does not follow that either the substance, or location, of transsexuality *within* the gendered landscape should have any *equivalence* to homosexuality, as it applies to the lives of the people who experience these phenomena first-hand. While discourses *about* homosexuality have been largely re-claimed by homosexuals themselves, the transsexual experience is sometimes reduced to a metaphor for the worst fears of the non-transsexed (including homosexuals) to serve the same border-keeping function: "Suddenly the transsexual has been resituated as the central figure in gender deviance, the one body that

[25]Other procedures, such as the psycho-therapy advocated by Raymond and Millot, would, in all probability, require an ongoing, possibly life-long maintenance by a "professional". While there is no evidence of the effectiveness of these therapies (Walters et al, 1986, 148), and they are generally not sought by transsexuals themselves, these processes do not promise the same closure, or accommodation within "the ordinary" that surgery offers.

[26]The *maintenance* of their transformed bodies is not necessarily outside the "normal" range of medical procedures for the non-transsexed. Hormone replacement therapy would be similar in form and delivery to that of non-transsexed persons without functioning gonads. Vaginal dilation for male-to-females would normally only be be required if they were not engaging in regular, penetrative sex. A lack of natural vaginal lubrication for male-to-females is, again, resolvable with over-the-counter pharmaceutical products. The exception to this state of "ordinariness" is that of female-to-male genitals (see 5.1.1.3 on page 238).

suffers, the only body that believes in gender and as an antidote to queer mobility" (Halberstam, 1998, 167). In adopting a similar stance to an abstracted notion of "gender-transgression", both gay *and* heterosexual authors can deflect their shared (but differently directed) anxiety over sexual performance towards a common concern over the label of "gender-deviance" (which both groups are as *equally unlikely* to ever suffer from).

5.4.2 Transsexual Discourses on Sex/Gender "Fluidity"

Transsexual writers, such as Bornstein and Wilchins have recently explored the concept of sex/gender fluidity in order to add weight to their public exposure as gender activists (Rothblatt and Feinberg also take this approach, but from a more "transgenderist" stance). Perhaps significantly, none of these theorists offer up a "conventional" transsexual autobiography. Their activism is celebrated by other gender-theorists and their experiences as transsexuals is used to confer authority on their writing and public appearances. Are these people radical or conservative? While they *are* visible, they are also entertaining: They offer up little to challenge the existing gender construct because their discourse comes from performers identified as safely *outside* that construct. Their presentation would serve to re-inforce notions that "normal" sex and gender cannot be *successfully* changed. The transsexual performers tell a story which can be construed as one of a personal project for finding solace in genderal *performance* on the margins, after they have realised the "futility" of the venture as genderal *transcendence*. As performers, they do not dwell on "the ordinary", such as the conventional transsexual narrators offer, because such a tale would move from the entertainment value of illustrating futility or failure *within* the superficialities of "public" gender, to the largely unarticulated threat of *transcendence* at a level of engen-

derment which haunts us all (i.e., it undermines the "naive" occupation of gendered space by the non-transsexed). See also 4.6.1.1 on page 224.

5.4.2.1 Genderal Fluidity?

Rothblatt sees a binary model of gender as oppressive, and advocates a spectrum of 256 "genders", designated by colours; for example, Lime-green, or Blue (1995, 110-116). Feinberg (1998) argues for the abolition of the notion of "gender" itself. After the challenges to the public understandings of engenderment (EUG) which commenced around the time of the publicity generated around Christine Jorgensen's transformation, the "gender-fluidity" message would come as light relief. Instead of the conventional transsexual narrative posing the question, *How can one of us/them feel so much like one of them/us?*, the fluidists can be compartmentalised elsewhere, out of harm's way: *Well, they just don't do gender in the same way as we regular folk do!* The fluidity discourse maps out a *separate* space in which the transsexed can be marginalised. The "conventional" transsexual discourse *demands* inclusion within the existing genderal structure. Both discourses argue that the substance of engenderment is somewhat different to "commonsense" understandings (EUG) in terms of mutability and relevance. Fluidists claim "gender" is an oppressive social construct that should be transcended, blurred or even abolished, and they usually offer *abstracted* examples of their own transitions in support of this argument[27].

[27]They also offer up autobiographical fragments of a more prosaic nature which do *not* support the "fluidity" case. Despite her own radical stance on some aspects of gender-theory, Riki-Anne Wilchins displays a typically transsexual pride in her "rite-of-passage" and an antipathy towards those gender-fluidists who see transsexual re-embodiment as subversive *on their terms*: "...my body didn't come this way - I made it this way. I like it this way. I'm angry at the parade of right-wing feminists and pseudoqueers who want to sit in judgement of my life and what I do with my body" (1997, 193).

5.4.2.2 Genderal Immutability?

At the other extreme, "conventional" transsexual autobiographers build their stories around the enduring and immutable nature of a core gender identity (CGI) which is similarly located on the gendered landscape to the engenderment of the non-transsexed (if it was ever unpacked, so that it could be recognised as a discrete component of engenderment). Although *linguistically* different from the largely unarticulated indigenous occupation of gender, the "conventional" transsexual narrative poses no threat of substance to the existing order. For the "conventional" transsexual argument of immutability of core gender *within an ordinary gendered landscape* to be accepted as the impetus for their transformation, it would follow that such a conviction *could* equally apply to all non-transsexed people as part of their fullfilment as human beings.

5.4.2.3 Sexual Fluidity?

The "everyday" notion of sexual embodiment is that it is invariant and unambiguous. Despite the existence of persons born intersexed, and of the transsexual narrative, Foucault observes that a contrary understanding amongst both "experts" and public opinion:

> ... [T]he idea that one must indeed finally have a true sex is far from being completely dispelled. Whatever the opinion of biologists on this point, the idea that there exist complex, obscure and essential relationships between sex and truth is to be found - at least in a diffused state - not only in psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and psychology, but also in current opinion (1980, x).

The transsexual narrative attempts to counter this nexus between *sexual* embodiment and "truth" by subordinating it to a "gender-

truth" (CGI) which has even stronger fixity and essence. Furthermore, the availability of genital surgery provides evidence of a transcendence of sexual embodiment which can be comprehensible *as* "truth".

Both the "gender-fluidity" and the "conventional" transsexual narratives point to the variance and relative mutability of sexual markers which signify "femaleness", or "maleness". The authors recount their first-hand experience of how a physical presentation affects gender-attribution (passing). Furthermore, within some of the narratives, there is a parallel, if imperfectly understood, discourse regarding the sexual embodiment of intersexed people, and the early transsexual story-tellers conflated the two states. "Conventional" transsexual autobiographies often contain a series of photographs, from childhood to the present, to mark the *physical* transformation of the author. Even where such pictures contribute little to the story itself, they can form a separate narrative of physical transcendence, as a "truth[28]", to supplement the text-based account of gender-anguish, leading to social transformation.

[28]In Fontaine's almost certainly fictitious work (1981), the posed, "before and after" photographs (of visibly different, and unnamed models!) are arranged side-by-side to give some illusion of the "truth" of that transcendence.

Chapter 6

Occupying Gendered Space

6.1 Transsexualism:A Spatial Concept of Embodiment?

The transsexual "project" involves a re-mapping of the skin's surface, in order to generate different social *meanings* for that surface. The author's discourses on sexual/genderal "authenticity" can be regarded as contested claims for an otherwise almost universally comprehended[1] space within a gendered landscape.

6.1.1 Limitations of Existing Approaches to Situating Transsexuality Within Society

Some models of gender appear to be aspatial, and constructed like recipes; a set number of ingredients need to be present, and they need to be processed in a certain manner, before the end-result has validity. In a model of genderal *authenticity* which is strongly bipolar, but *aspatial*, any claim to "the feminine" by a person born with

[1]That is, it is *only* transsexuals (and some intersexed people) whose claims for genderal legitimacy are not *comprehended* within a "naive" understanding of natural sex/gender (see Garfinkel, 122-128).

a male body[2] will fail on several grounds, chromosomes, internal organs, reproductive potential, history, or socialisation. The process of failing to meet *any one* of the "natural" criteria of genderal authenticity will disqualify the transsexual claimant *as an agent*[3], and enquiry need not proceed to all other criteria. If they fail on *any* ground to be "authentic" women (or men), then any further protestations of engenderment can then be read as illusory: Whatever place transsexuals *might* have within (or without) an aspatial binary, there is no place for their discourse *as an authentic voice.*

In a *wholly* "gender-fluid" model of engenderment, there is also no place for a transsexual discourse[4], because there is no discrete gendered ground to claim, and notions of sexual/social "transitions" are rendered meaningless without a common understanding of a distinct starting and finishing point. This model has no provision to recognise transsexuality as a *personal* sex/gender-problem, and places a much lower value on personal transition as a "cure" for personal gender anguish than the transsexual applies to hirself, so the celebration of *personal* agency which is so prevalent in the transsexual narrative would have little significance.

6.1.2 Can a Spatial Analysis Provide a Different Account of Transsexual Embodiment?

One could also consider "gender" as a map; in terms of the overall *strength* of a claim to gendered space, even where the components of that claim may vary slightly. A spatial analysis allows a reader to assume, as a first principle, that the transsexual narrators are

[2]And, of course, a similar situation would apply to a claim to "the masculine" by a person born into a female body.

[3]There is still scope in this model for incorporating the transsexual into society *without agency*, as a victim of defective childhood socialisation, or as dupes of patriarchal conspiracy by Raymond's "Empire" (1979) but their genderal legitimacy would be denied.

[4]Or, indeed, any other discourse on binary genderal authenticity by non-transsexuals would have little meaning.

in occupation of a similar (or diametrically opposite) *type* of engenderment to themselves. The case for the "legitimacy" for that occupation can then be unfolded, and the reader can assess the strength of the case without directly undermining their own sense of engenderment. Even where the most accessible parts of a non-transsexual reader's terms of occupation of gender do not accord with that of a transsexual claimant's, a viable case for genderal legitimacy is still possible.

6.1.2.1 Advantages

Many of the critics of the transsexual phenomenon challenge the transsexual's claims to "authenticity". This stance assumes that "authenticity" is stable, one-dimensional and knowable. A spatial approach can ask; "Have they arrived?"; "Where have they arrived?"; "What route did they take?"; and perhaps more importantly; "What are the *terms of their occupation* of gendered space?"

6.1.2.2 Limitations

One difficulty is with "Geographic" language. Although occasional spatial terms do infiltrate the discourse on gender, most gendered transactions do not take place as *overtly* spatial processes.

6.2 Exploring Socialisation into a Discordant Gender

If core gender identity (CGI) (as distinct from other aspects of engenderment) was *wholly* socially constructed, then transsexuals, as a group, must have received a specific and identifiably defective form of childhood socialisation. It is not possible to discern a *pattern* of problematic socialisation within the autobiographies in this study. Furthermore, it is not clear why non-transsexual

adults who were raised in gender-roles in contradiction to the sexual embodiment do *not* become transsexual (Renee Richards' sister, Mike is but one example (Richards and Ames, 1983, 11-14)). John Money proposed that there was a 18-month window from birth when gender-identity is malleable (Money, 1986, 232), but this theory is severely undermined by his involvement in the outcome of the "John/Joan" case of a genetic male, David Reimer, who reverted to his male gender-role (SGL, EUG) in adolescence, despite being deliberately raised as female following the accidental removal of his penis in childhood (Colapinto, 2000).✱

The above theories maintain the "commonsense" understanding that gender (EUG) is a social construct, while going some way to explain the anomalies of transsexual engenderment as a consequence of a *failure* of that socialisation. However, Stoller's assumption that a defect in childhood socialisation is responsible for the condition raises the question of just what is the *substance* of the defect. The autobiographies do not show a pattern consistent with Stoller's claim of distant or absent father-figures (1968, 326) and there is little evidence offered as to why such absence does not affect *every* child in such a family situation. The autobiographers' accounts point to an as-yet unidentified organic[5] cause, and in Chapter 8, I will draw on these stories to argue that core-gender identity (CGI) is physically-based state that is distinct from the more visible socially-constructed aspects of gender-role performance (GRB).

6.3 The Awakening: Childhood

Stories by transsexuals explore be(com)ing gendered female/male, or of resisting be(com)ing gendered female/male during girlhood and provide insights into both the mechanics of gender-focussed

[5]Or possibly, as an environmental cause which manifests itself *as if* it was organic (i.e., consistent, predictable, and irreversible).

Footnote *

While I acknowledge the pioneering work of Diamond (1982) and Diamond and Sigmundson (1997) in uncovering the clinical irregularities of the ``John/Joan" case; in this thesis I am giving primacy to personal *narratives*, rather than clinical notes and, therefore, I draw far more heavily on Colapinto's account of David Reimer's life than that of the psycho-medical professionals.

socialisation and the agency, claimed or actual, exercised by the proto-transsexual children themselves in this process. The language and the way of describing gender dysphoria has changed over the years, as society's understanding of gender (EUG) has evolved through the "natural" to the "scientific" to the "political" and this biographic sub-genre reflects this evolution. The accounts of girlhood/boyhood contained in these autobiographies tell of confusion, disappointment and an increasing unease with the authors' gender identity and sexual embodiment as they emerge into adulthood. Within the everyday understanding of a homogeneous "natural" engenderment (EUG), many of the biographers challenge notions that a conviction of being gendered female (or male) is a natural and inevitable outcome of either childhood socialisation *or* of sexual embodiment at birth. I draw on the accounts of girlhood/boyhood to explore what significance life history plays in our conviction, as adults, of being gendered female (or male).

6.3.1 Theorising Sexuality and Girlhood

What effect does girlhood (or boyhood) have on our adult lives? The glaringly obvious response would probably be that girlhood (or boyhood) is a necessary precursor to womanhood (or manhood). However, if one examines the autobiographies of transsexuals, a simple, monolithic thing called "girlhood" (or "boyhood") is difficult to isolate and describe. What components, if any, of girlhood are actually needed to be experienced to give one the conviction that one is a woman? I cannot accept the assertions of feminist theorists, such as Janice Raymond (1979) who use essentialist arguments to dismiss transsexual claims to gender legitimacy after bodily transformation. Raymond argues that transsexuals are deviant victims of a larger patriarchal conspiracy, and without a childhood socialisation as a girl, no one born in a male body can claim womanhood:

> We know that we are women who are born with fe-

> male chromosomes and anatomy . . . Transsexuals have not had this same history. No man can have the history of being born and located in this culture as a woman (Raymond, 1979, 114).

Raymond's approach ignores the agency that is claimed by the transsexual authors in negotiating the gender conditioning that they receive as children. Caroline Cossey exerted her claim to girlhood at school, even though the social cost was high:

> . . . the make-up, the long hair, and the refashioned school uniform cost me dearly in taunts and bullying. But my instincts to be female, to behave and be accepted as a woman, were so strong that I had no choice. Being a boy and all that entailed was far more painful than trying, in my own rather stumbling and inarticulate way, to be a girl (1991, 13).

Georgina Byer responded to threats of punishment for cross-dressing in her claimed gender (as a girl) by becoming more secretive, rather than considering that this gender-affirming process was inappropriate for someone with a boy's body:

> Colin and Mum made it clear that dressing up as a girl wasn't the thing for little boys to be doing. To them it was unnatural and had to be stopped. I was told in no uncertain terms that if I was ever caught doing it again, I would be in for a severe hiding. In fact, I simply became cleverer at hiding it.
>
> I went underground (Byer, 1999, 27).

Jennifer Spry had a "natural" attitude to her girlhood, despite the realities of her male body and socialisation as a boy. As pressure mounted for her to conform to the roles appropriate to boyhood, she exercised sufficient agency to maintain her gender-conviction:

> At the age of five I could not have known that what I was thinking would be interpreted by adults as abnormal. In my childish naivete I don't think I even knew that I was thinking differently from any child my age. By the time I was ten, however, I was using whatever opportunities came to me, via subterfuge or otherwise, to live as a girl (Spry, 1997, 16).

The essentialist argument must also assume that *all* gender- socialisation directed at girls, no matter how "good" or "bad", is taken up to similar effect by all but those small number of female-to-male transsexuals often described or categorised as "deviant[6]" (representing a "failure" of childhood socialisation, and thus preserving assumptions about the constructedness of gender).

Raymond dismisses female-to-male transsexuals as "tokens", thus denying them *agency* and avoiding recognition that the sort of childhood socialisation that is imposed on women could *ever* be resisted (Raymond, 1979, 27). The accounts of female-to-male authors frequently mention their *resistance* to "female" socialisation in girlhood. This somewhat predictable aspect of their stories could serve to indicate more than an observation that the socialisation failed to "take" in a passive sense, but that they actively sought to *counter-socialise* themselves. There is no hint of victimhood in their claims to an ethereal boyhood, rather a recognition of their own agency in their gender-socialisation. As a child, Robert Allen seems to have known that his behaviour was more significant than a passing "tomboy" phase:

> I had a fondness, too, for dressing up in his [hir father's] clothes, even to getting into his trousers which had to be well turned up and secured at the waist with elastic before I could walk around in them. This liking

[6]"Transsexual surgery can be viewed as taming potentially deviant women" (Raymond, 1979, xxiv).

> for masculine impersonation, and my preference for the company of boys rather that girls of my own age, apparently never struck my mother as being a pathological tendency. She had every reason to know, of course, that I was a difficult and refractory child and very unfeminine as little girls go, but then, she must have reasoned, plenty of girls behaved in exactly the same way that I was doing and then grew out of their tomboyishness into demure, marriageable misses. Mother must have thought that that was the way it was going to be with me (Allen, 1954, 36-37).

Paul Hewitt recounts not only his agency *in* choosing male friends, despite his embodiment, but he also celebrates the agency *of* his chosen peers (boys):

> Certainly, I was a typical tomboy. All my friends were boys. Indeed, at that time I'm not sure that I noticed that I was any different to them. I simply found the conversations and games which satisfied me were to be found among those wearing shorts and trousers. I empathised with boys competitive nature, the eternal struggle to be the top of the pecking order, and the way that they fought for respect rather than communicated interest in one another, like girls. I thought I was a boy, or perhaps I never thought about it. I was too busy dreaming that I was Tarzan, diving off waterfalls and wrestling with lions (Hewitt, 1996, 15).

There is little evidence in the biographies that they are "dupes" of an overly-rigid gender dichotomy, as the essentialists claim (Raymond, 1979, 27-28). Janice Raymond presents transsexuals as *products* of the psycho-medical establishment (the "Empire"), denying the possibility of the transsexuals' individuality or agency in the process:

> The kind of individualism that transsexual therapy promotes is really an individualism that serves a role-defined society and thus it is more realistic to say that it is an ethic of social conformity. . . . (Raymond, 1979, 98).
>
> The transsexual therapist – in adjusting the transsexual mind and behaviour to the stereotype of the desired sex – and the medical specialists – in adjusting the transsexual body to the desired body-type of the opposite sex – are dealing with transsexuals as manipulatable objects and reducing them to the world of appearances (Raymond, 1979, 145).

Because I accept the validity of the authors claims to "ordinary" gender, I also refuse to read the stories as *subversive* accounts of self-sacrificing sexual agents-provocateurs of gender destabilisation politics that seems to fascinate some post-modernists[7]. There is a growing cynicism amongst some transsexuals about the value of theorising by non-transsexuals about transsexual issues. Claudine Griggs gives more weight to a lived experience than to theory:

> I watched my femininity rise each new day – as a child, as a teenager, as an adult – even when I vehemently fought its ascent. I recognised unconscious manifestations at age sixteen with my first pregnancy dream, yet I hoped "Maybe I only dreamed what I dreamed". Character unremittingly staked its claim. Neither maleness, nor ostracism, nor self reproach could prevent it.

[7]Raymond implies that the transsexual (and "transgender") phenomena have failed as "sexuality's . . . cutting edge" (1996, 215), without, in the case of transsexuality, ever seriously questioning whether it was ever a "subversive" phenomenon (at least to the participants) in the first place. Perhaps both the threat, and the "subversive" potential of transsexuality arose, and subsequently dissipated, primarily within Raymond's own concept of engenderment, without extending to those whom she had appointed as her *proxy subverters*.

> Differences between men and women are all around us. Some are represented by variant role expectations, but the difference is inside us. Gender identity is the primary sex characteristic. It is real. It has a pulse. It wails in three dimensions and in the electrochemical substance. Postmodern gender theorists can neither create nor undo this reality (Griggs, 1998, 140).

Riki Anne Wilchins, a transsexual theorist, objects to the academic voyeurism of non-transsexual authors on the topic:

> Is there not something deeply immoral in the way these writers fail to help those whose lives they blithely mine for new insights and incantations? Do they never feel a twinge of guilt as their studies merely escalate the politicisation of our bodies, choices, and desires, so that, with each new book, while the audience enjoys the illusion of knowing more about us, we find ourselves more disempowered, dislocated, and exploited than before? Our performance of gender is invariably a site of contest, a problem which – if we could but bring enough hi-octane academic brainpower to bear – might be solved (Wilchins, 1997, 22).

The transsexual stories of "girlhood" describe the authors' sex/gender makeup as three distinct, and non-congruent components, that is, sexual embodiment, gender-role socialisation and gender identity. In explaining their gender-dysphoria, transsexuals usually make a distinction between their sense of engenderment (ISG) and the physical aspects of their sexed body, in ways that non-transsexuals do not need to do. The second aspect, gender-role/socialisation is both the cause of their pain (as it applies to their birth sex) and a substantial part of their salvation (resisting gender-socialisation and re-working gender role-behaviour strengthens their hold on their claimed gender).

I have accepted the transsexual authors' frequent claim that gender identity (CGI, ISG) has primacy over gender-role (GRB) and even one's genital arrangement: To do otherwise would be to interpret the texts as something other than primarily an assertion of selfhood[8].

Perhaps the unease created by the visibility of transsexuals (and intersexed people) stems not from their intrinsic pathology, but from the threat that they pose to the *naive* construction of "ordinary" gender (EUG). The stories of transsexuals call into question the assumption that ones' sense of *being* gendered is a social construct, and make the conflation of gender role (GRB) and identity (CGI, ISG) untenable.

While many transsexuals can often change their bodies to an acceptable degree to allow them to live as "ordinary" members of their claimed gender, and while transsexuals claim that their gender identity (CGI, ISG) has *always* been opposite to their birth sex, what of the *management* of their history? If, as Garfinkel claims, gender consists of several historically-based components, does that forever preclude occupation of a transsexual's achieved sex/gender *as* "ordinary"? (Garfinkel, 1967, 122-128). While I believe that at least part of the narrative involves constructing a history to stand *in the place of "the real"* and is, as such, a process no more dishonest than responding to questions of "How are you?" with an automatic "I'm doing well", regardless of the actual state of one's health.

Ordinary gender (EUG), as it is currently constructed, demands a contiguous, non-contradictory history, so it seems expedient to supply whatever is required, and it is sometimes dangerous to offer up anything else. In an "innocent" model of gender, such as described by Garfinkel (1967, 122-128), which does not acknowledge agency of children (or adults) in *managing* the construction

[8]I will argue in Chapter 8 that a socially "legitimated" sense of engenderment is the primary building block in constructing a sense of selfhood.

of their own gender roles, these transsexual autobiographers may appear to be merely "liars", or at least delusional. Even some of the "innocence" of a non-transsexual childhood sense of engendering can be offered up in the stories. Caroline Cossey tells of how she had at least some of the naive experience of girlhood that non-transsexual girls have, until the pressures of school destroyed that innocence:

> Our favourite game was dressing up . . . I would become so engrossed in my make-believe that I would lose all sense of being a boy - I felt like any little girl posing before the mirror in her mummy's clothes . . . But as I approached my fifth birthday I was in for a rude awakening. School was on the horizon, and with it was the growing awareness that I was not like other boys (Cossey, 1992, 4).

However, I believe that the *substance* of the accounts of "non-girlhoods" by female-to-male transsexuals and "ethereal girlhoods" by male-to-female transsexuals is valid, because these people actively filtered out, or gathered in, gender-coded experiences on the basis of their core gender identity (CGI, ISG) that they have had since early childhood. Mario Martino is almost boastful when he recounts how he *resisted* socialisation as a girl:

> We'll make a lady out of you, the counselor . . . had said. But I didn't want to be a lady! Accordingly, I'd packed extra jeans and my most mannish shirts to prove the point. After all, being a lady was how you felt inside, not how you dressed outside . . . *Nothing was going to change my mind about how I FELT* (Martino, 1977, *3, emphasis in original*).

Jan Morris claims that the first incident in her childhood that she can remember is when she first became aware of her female gender, which neatly serves to validate her claim to have *always* felt

she was a woman, as she owns *no* memory that predates this conviction:

> I was three or perhaps four years old when I realized that I had been born into the wrong body, and should really be a girl. I remember the moment well, and it is the earliest memory of my life (Morris, 1974, 9).

Kate Bornstein who, unlike the majority of transsexuals, has set out to destabilise the existing construct, sees this type of story-telling as undesirable:

> I was told by several counselors and a number of transgendered peers that I would need to invent a past for myself as a little girl, that I'd have to make up incidents of my girlhood; that I'd have to say things like, "When I was a little girl . . .". I never was a little girl; I'd lied all my life trying to be the boy, the man that I'd known myself *not* to be. Here I was, taking a giant step toward personal integrity by entering therapy with the truth and self acknowledgment that I was a transsexual, and was told, "Don't *tell* anyone you're transsexual". Transsexuality is the only condition for which the therapy is to lie (Bornstein, 1995, 62, *emphasis in original*).

Kate Bornstein is a public performer and author who makes her living out of gender-destabilisation (Bornstein, 1995, 143). Her statement seems brave and honest (and, incidentally, genderally "subversive"). But is this a reasonable demand to impose on *all* transsexuals, who, by doing so, may deny themselves access to the goal that they aspire to; namely, "Ordinary" gender? It also seems implicit in Bornstein's statement that she *never* experienced anything remotely like a girl, *never* negotiated the gendered landscape as a girl might, or *never*, even for a fleeting moment, regarded "us"

as female and "them" as male. Is she giving primacy to society's reaction to genital reality over the survival, resistance and childhood agency, which is the theme of the "conventional" autobiographies?

6.3.2 Stories of Girlhood . . .

There is no clear, or typical description of girlhood (or boyhood) in the narratives that indicates that gender identity (CGI) (as distinct from aspects of gender-roles (GRB)) is a social construct. The authors were raised by alcoholic parents, pillars of the community, dysfunctional families, caring families (Martino, Grant, Richards, Morris, Hewitt). Another example is that of identical female twins raised together: Martine (now Paul) Hewitt is a female-to-male transsexual while his sister Karen, has a female gender identity. The Hewitt's case challenges notions of both nature *and* nurture, as the twins share almost identical genetic material and apparently have received similar socialisation as girls, yet their gender identity (CGI) is expressed quite differently in adulthood. Despite their similar socialisation, Paul's (and Karen's) father recalls that the twins were displaying different gender identities in early childhood:

> You were both very different as children. A real case of chalk and cheese, he told me. Karen liked doing the girl's things and you liked doing the boy's things. You loved football from a very early age (Hewitt, 1996,17).

It would follow that if Paul's account of his childhood is true, then socialisation could not have *caused* the disparity in gender identity between himself and his sister. Furthermore, as they were identical twins, any physical *difference* between them would be slight, so any physical *cause* of their apparently opposite engenderment would be confined to a small area and be unequivocal[9] in effect.

[9]It is difficult to imagine how an *extensively*-located and indistinct variation at a cellular level could lead to a diametrically different and specific *mental* effect: Core gender identity (CGI) manifests itself as distinctly binary in form.

Even in families, such as that of Renee Richards, where the most bizarre gender-conditioning was applied to *both* her and her sister, some siblings are apparently unaffected by gender dysphoria (Richards, 1983). Renee's older sister was raised as a boy, and called Mike, yet in adulthood, she married and adopted an apparently conventional heterosexual identity as a woman. Mike also participated in the sexual torment of her then brother (Renee):

> She [Mike, her sister] was never nicer to me than when dressing me as a girl. Although the feminine clothes in her closet disgusted Mike, she took absolute delight in putting these same clothes on me. Starting when I was about two years old, Mike would periodically dress me in her panties and slip. She would then praise me for being so pretty. Strangely enough, my mother was present at several of these sessions and was as charmed as my sister by the sight of me so transformed. I was, in fact a pretty child, and I was so delighted by the unusual positivity, that I'm sure I was quite lovable. My mother, ordinarily so stern, treated me as if I was a delicate fairy child, a changeling who couldn't be blamed for the shortcomings of my other self. Whatever fears and hates my masculinity stirred in them were apparently neutralised by this simple action.
>
> My sister sometimes played another game with me when we were naked together – or at least when I was naked. She would take my penis and push it up inside my body, make it disappear. Then she would say, "See you're not a little boy, you're a little girl." She'd let it go, and it would come back out, sometimes much bigger than before. We both thought this remarkable; so my sister would push it in again and again and again (Richards, 1983, 12-13).

As a counter to the "gender as wholly a social construct" model, one could ask, "Why *didn't* Renee's sister, Mike, become a female-to-male transsexual?"

6.3.3 Girlhood as Unmarked Gender?

Whilst the occurrence of female-to-male and male-to-female transsexualism and the level of distress that it causes may be similar, social manifestations of the condition do not always mirror each other. Claudine Griggs concludes, after interviewing transsexuals, that adult female-to-male transsexuals are fleeing *from* womanhood with as much passion as male-to-female transsexuals are trying to move *towards* womanhood:

> While it is clear that male-to-female and female-to-male transsexuals both suffer from an inability to express gender openly and from gender attributions that oppose their identities, the anguish is different. FTMs are earnest about dispelling the feminine attributions; MTFs are solemn about gaining it (Griggs, 1998, 47).

In adults, the notion of "masculinity" does not seem to the focal point of the transsexuals' condition. This situation contrasts with experiences in childhood, where there is usually a degree of tolerance of tomboyism amongst female children and the frequent prohibition of sissy behaviour in males, which which appears to make "maleness" (or its deficiency) the site of resistance (or acquiescence to gender-socialisation for children.

Many of the proto-transsexuals did not have sufficient information about transsexuality in their childhood and adolescence to recognise the *underlying* cause of their unhappiness and social isolation, so they explore the possibility that their as-yet-unexplained gender dysphoria may be due to a "queerness"[10]. All of the twelve

[10]According to the model of engenderment that I describe in Chapter 8, their conscious (if unhappy), *linguistically-based* sense of gender-identity (ISG) was

autobiographies of female-to-male transsexuals that I have located describe *some* experience resembling lesbian contact, and some actually identify as lesbian for many years before they re-identify as transsexual. Mark Rees, while still embodied female, felt sexually attracted to a woman and initially explained his feelings as "lesbian", but when he accepted the primacy of his gender identity over his birth sex, the same *direction* of sexual orientation was re-read as "heterosexual" (for a male):

> Had I been male there is no doubt that I would have wanted to have my wicked way with her, restricted only by my own moral code. Yet still, because of lack of information, I regarded myself as some kind of deviant lesbian. I couldn't find another label.
>
> A few years later I attended a lesbian club. That finally convinced me, that whatever others may have thought, I was certainly no lesbian. The women there didn't want to be men; they were happy in their gender role (Rees, 1996, 58-59).

While some of these contacts could have been (and were) read as "lesbian" by outsiders, many of the authors did not see them this way. Raymond Thompson had his first sexual experience in a girl's borstal, but his conviction that he was male and his disdain for his female embodiment forced him into a one-way "stone-butch" relationship:

---

still in accord with their birth-sex at this time, for want of sufficient knowledge of the nature of transsexuality. Even though their core gender identity (CGI) would have been fixed at some time around their birth, it was not in accord with their ISG until they accepted that they were transsexed. The transsexual "project" usually requires a sufficiently coherent and strong conviction of gender-identity to overcome the inertia of the assumptions underpinning "ordinary" engenderment. It is only when CGI and ISG correspond that their anguish can be comprehended as a "body-problem". Prior to this revelation, they may regard their anguish as stemming from a misplaced *sexuality* ("queerness"), misplaced or thwarted *gender-expression* (transvesticism) or perhaps as a form of insanity.

> It was at the beginning of my time in borstal that I had my first sexual experience. A girl was very friendly towards me when I first arrived, and a few days later, when we were alone in the dormitory, it just happened . . . My sexual experiences were one-sided, and for many years they had to be. While my body was the way it was, there was no way anyone would be allowed to see or touch the parts of it that didn't belong to me . . . My body didn't exist in the way it was born; for me it only existed in my inner identity as male. Having a woman touch me sexually would not only have seemed perverse to me, but it would have broken my detachment, which I needed to maintain in order to keep my sanity (Thompson, 1995, 74-75).

Only three of a much larger number (52) of male-to-females spent time actively and apparently uncritically identifying as homosexual males (Julia Grant, Traci Fellows and Carmen). Why does a "lesbian" identification provide a refuge for evolving female-to-males, but what might be expected to be an equivalent gay male lifestyle rarely serves as a holding place for male-to-females during their gender-confusion? Claudine Griggs' observation may be of use in explaining this (Griggs, 1998, 47). If female-to-males are *fleeing* womanhood, then the gendered identity that *attaches* to a lesbian sexual orientation is *different* from "ordinary" womanhood. Pat Califia, before proceeding with bodily transformation in 2000, found a lesbian identity a useful way of managing hir "transgender" feelings:

> My lesbianism is largely a product of my profound emotional and erotic involvement with other women. But it was also a strategy for reducing my gender dysphoria, part of a search for a place where I could be more of a

> man, or at least a different sort of woman (Califia, 1997, 3).

However, for male-to-females, who want to *acquire* womanhood, a gay-male identity is not the same as *being* a woman. I expect that for many male-to-females, the identity attached to a "gay male" orientation, despite the sanction given to parody of women amongst "drag-queens", does not offer up the possibility of "*sameness*" or "ordinariness" as a woman. Thus, a male-to-female exploring hir[11] gender identity (ISG), dysphoria and social roles (GRB) may conclude that a gay lifestyle does offer "difference" from the male stereotypes that they feel alienated from, but that this identification neither puts them any closer to their goal of "sameness" with women, nor does it provide a resting place from which further explorations of gender identity can take place. Even when Caroline Cossey was accepted within parts of the gay male community, it was as a refuge, rather than an opportunity to explore her gender-identity:

> Although Adrian and I got on well, the differences between us soon became apparent. Adrian never wore make-up and couldn't understand why I did. He was a pretty boy, but, unlike me, he had no desire to be taken for a girl. "If you look too feminine, you'll never meet anyone in the gay scene", he explained. "Gay men like men. That's the whole point". But I enjoyed going to pubs looking like a girl. I had no words to explain my compulsion, and he was unable to change my mind (Cossey, 1992, 18).

[11] I use the claimed gender of each author when examining their texts, but because this is a general observation, I have used a gender-neutral term "hir", which has gained recent currency in intersex and transgender discourse.

6.3.4 Embodied Markers of Girlhood (and Non-Girlhood)

I have explored accounts of female-to-male "non-girlhood" to describe what develops as a result of being born in a female body and socialised as a female without *owning* a female identity. So, what does the experience of being embodied as a female child and receiving the socialisation usually accorded to a girl mean to a female-to-male transsexual who has had a conviction that he is male from an early age? How much "girlhood" seeps through the filter of an entrenched male gender identity? How much gender-coded socialisation is inverted, or re-read, as affirmation of a hidden, unarticulated gender identity (CGI, ISG), and how much is unassimilated, and turned into pain, alienation and confusion?

6.3.4.1 Breasts!

For a female-to-male proto-transsexual during "girlhood", the lack of breasts often allows access to many of the "ordinary" aspects of maleness, and embodiment is less problematic, because it is not acknowledged as "sexual", in the way that an adult female embodiment is regarded. The development of breasts is momentous, not only because they are signifiers of femaleness[12], but they preclude occupation of gendered space in the way that was possible prior to puberty. Mario Martino recognised the point in time when breasts, or the immanent appearance of breasts, signaled the end of an "innocent" childhood mimicry of his father:

> Pa liked to work without his shirt. Naturally, I did too. Because Pa did. Everything he did I aped-even to the way he hitched up his jeans. And then, suddenly one day in my ninth summer, he looked at my bare chest a second time and roared out at me: "Go home! And put

[12]Up until this stage, most female-to-male children had dealt with "femaleness" of embodiment by simply ignoring it.

> some clothes on!" I was mad. Just as mad as Pa was. If he didn't have to wear clothes on top, why did I? No one explained why (Martino, 1974, 11).

The *suddenness* of breast development distressed Paul Hewitt, although it is probable that he would have ignored their initial development and only acknowledged them as a problem when they became intrusive. Paul expresses a loathing over the possession of breasts many times in his autobiography, and offering the following "bizarre" explanation for their appearance, rather than a physically "natural" (however unwanted) pubertal development:

> I awoke one morning when I was seventeen and with horror sensed that I was sharing my bed with someone, or something, else. The day before I had no breasts to speak of, but I had awoken with a huge pair from hell which seemed to have appeared overnight. I remember thinking that I must have fallen victim to some bizarre genetic experiment (Hewitt, 1996, 51-52)

It is, of course, highly improbable that the author's breasts could have grown spontaneously in the course of a night. Paul's breasts, as tissue, would have developed at a similar pace to other female-bodied adolescents (including his twin sister), but Paul's *notion* of "breasts-as-a-problem" may have arisen overnight, when he could no longer ignore the reality his female embodiment, and the consequences for his internal sense of genderal legitimacy. Paul eventually celebrates the removal of his breasts as the climax of his book:

> My new manly chest is the best present anyone could ever give me, and not a day goes past when I don't admire it in the mirror (Hewitt, 1996, 293).

Again, for Mario Martino, the possession of a large pair of breasts made "passing" as male almost impossible, even with the most uncomfortable of chest-binding. And mere "passing" is still a long way from *comfortable* occupation of "the ordinary":

> Wanting only to be a man, I went to all imaginable lengths to be one: affecting male attire, male mannerisms and figures of speech, having my hair clipped at the men's barbershop, roughing up my bushy eyebrows. But no matter what I did, the picture remained imperfect. . . My spirits would fall. No amount of masquerading could ever hide a forty-four inch bustline (Martino, 1974, 134).

As with Paul Hewitt, Martino's book also celebrates the removal of his breasts:

> "Are they off?" I tried to look down at the massive pressure bandages covering my chest. Yes! Now I had a chest[13] as opposed to breasts. I felt wonderful - and immediately dozed off. When I next opened my eyes the same question: "Are they off?" (Martino, 1977, 184).
>
> Had there actually been surgery - or was I still wearing those unsightly breasts? (Martino, 1977, 185).
>
> The prospects of a hairy masculine chest filled me with new manly pride (Martino, 1977, 190).

Non-acquisition of breasts is not a physical marker of passage into manhood for the non-transsexed. Therefore, the *removal* of breasts does not seem to have an equivalence in ordinary "boyhood" for female-to-males. Mastectomy signifies an undoing of an *unowned* passage into womanhood, whereas the acquisition of breasts by

[13]Of course, he always had a "chest", in an anatomical sense, even when that chest supported breasts. He is celebrating having regained the chest *unmarked* by femaleness that he possessed in his childhood. See quotation earlier in this sub-section.

male-to-females, whether by hormones alone, or with surgical enhancement, is an equivalent (if delayed) physical marker of *owned* womanhood for them, as it is for non-transsexual women.

6.3.5 Naivete and Its Loss....

Many of the autobiographers mention that they were raised in an "innocence" of the sexual embodiment that would later bring them such unhappiness. A highly developed childhood curiousity about differences in sexual embodiment could be a *liability*, which could undermine the young transsexual's conviction of their "true" gender. Nancy Hunt recounts:

> In the innocence of the nursery, I paid scant attention to the biological arrangement between my legs, assuming that everyone was constructed the same way (Hunt, 1978, 44).

Mark Rees believed that s/he would grow up in accordance with hir gender identity (ISG), seemingly oblivious to the realities of hir embodiment and socialisation as a girl:

> I didn't realise until puberty that I'd grow up into a woman; it was something so inconceivable that I gave no thought to it (Rees, 1995, 6).

Even as s/he approached puberty, s/he regarded the disparity between hir internal sense of "maleness" (ISG) and hir experience of an *unowned* girlhood as quite "normal" among female children:

> At the age of ten I was happily ignorant of any problem of gender identity and still assumed that all girls wanted to be boys (Rees, 1995, 8).

Inevitably, childhood "innocence" gives way to the increasing imposition of gender-specific social expectations and the embodied realities of puberty. Geri Nettick recalls the simultaneous shattering of hir childhood expectation of being eventually recognised as female (ISG) together with the onset of a fathomless loneliness, when s/he first wore a school uniform – a boy's uniform:

> No matter how much my thoughts would turn to other things, no matter how much I fit in with my playmates or gained the approval of my parents and teachers, this feeling of dread would stay with me from then on. I knew I was trapped in a lie, and as I grew up, no one else seemed to notice what hung over me like a threatening storm cloud.
>
> I walked on, picturing myself in a plaid skirt and saddle shoes, knowing I had to give up that dream. And I cried now while I could, knowing I'd have to stop before I got home because no one would understand (Nettick, 1996, 40-41).

Christine Jorgensen saw the unfolding of the sex/gender binary as fundamentally *unfair*, at least as far as the way "boyhood" was applied to hir. The shock of the imposition of gender-roles is aggravated by the clumsiness of the adult response to this gender-dysphoric child. In some ways, Christine's parents displayed a greater degree of naivete than their child (although, as a result of the publicity surrounding Christine's later surgical and social transformation from male to female, at least some future parents would have been sensitised to the possibility of transsexualism for the first time):

> I became aware of the differences between my sister, Dolly, and me. Those differences, to me lay in the order of masculine and feminine things. Dolly had long blonde

> hair and wore dresses, both of which I admired but which were not allowed to me, and I was upset and puzzled by this. "Mom", I asked, "why didn't God make us all alike?" My mother gently explained that the world needed both men and women and that there was no way of knowing before a baby was born whether it would be a boy or girl. "You see, Brud", she said, "its one of God's surprises". "Well", I replied, "I don't like the kind of surprise God made me!" (Jorgensen, 1968, 11-12).

This passage illustrates a distinction between Jorgensen's awareness of the *existence* of the core gender binary (CGI) , and the *actuality* of hir apparent location in it (however unfair that might have felt to hir at the time), but without the subsequent development of an internal sense of *belonging* to the other (female) side (ISG) of the gendered landscape. This transitory discontinuity between hir internal convictions of engenderment (CGI *vs.* ISG) was resolved later, when s/he recognised hir internally legitimate gender as "female", and decided to become socially legitimised as a woman (SGL), by way of surgical transformation.

6.3.5.1 Sissy-Baiting . . .

In most cases, the male-to-female authors' expression of female-coded behaviour (GRB) was vigorously discouraged. Christine Jorgensen's love of a small piece of needlework was stamped out within the school system, because it signified an inappropriate level of "femaleness" in a boy:

> I can't recall how, but when I was eight, I had in some way acquired one of those rich treasures: a small piece of needlepoint which I kept hidden in my school desk. Occasionally, I would reach in my desk and touch it, or if no one was watching, I'd take it out and admire it secretly.

> I didn't display it openly, probably sensing the derision that might result (Jorgensen, 1968, 17-18).

The author's fears were realised when a teacher confiscated the needlepoint and confronted Christine/George's mother about the appropriateness of her son possessing this gender-coded object:

> In the silence that followed, the teacher took an object from her desk. "Is this yours?", She asked, with a prim little smile, holding the precious needlepoint just beyond my reach. "Yes", I answered. I felt a quick sting of tears, the blood rushing to my face and heard a hot little breath sucked in behind me in excitement. I reached out to take the needlepoint from her hand, but she withdrew it sharply and faced my mother. "Mrs. Jorgensen, do you think that this is anything for a red-blooded boy to have in his desk as a keepsake? The next thing we know, George will be bringing his knitting to school!" (Jorgensen, 1968, 17-18).

Ironically, the insults meted at Christine/George accused hir of an underlying femininity which s/he was unable to articulate at the time.

Canary Conn faced similar taunts from a male Gym teacher, who, secure in his own understanding of the gender-landscape and his place in it, assumed that another male-bodied person (Canary) would be intimidated into compliance by suggestions that s/he was a "lady/sissy/failed man":

> "You, that's right little lady. You think that I can make a man out of you? . . . Listen here, sissy, when I tell you to get your clothes on and get the hell out of here I mean it. And when I ask you a question you're going to answer me like a man. Do you understand me?" "Yes, sir!", I

> yelled. My voice cracked and went into a girlish scream. The boys who hadn't left broke into a laugh (Conn, 1974, 33).

While sissy-baiting may have some effect on policing the boundaries of gender-expression (GRB) in non-transsexual boys, the insults alluding to femininity would have served to re-inforce the conviction in these authors of the girl within themselves (ISG). These fragments of an "ethereal girlhood" are offered of as part of a historical claim to "womanhood" by male-to-female transsexual narrators. "Misattributions" of gender based on physical embodiment can be turned around to affirm a transsexual child's internal sense of self (ISG). For Jennifer Spry, a casual observation about hir hair generated feelings that were different to their intended purpose, and almost certainly different from the usual reaction of non-transsexual boys. Furthermore, the following incident was so significant that Jennifer remembered it as an adult and offers it up as part of her written claim to womanhood:

> When I was about eight or nine our next door neighbour said one day as we stood outside our house, "What beautiful hair you have. It is wasted on a boy. It should be on a girl". The comment struck me hard and I silently said to myself, "Oh but it is on a girl, it is. If only I could tell you". I am sure that other people involved in these incidents forget them in a moment, but for me they hit a chord that I can still hear (Spry, 1997, 10).

Canary Conn, although hurt by taunts of being a sissy, did not alter hir conviction of being a girl. Hir father's comments were not only meant to shame Canary into genderally-appropriate behaviour, it contained a tone of misogyny:

> My looks disappointed my father, although he never came right out and said it. My effeminate appearance

> was cause for continual challenge from him to stand up and be a man. "What are you, some kind of sissy or something?", he'd say. "If you can't do the work, maybe we can get you little sister to do it!" As I grew up, I realised that most of this kind of talk is common among men. But in my early years, I was very much aware that I wasn't a boy, let alone a man. As far as I was concerned, what they said about being a sissy was right. Sometimes the word hurt, though (Conn, 1974, 14-15).

The taunt of "sissy" may have been gender-coded as "female", but it conferred no genderal legitimacy for Canary, as a crypto-transsexual. It may have described the *location* of where s/he appeared to occupy gendered space, but conferred no recognition of hir *right* to occupy that place (SGL).

6.3.6 The Substance of Transsexualism?

Many of the authors argue the immutability of their gender identity as adults. Yet only one author suggests that their discordant gender identity might have been *caused* by childhood socialisation[14]. The substance of their hold on gender lies elsewhere: Although the authors either attribute their condition to various non-social causes (medical or spiritual), or simply accept their engenderment as an unfathomable given, the accounts of childhood concern the survival of this identity, despite the counter-conditioning. *The stories of girlhood (or boyhood) are of an already-existing, healthy gender under siege, not of a deviant gender in the making.*

Unlike most non-transsexuals, the autobiographers have felt compelled to explore their gender identity, gender-roles and sexual embodiment as distinct, and not necessarily concordant enti-

[14]Renee Richards describes hir childhood socialisation as being of the sort that *should* cause transsexuality: "If they aren't the true cause they ought to be" (Richards, 1983, 5)

ties. Jan Morris places gender identity, at least when problematised by transsexualism, outside both the sex/gender-role and nature/nurture dichotomies:

> In my mind it [transsexualism] is a subject far wider than sex: I recognise no pruriency to it, and I see it above all as a dilemma neither of the body nor of the brain, but of the spirit (Morris, 1974, 14-15).

Christine Jorgensen downplays the influence of outside gender-conditioning on her conviction of her "femaleness" (ISG), allowing hir an ethereal "girlhood", despite the socialisation that was consequent from hir male embodiment at birth:

> How many of my emotions could be attributed to this early environment I couldn't determine then, of course, but deep within myself, even at that early age, I felt that all these basic feelings were an integral part of me and not highly influenced by outside conditions (Jorgensen, 1968, 20).

6.3.7 Looking Back . . .

These stories of childhood are no more objective accounts of "reality" than other autobiographical work. They serve as more than a mere introductory preamble to a later hormonal/surgical/social transition across the gendered landscape, but are a *core part* of the authors' claims to gender-legitimacy (SGL). While gays and lesbians may need to argue for acceptance of "difference" (of sexuality), transsexuals are claiming "sameness", that is, as ordinarily gendered people. In the case of male-to-female lesbian transsexuals, such as Jennifer Spry, her "coming-out" covers *both* story-telling processes:

> The main difference in the lesbian coming-out stories I read, compared to my own experience, was one of degree. I wanted more than the right to live with a same-sex-partner; I wanted the right to change my apparent gender and live with a same-sex partner (Spry, 1997, 7).

The pursuit of "sameness" creates a dilemma for transsexuals regarding their personal histories that is different to the story-telling by gays and lesbians. While gay/lesbian histories need only be "acceptable", transsexuals stories not only need to be acceptable, but also, at least of the level of core gender identity, be *congruent*, and have enduring substantiation of the author's claimed gender. As the authors make some sort of a claim to legitimacy in the sex/gender opposite to their birth sex, the stories of a childhood conviction that they have, in some sense, *always* been of that gender serves to reinforce their claims. Not that I doubt the veracity of the claims, but the "ordinary" construction of gender *demands* that a childhood be consistent with an adult experience of gender, and pragmatism alone could justify conforming with this expectation. The naive notion about the continuity of gender-history (EUG) makes demands that go far beyond the minimum necessary in social encounters. As Garfinkel pointed out, one of the characteristics of the "natural" attitude about gender is that gender cannot be changed[15]. Even though an affirmation that, "I stand with the women/men" *should* be enough to allow almost all social transactions to take place without basic misunderstandings over one's gender-affiliation, there is an expectation that, even in superficial encounters, each participant will be "legitimate", that is, they have always been of the *sex*, or failing that, at least of the *gender* that they are currently presenting.

[15]Garfinkel (1968, 122-128) lists ten assumptions about 'natural, normally sexed persons', the fourth assumption being:

'The members of the normal population, for him the bona fide members of that population are essentially, originally, in the first place, always have been, and always will be, once and for all, in the final analysis, either "male" or "female".'

In the end, it is intangible, personal history which stands between a transformed transsexual and "the real" (EUG). The transsexual narratives describe the authors' post-transformation lives as occupying their claimed gender as "ordinary" women or men, that is, their bodily and social metamorphosis is sufficiently convincing to allow "everyday" social transactions to proceed without constant challenges to their gender-legitimacy (SGL). While the post-operative transsexuals are infertile, have chromosomal signatures which do not correspond to their claimed gender, and often have some vestiges of their birth sex in their embodiment (height, voice-pitch, size of hands or feet) these characteristics do not serve to *absolutely* exclude non-transsexual women or men from "the real"[16]. Whilst most of the physical markers and, in many situations, the legal status of birth sex can be transcended by transsexuals to occupy their claimed gender, they remain different from non-transsexuals in one respect: They have different histories, whether they choose to disclose them, or not. The first story, a *biography* of Lili Elbe, published in 1932, attempts to overcome the problem of her incongruent personal history by simply *abolishing* it:

> There could be no past for her. Everything in the past belonged to a person who had vanished, who was dead . . . Now there was a perfectly humble woman, who was willing to obey, who was happy to submit herself to the will of another (Hoyer, 1932, 170).

Of course, leaving Lili without *any* history of sex/gender would not allow her to make a claim to legitimate gender (SGL) on the same terms as a non-transsexual. Perhaps if Lili had been able to write

[16]Some intersexed persons, such as those with CAIS (complete androgen insensitivity syndrome) have XY chromosomal signatures typical of "males", yet they have external physical embodiment as women. At least in respect of society and the legal system, they do not face the same challenges to their 'realness' as women that transsexuals do in many parts of the world.

her own story (she died soon after her transformation) she would not have dismissed her past in this way. The later transsexual autobiographers take their own histories very seriously.

Whilst the substance of transsexual histories cannot be changed, it can be re-interpreted and managed, and offered up as an *equivalent* to "the real". Accounts of "girlhood" are a *tool* in building that "reality". But "the real" is elusive: Even when a strong case is put for *equivalence* of historical "girlhood" (or "non-girlhood") *difference* endures. History remains to haunt the autobiographers. While acknowledging that he has gained some social recognition as a man, Paul Rees still grieves over his disjointed and "inauthentic" history:

> My past is also that which sets me apart, which isolates me from the rest of the community. I was not reared as a boy or as a young man. My experience can include neither normal heterosexual relations with a woman or fatherhood. I have not shared the psychological experience of being a woman or the physical one of being a man. My apparent sex may have been that of a biological female but a woman is a female person. That I have never been. I don't know how it feels to be a normal woman. What changed at my role-assignment was the world's perception of me: my essence, my personhood remains. My gender role was re-assigned, my gender identity confirmed (Rees, 1995, 176).

"The real" is constructed on notions of "innocence" and "naturalness" and, as a result of their transition, transsexuals know far too much about the construction of sex and gender to ever be "innocent" again. The loss of "innocence" can manifest itself as a feeling of loathing towards having a *transsexual* (i.e., a non-gender-innocent) history. Claudine Griggs was shocked when she was reminded of the intensity of her feelings:

> In October 1995, I wrote a letter to a friend, which contained a disturbing but accurate statement of how I viewed my life. When I reexamined this correspondence several weeks later, I was startled by what I had written and that it seemed true at its core. I complained: "After all I've been through with this sex-change thing, I yet hate being transsexual so much that I sometimes can barely stand to look at myself in the mirror. On the bright side, I like being a woman enough that I tolerate my own self-hatred. Hatred is the right term".
>
> Perhaps I was troubled more on this day than others, but perhaps not. The words convey an undertone that I have felt for many years (Griggs, 1998, ix).

Because "normal" gender is built on assumptions about historic artifacts, history both *constructs* and *undermines* the transsexual authors' claims to gender legitimacy. They know that the "natural" notion of immutable sexual embodiment can, in most *socially significant* respects, be transcended. They have survived often relentless and brutal attempts at gender-socialisation in both childhood and as adults. It seems that the "natural" construction of gender (EUG) itself is compromised when it *demands* ignorance of its underpinnings. Agency and self-knowledge are not "natural" parts of gender. For "public" transsexuals, who appear to have too much first-hand knowledge of its construction, their claims to legitimacy within it (SGL) are lessened.

6.3.8 Locating the "Problem" in Wider Society

The autobiographies celebrate *agency* in childhood and beyond: The girl within, where she exists, will be heard, defying the "realities" of embodiment and socialisation. The authors' accounts of the transsexual condition do not run counter to the *substance* of ordinary gender, only on some of the naive assumptions which under-

pin it. If they are, as some essentialists claim, victims of a supposedly over-rigid gender dichotomy, then perhaps non-transsexuals are even more so[17].

6.4 Transsexual Journeys Through Boyhood

6.4.1 Theorising Sexuality and Boyhood

While there are parallels between the accounts of the pain experienced by both male-to-females and female-to-males in their childhoods, there was usually a different degree of tolerance of gender-transgressive behaviour prior to puberty. "Sissy" behaviour in genetic males was discouraged far more than "tomboy" behaviour in genetic females.

Gender-transgression by those born female could be read as an "innocent", perhaps envious mimicking the privileged sex (boys) and acquiring a fleeting taste of that privilege. It could be seen as a pursuit of social freedom and privilege, without sexual connotations. Prior to puberty, when an expression of a precocious "adult" sexuality is denied to most children, a mimicry of the "unmarked" male gender/sex would not have the same consequences as later in life ("unmarked as sexual" is consistent with the sexual "innocence" expected of children). Conversely, the unease caused by sissy-behaviour in pre-pubescent boys could be seen as mimicking a "gender marked as sexual" (female) when sexual innocence is assumed.

As I discuss in 6.4.2.2 on page 296, the impact of puberty is also different for female-to-males. For female-to-males, the markers of "femaleness" (breasts and menstruation) generally intrude earlier

[17] *If* one accepts the essentialist argument that the rigidity of gender-roles is inherently oppressive, then transsexuals could have more insights into the mechanics of that "oppression", and be better able to resist it. However, as the same essentialists also deny transsexuals' *agency* in negotiating the gendered landscape, such "insights" could have no valid application in this model.

that their male-to-female peers and, unless their breasts are small, they are harder to disguise under clothing than a well-tucked penis. In addition, there is often a tightening of social expectations on a pubescent female-bodied person at a time when genetic males are allowed more autonomy.

While Mario Martino recognises a difference between childhood socialisation of girls and boys he also acknowledges that he was unable to fully participate in *either* process:

> Taking a last backward glance, I realise that in envying the boys rich maturation period I also denied myself many of the riches the girl experiences in the same period. On the brighter side, I have experienced some of the best of both. I've been doubly blessed (Martino, 1977, 273).

Whatever Martino means by "the best" in respect of his unowned "girlhood" while a female-bodied child, it would be different in meaning to a similar process of socialisation experienced by a non-transsexual girl. Martino would have also been spared the excesses of sissy-baiting which probably constrain the genderal horizons of most boys.

6.4.2 Stories of Boyhood . . .

The autobiographies also discuss "boyhood" as both a problem and a goal. To a large extent, the discourses of transsexual boyhood are the mirror of girlhood, as previously discussed, with the values inverted. In 6.3.3 on page 276, I argue that, in contrast to adult genderal identity, "girlhood" is the unmarked category. While most of the observations about boyhood could have been included in the the earlier section, there are some comments which could be discussed without a strong reference to the notion of girlhood.

6.4.2.1 Embodied Markers of Boyhood (and Non-Boyhood)

Despite having a sexual embodiment inconsistent with his gender identity, Mark Rees hoped for other markers of being male. Even a wispy growth of facial hair brought him a sense of joy which is hardly distinguishable from that of an adolescent boy:

> A beard was a very visible sign of masculinity which is why I wanted one (Rees, 1996, 17).

Raymond Thompson went further than denying the legitimacy of his female embodiment: He refused to acknowledge the legitimate *existence* of female-coded embodiment. He cultivated a selective blindness to those body-parts and functions. Without a body which re-inforced his claims to maleness, he had little notion of embodiment at all. Parts of his body effectively did not exist as part of his persona:

> While my body was the way it was, there was no way that anyone would be allowed to see or touch the parts of it that didn't belong to me. I had rejected them myself so long ago, and had learned to close off from my mind that they were there. I never looked at the parts of my body that were wrong - it was hard enough to wash them. . . . My body didn't exist in the way it was born: for me it only existed in my inner identity as a male. (Thompson, 1995, 75).

6.4.2.2 Puberty

As with accounts of "girlhood", the stories by "boys" are those of a male coming to terms with a illegitimate and deformed (i.e., female) body. For Mark Rees, the onset of puberty had quite a different effect on his attitude to his embodiment than his peers. In desperation, he hoped for divine intervention to lift the burden:

> By now I regarded myself as male, cursed with a female body, a feeling which grew more intense as my peers became more feminine. In spite of pleading with the Almighty that I'd find myself developing into a man, I too began to develop breasts, although, little comfort, they were small. If anyone were tactless enough to remark that my figure was developing I'd deny it, and desperately try to conceal the offending parts, which were to me a deformity I abhorred. As far as I was concerned this new body prevented me from living what to me was a normal life, i.e., that of a male (Rees, 1996, 14).

While Mark Rees acknowledged the aspects of femaleness in his embodiment and did his best to *conceal* them, Raymond Thompson dealt with the onset of puberty by *denying* the existence of his female bodily functions:

> I was always trying to stand in front of the toilet rather than sit to pee. I would stand there and hold what I thought should be there, my penis. It wasn't only the thought, but the act and the posture that made it right (Thompson, 1995, 2).

Another way to cope with the distress of an "unowned" embodiment, was to confront the distress head-on. While many male-to-female authors tried this approach, it was rare among female-to-males. Unlike most of the female-to-male story-tellers, Paul Hewitt coped with the unease of his embodiment by trying harder to pass for female, despite the pain it caused him:

> I have tried desperately hard in the past to accept my female body, even resorting to super-femininity in an effort to to convince myself I was female (Hewitt, 1996, 69).
>
> The problem was that I was dressing my body, not me. Deep inside I felt no better than that awful sticky

> stuff you scrape off your shoe. I felt hollow and doomed. I was feeding off the compliments as a tapeworm feeds off its hosts, greedily, desperately and parasitically. I kept my red lipstick carefully outlined, worn as my painted-on smile. I had made myself, my body, into a diversion. While I flounced around, masquerading as a walking, talking, flirting feminine icon, no one would guess my real identity (Hewitt, 1996, 70-71).

He sought gender-legitimacy from outside, but as with the male-to-females who pursued hypermasculinity (see 2.1.14 on page 97, 2.1.23 on page 107, 2.1.25 on page 109) his efforts ultimately failed. The recurring theme in the autobiographies is that the "common-sense" solution of "make the gender fit the body[18]" does not work for transsexuals. I will argue in Chapter 8, that this model of childhood socialisation and adult gender-reinforcement does not work for non-transsexuals either, but they do not face discordance between gender identity and sexual embodiment in the first place.

6.4.2.3 Butch-Baiting . . .

Just as male-to-females were both intimidated and ambivalent by the label "sissy", the label "butch" woman (i.e., a *woman* who had adopted some male characteristics) gave some female-to-males a degree of discomfort:

> Although I hated wearing women's clothes, it worried me lest I were seen as 'horsey' or 'butch'. Certainly I didn't identify with mannish women and was repulsed by the thought of being classed as one. I didn't want to be seen as a woman, either feminine or butch. Yet- and this seemed paradoxical to some, especially my mother-

[18]Or more correctly, "make the *core gender identity* fit the *visible makers of sexual embodiment*".

> I enjoyed seeing others looking feminine and attractive. If, however, my gender, my true self, were male, then this is self-explanatory (Rees, 1995, 14).

The discomfort lies in how expressions of identity are read: To the female-to-male, being perceived as a "woman with a gender-problem" is the opposite of how they perceive themselves, i.e., as a "man with a body-problem".

6.5 The Terms of Occupation of Gendered Space

Social, surgical, and hormonal transformations undertaken by transsexuals usually result in a "successful" outcome[19]: That is, these previously gender-dysphoric individuals lead happier and more productive lives in their achieved sexual/genderal roles and most integrate quietly into the "ordinary". There is, however, a contradiction to the transsexual "condition". While "the ordinary" in gender (SGL) is achievable, "the real" is more elusive. These people have re-located themselves in a gendered landscape which denies their existence, or at least the legitimacy of their transformation. The "normal" construction of gender, as described by Garfinkel (1968, 122-128) (and clarified by Kessler & McKenna, in 1977) admits no possibility of legitimate change of gender-role (SGL), or of the sexual embodiment which underpins it. This gender landscape, as described by Garfinkel does not concede that other terms of occupation are possible. Specifically, transsexual transformations disrupt the second proposition that "One's gender is invariant. (If you are female/male, you always were female/male and you always will be female/male)", and the fifth observation that "There are no

[19]In 7.2.2 on page 315, I discuss what "success" might mean, in terms of social, genderal and sexual outcomes.

transfers from one gender to another except for ceremonial ones (masquerades)".

6.6 Public Disclosure

Although public exposure would seem to undermine most transsexuals' desire for assimilation and anonymity, I believe that the stories represent a pursuit of a substitute for sexual and historical "authenticity". Part of the "project" of transsexual story-telling is to confront the rigidity of the rules for gender-authenticity as described by Garfinkel (1967, 122-128). I see devices that are used by the authors to claim a status which serves to stand *in the place of* conventional gender legitimacy:

Pragmatism: The authors compare their quality of life before, and after transformation, and argue that no other outcome would bring happiness.

Rite of Passage: The authors describe the struggles they faced to achieve their re-location within the gendered landscape.

Underlying Authenticity: The authors claim to have been "real" women or men from birth, by giving primacy to core gender identity(CGI) over sexual embodiment, and stressing it s immutability.

These affirmations frequently run together as a multi-faceted declaration: In the following short passage, Nancy Hunt makes a declaration which contains all three elements of gender-legitimisation: *Pragmatism* "Even on my worst days - tired, lonely, sick, scared - I look at myself in the mirror, and I am happy." *Underlying authenticity:* "I now see in that reflection a mirror image of the person that I have always been, no longer distorted by the flickering candle-heat of society or the crazy lens of masculinity." and *Rite-of-passage*:

"For better or for worse, at last I am me, a woman, an honest person. By right of suffering and endurance and the Circuit Court of Cook County, I am Nancy. (Hunt, 1978, 263)".

6.6.1 Making Declarations of Genderal Legitimacy

If the *legitimacy* of occupation of gendered space was a simple, constant and clearly-understood concept, then an equally simple declaration should suffice for the transsexual story-tellers. Unlike the native-born (non-transsexuals), transsexuals may feel a need to articulate their commitment in the same way as naturalised new citizens may do. Furthermore, as with the notion of citizenship, "legitimate" engenderment is considered to be all-embracing, and somewhat more fragile for immigrants than for the native-born. Even one inconsistency (or disloyalty, or act of treason) *could* be enough to disqualify a claimant, particularly is one is an immigrant (transsexual). Often a transsexual's declarations are as broad-ranging as gender-expression is in the widest social context. These declarations may clarify, and replace some of the largely unarticulated terms of occupation of "gender-in-the-ordinary" by non-transsexuals.

6.6.1.1 Pragmatism:

Whilst the occurrence of female-to-male and male-to-female transsexualism and the level of distress that it causes may be similar, social manifestations of the condition do not always mirror each other. Claudine Griggs concludes after interviewing a group of transsexuals that adult female-to-male transsexuals are fleeing from "womanhood" with as much passion as male-to-female transsexuals are trying to move towards "womanhood":

> While it is clear that male-to-female and female-to-male transsexuals both suffer from an inability to ex-

> press gender openly and from gender attributions that oppose their identities, the anguish is different. FTMs are earnest about dispelling feminine attributions; MTFs are solemn about gaining it.
>
> A genetic female who feels like a drag queen in a new dress on the first day of kindergarten or high school has a different "private experience of gender role" from a genetic male who dreams of that same new dress and that same first day of school (1998, 47) .

At least in adults, "masculinity" doesn't seem to the focal point of the transsexual "condition". However, I believe that the situation in childhood is the reverse: The tolerance of "tomboyism" amongst female children and the prohibition of "sissy" behaviour in males makes "maleness" the site to be fled from or to. This may be why FTM stories typically stress the author's failure and unwillingness to live up conventional expectations of adult women, while MTFs tell of a pining for "womanhood", often while the author is being superficially "successful" in male gender-role display.

Mark Rees sees the pre-transformation transsexual "condition" as being unsustainable, implying that acknowledgment of one's transsexuality and acting upon that conviction is mandatory in obtaining "personhood":

> The transsexuals who deny their condition are not being true to themselves. This denial can take the form of aggressive masculinity or femininity and perhaps marriage, which usually breaks up, causing distress to spouse and children. If we get as far as acknowledging our condition, but cannot live in our rightful role, we despise not only ourselves but also the society which imprisons us in it. Countless transsexual people have referred to their pre-treatment state as 'living a lie'. It is impossible to be

> truly ourselves while trapped in the wrong gender role (Rees, 1995, 179-180).

Robert Allen describes his ineptitude and disinterest in the superficialities of female gender-role behaviour. He also associates the expression of "tidiness" not with womanhood, but with *appropriateness* of gender; that is, with his father's, in contrast to his own situation:

> I didn't mind in the least dragging my feathers in the dust. My slovenliness infuriated him. Meticulous over his own appearance (it was a fetish with him) my appearance was always an affront. It was the day of the Marcel wave, but not for me whose hair-style looked more like a long deserted bird's nest.
>
> 'Why don't you behave like other girls?' father would storm. 'A little lipstick and a little powder and you might begin to look something. Smarten yourself for heaven's sake."
>
> But that was just what I couldn't bring myself to do, and father mistook the conflict within me for the defiance of an ungracious daughter. It was ever a thorn in his side the way I went about, sloppy and uncaring, and none of the arguments that took place between us and poisoned our relationship would have occurred if only I could have matched his immaculate standards. We wounded each other unwittingly and without malice and the tragedy of our love for each other was the lateness of the hour that we became reconciled as father and son (Allen, 1954, 54-55).

6.6.1.2 Rites of Passage:

The stories of rites-of-passage, not only declare that a transsexual's achieved sex/gender has been *earned*, but they lay down a

framework for the argument of gender-legitimacy, by describing a *substantial* journey from the physical "realities" of birthsex to somewhere else, and for a binary transsexual discourse, this can only re-inforce one's claim of transcendence.

Raymond Thompson hints at the naivete of childhood constructions of gender and proclaims that his struggle stands *in place of* that history of "innocence":

> My childhood dream of waking up, transformed painlessly and instantly into a boy, had been replaced by a long rocky road, but a road leading to the same conclusion (1995, 309).

Paul Hewitt's observations state the obvious about the process of his bodily changes, but he also claims "ownership" of this latter-day transformation, and contrasts it with the unwanted upheavals of an earlier female puberty, effectively declaring that it is *owned* change which leads to gender-legitimacy:

> I am on a fascinating learning curve, discovering what it is like to inhabit a male body as it develops around me. This is infinitely more comfortable than female puberty. Growing hair on my face gives me a strong sense of satisfaction which has been long overdue, whereas my maturing breasts as I went through female puberty, and the monthly bloody hell, left me feeling detached from my body and isolated inside myself. I welcome my maturing male form with open arms. He is my long-lost son (1996, 155).

6.6.1.3 Underlying Authenticity:

The third form of argument appears, in some form or other, in all the autobiographies, even *before* the conventional "psychological"

discourse of the separateness, immutability and primacy of gender identity had been articulated by the post-Stoller[20] narrators. The first account (Hoyer, 1932, 59) mentions Lili Elbe's "natural" and "innocent" occupation of "girl's" space:

> As a little chap I had long, fair locks, snow-white skin, and dark eyes, so that strangers often took me for a girl. In a kindergarten, where, as the only boy, I played with eleven girls, I was the cleverest of all the children in knitting and embroidery. As a five-year-old, at the annual prize-giving of our kindergarten I received my first mark of public distinction for fancy-work.

This recalling of an ethereal "girlhood" by male-to-female transsexuals is a common theme, adding both an historical note, and a touch of the naivete that characterises non-transsexual constructions of gender. Caroline Cossey also describes this state of "innocent" occupation of female space:

> Our favourite game was dressing up. We loved climbing into Mum's best dresses and staggering around the room in her high heels, our faces covered in powder and our mouths red with shiny lipstick. Grown-up women seemed such elegant, mysterious and glamorous beings. I would become so engrossed in my make-believe that I would lose all sense of being a boy - I felt like any little girl posing before the mirror in her mummy's clothes. But as I approached my fifth birthday I was in for a rude awakening. School loomed on the horizon, and with it came the growing awareness that I was not like other boys. The rough world of the classroom was to teach me some harsh lessons. The real traumas of my childhood were about to begin. (Cossey, 1991, 4).

[20] "Sex and Gender", 1968.

Nancy Hunt describes a feeling of alienating "otherness" from boys which is fundamental and palpable, affecting not only her identification with her putative peers, but so obvious that her playmates could sense it:

> For one thing, her playmates had treated her like an alien. "your peers are the ones who pick you out the fastest," she said. ... I knew this was true. It wasn't merely that I had cried more easily or hated fighting or thrown a ball like a girl, though these were the facts. It was a deeper difference. I wasn't like them, and they sensed it, smelled it, and in consequence always kept me at a distance, as if I was a threat to them (Hunt, 1978, 43).

Another aspect of the "authenticity" claim is the assertion that gender identity (CGI, ISG) is the primary determinant of legitimacy as a woman or man and that birthsex, when it is inconsistent with this identity, is subordinate. Raymond Thompson makes one of the strongest declarations that his occupation of his birth sex, i.e., as a female, was *illegitimate*, and therefore granting a legitimacy to his achieved sex/gender role and embodiment as a male, almost by default. Perhaps to reinforce his claim, his discourse is also in strictly binary terms, with no admission of gender ambiguity, or even of the process of transition into his re-embodiment. He had the "wrong" body-parts removed and the "right" parts were constructed:

> My name is Raymond.
>
> Once upon a time, a very long time ago I had another name. I don't care to think of that name, perhaps I don't really remember it. The life that I led, when this other name was assigned to me, is a life that is no longer part of me. In a sense I am reborn.

> The first time I was born, it was in a body which was other than male. By some cosmic mistake, as a budding human being I had somehow chosen the wrong body, or the wrong body had chosen me.
>
> I am a transsexual person, a man really. It took more than thirty years to reach a stage when my body started to fit my identity as a man, but now there is no doubt of it. Here I am, well and truly the male I have always known myself to be (Thompson, 1995, 1).

For Raymond Thompson, "a body which was other than male" is a *mistake* of nature. If one accepts that a transsexual is *entitled* to state-provided medical services, then Thompson believed that he was *entitled* to his male embodiment, as a correction of a birth defect. Nevertheless, he did have difficulty in obtaining treatment through the UK NHS and when, after years of delay, he received news of his surgery, he was ecstatic:

> I thought it was a miracle that gender reassignment surgery could be had on the National Health Service. In fact it was a miracle that it could be done at all. At no other time in the history of mankind has this been possible, not even twenty years ago[21]. Maybe, after all, I was in the right place at the right time (1995, 261).

The "naturalness" of Thompson's inherent masculinity only became fully realised as a result of genital surgery. Prior to the availability of such surgery, Thompson's "natural" terms of occupation of gender were also precluded. Stephen Gordon, the masculine, and probably proto-transsexual character in Radclyffe Hall's novel may have looked to God for the "miracle" that Thompson celebrated in reality: "Do you think that I *could* be a man, supposing I thought

[21] In fact, Michael Dillon's surgery had taken place *forty* years before, predating implementation of the NHS in the UK.

very hard - or prayed, Father?" (Hall, 1968, 26 *emphasis in original*). Even if hir prayers *had* been answered, to claim *underlying authenticity*, Stephen would have had to "naturalise" hir transformation in a similar way that Thompson was able to do.

Garfinkel's account of his male-to-female transsexual patient, Agnes, also describes his interpretation of hir claim to *underlying authenticity* as an insistence on "the possession of *either* a vagina that nature made or a vagina that *should have been there all along*" (1968, 127 *emphasis in original*). In Agnes' case, by claiming to be intersexed (with an *underlying authenticity*), s/he was mounting what s/he regarded as a stronger case than that of a contemporary transsexual (which may have been more of a *pragmatic* solution to an otherwise incurable "delusion").

6.6.1.4 Resistance from "Outside"

While conservative feminist theorists, such as Raymond (1979) have sought to dismiss the declarations of legitimacy by transsexuals by denying them *agency* to define their terms of occupation of gendered space, I believe that these terms are remarkably similar to those of non-transsexuals. The difference between transsexuals' and non-transsexuals' terms of occupation lies not so much in the *substance* of these declarations, but in the need to make the declarations at all.

Chapter 7

Negotiating Transsexuality

The transsexual narrative is a record of the *survivors* of a condition which, if left unresolved, often leads to self-destructive behaviour. The authors have, therefore, negotiated the gendered landscape sufficiently well to remain alive, and to have retained sufficient insight and agency to write their stories. Those who fail to negotiate the condition are either dead, through suicide[1], murder[2], or self-neglect[3], or they are institutionalised[4] out of the mainstream. Most of the published stories include a generic explanation of both the

[1]It is perhaps significant that the only story which ends with suicide is the almost-certainly fictional account by Fontaine (1981). I am not aware that *any* of the other authors in this study have suicided after writing their autobiographies.

[2]The *biography* of Brandon Teena (Jones, 1996) is the only account in this study of a transsexual who was murdered. Nevertheless, there are many other non-published transsexuals who have been murdered, primarily *because* they are transsexual: Wilchins (1997, 201-221) give details of eight murders of trans-people between 1992-1997.

[3]Billy Tipton deliberately avoided medical treatment because s/he feared exposure of hir female embodiment. S/he died of a bleeding stomach ulcer, a condition which should have been treatable, had s/he approached a doctor: "... [H]e brushed off questions about his health. Untreated, hemorrhaging ulcers finally killed him" (Middlebrook, 1999, 5). Hir failure to maintain hir health could be regarded as at least a partial failure to negotiate the realities of hir transsexual condition.

[4]Prior to their transformations, Fontaine, Grant, Johnson, Morgan, Perez and Rupe all spent time in male jails for crimes at least partially related to their "condition". Jane Fry had a long history of incarceration in mental institutions as a consequence of the pathologisation of hir engenderment.

condition and the gendered landscape in which their anguish and subsequent transcendence occurred.

7.1 Explaining Transsexuality

The transsexual narrative is not only a personal account of an unusual experience. Particularly in the early accounts, the project of explaining the condition underpins the personal story of the author. Because the condition is something that the non-transsexed will *never* experience first-hand[5], the authors had to describe the nature and location of the pain to give their stories credibility.

7.1.1 Definitions/Distinctions

The early works usually contain a differentiation between transsexuals and other similarly marginalised players in the gendered landscape of the day. These explanations serve not only a general educative role of offering up information on a range of hitherto unknown, or unarticulated conditions, but also a carving out, and claiming of a distinct space within the gendered landscape. Prior to the publication of Stoller's work in 1968, sex and gender were *almost* synonymous, and the serious writers on transsexual condition needed an explanation which both *located* it in the "gendered" part of a conflated sex/gender discourse, but also *defined* it in terms which were substantially different to the "everyday" understandings of that discourse[6].

[5]Casual cross-dressing, or other forms of transitory "gender-fuck" are in no way comparable to the permanency of the transsexual condition. I will elaborate on this distinction in the next chapter.

[6]Which would have branded transsexuality as a "deviance".

7.1.1.1 Differences from Transvestites/Homosexuals Explained

While many of the male-to-female narrators admit to cross-dressing as a means of assuaging their gender-anguish in their earlier life[7], the *mechanics* of cross-dressing becomes a means-to-an-end when initially presenting to the world in their claimed gender. Transvesticism is currently one of the conditions which is eliminated when arriving at a differential diagnosis for transsexuality or, as it is categorised in the DSM-IV, Gender Identity Disorder (APA, 1994, 302.6/302.85), although Benjamin (1966, 17) had made some distinction between the conditions much earlier, based on the *intensity* of "sex role disorientation". Nevertheless, some later psychologists, such as Docter blur the distinction with the sub-category of *secondary transsexual*: "[T]he basic cause of secondary transsexualism may be based on an ever-strengthening sexual script founded on a history of fetishistic cross-dressing" (1988, 32).

It would have been in the transsexual narrator's interest to distance themselves from the notion of "common" transvesticism both before, and after transformation. Prior to surgery, they need to offer up whatever story will allow them access to that surgery; that is, they need to present as "real" transsexuals, with an otherwise unmanageable condition, which is permanent, and emotionally painful (as opposed to "transvesticism", which, although possibly permanent, is also characterised as manageable, transitory, and often a playful expression of a superficially-held, fetishistic desire).

After surgery, the transformed transsexual's claim to be "ordinarily gendered" may be undermined by any association with a

[7]Several of the authors (Cummings and Richards) continued to cling to a self-definition as transvestites, for some time *after* they had reached a realisation that were "really" transsexual, and that a surgical/hormonal solution *was* available. Despite their desperate feelings of gender-anguish, the prospect of the mechanics of bodily-change and the threat of losing friends, family and social validation in either sex/gender, is not necessarily any less threatening to some transsexuals as it would be to the non-transsexed.

named paraphillia, such as transvesticism. Perhaps the most extreme efforts by any of the authors in this study to distance themselves from cross-dressing is that of Christine Jorgensen, previously quoted at 4.2.6 on page 205.

7.1.1.2 Locating the Transsexed Within Society

I will argue in the next chapter that "gender" is necessarily a public act[8]. Part of the transsexual legitimisation project may involve placing the "problem" and the "solution" of transsexuality *within* a social context by way of autobiography, or other form of narrative. Whereas fetishism may represent a *withdrawal* from the realities of gendered space, transcendence of the anguish of transsexualism depends on negotiating that "reality" as successfully as one can, given one's sexual embodiment and personal resources.

7.2 Gatekeeping: Negotiating Psycho/Medical Professionals

The majority of authors present to psycho/medical professionals with a previously discovered, if informal, self-diagnosis of their condition. While they may seek official confirmation of their convictions of engenderment, the main purpose for this relationship is usually to obtain approval for hormones and surgery. Being driven by the need to obtain such approval, they frequently offer up *whatever* story they believe is most likely to succeed.

[8]Except in respect of socially un-validated core conviction of engenderment (CGI). See Chapter 8 for a further discussion. Even where a "closet" or prototranssexual condition exists, thinking about, and coming to terms with one's gendered state involves calling on language (socially constructed) and a knowledge of the social expression of gender.

7.2.1 The (Un)Real Life Test

The Harry Benjamin Standards of Care, which many of the gatekeepers adhere to, wholly or in part, require that the transsexual lives successfully in their claimed gender role for at least one year before being offered surgery (Ramsey, 1996, 168). This requirement is often referred to as the "real life test" (RLT). But how "real" is such a test? While I cannot think of another *single* method of screening aspiring candidates for transsexual surgery which would be more effective, there are several shortcomings to this method of testing commitment:

- The definition of "success" in living the "RLT" in one's claimed gender lies with the gatekeeper (who is usually non-transsexual, male, heterosexual, socially secure and conservative);
- Any committed transsexual will hide or misrepresent any social difficulties during the "RLT" which may diminish their chances of approval;
- Negotiating sexual encounters with one's birth genitals intact does not replicate the "reality" of a post-surgical embodiment. Sexual performance, if it occurs at all, will probably be tainted with some notion of "queerness";
- There would be a temptation for the transsexual to assume that any social difficulties experienced during the test period would be swept aside after surgery[9];
- Prior to surgery, a transsexual's legal status is not altered in most jurisdictions;
- The imposition of such a test does not fully recognise the *agency* of the transsexual in defining and managing hir condition.

[9]I have observed this attitude on several occasions during my experience as a peer-support counsellor for transsexuals.

While the requirement to *mimic* the social re-location location of the transsexual patient may *appear* to the outside observer a "reasonable" test, it fails to address many of the fundamental *terms of occupation* under which the non-transsexed occupy the gendered landscape. During the "real-life" test, the transsexual candidate's *terms of occupation* are:

- *Transitory,* (They can pull out and revert to the "other" gender-role at any time they cannot cope; non-transsexuals do not have this option);
- *Conditional,* (They are "women" or "men" only to the extent that the law and society *allows* them to be; non-transsexuals do not need an equivalent legal/social sanction to be "women" or "men");
- *Constrained,* (They are limited as sexual agents, and the minutiae of their social performance are subject to pass/fail criteria by psycho-medical gatekeepers; non-transsexuals only need to avoid breaking the law and to be cognisant of serious social taboos).

The gatekeeping process *purports* to select candidates for transsexual surgery on the basis of gender-role performance (GRB), but it also serves to assure the wider public that the transsexual is *worthy* of transformation. The requirement for a "real-life" test *appears* to be an appropriate assessment of this "worthiness". While the *apparent* success rate[10] of this type of screening may indicate

[10]Walters, Kennedy and Ross (1986, 146) claim that follow-up measures of satisfaction of post-operative transsexuals who had passed through their gatekeeping program was over 80%. This figure includes patients who had complaints with the *mechanics* of surgery and therefore perhaps underestimates the satisfaction with the bodily transformation, *per se*. Furthermore, as the authors point out, only a small number of former patients consent to follow-up research (1986, 144) and I anticipate that a disproportionate number of those who maintain contact with the program do so because they have an ongoing, but related problem (most often surgical complications). Therefore, it is probable that the

that it is justified, it may be the case that the survivors of this test are simply more determined, more resourceful *people*, rather than particularly suitable candidates. The *real* "real-life" test starts after surgery. By becoming free of the constraints, excuses, and scrutiny of their pre-operative period, the transformed former "patient" regains hir autonomy and agency and occupies the gendered landscape under similar terms to the wider population.

7.2.2 Filtering by Psycho-Medical Workers

Whatever measure of "success" is used to assess the effectiveness of psycho-medical gatekeeping in selecting surgical candidates, the nature of the transsexual "condition" affects the propriety of using such screening at all, and what a "successful" outcome signifies. The psycho-medical gatekeepers frequently exclude persons presenting as transsexuals if they display any of a range of largely non-gendered contra-indications. Walters et al. (1986, 146) offer the following contra-indications:

1. The presence of psychosis;
2. States of mental retardation or dementia;
3. Abuse of drugs, including alcohol;
4. Repeated criminal acts;
5. Lack of support from family and friends;
6. Inability to pass successfully as a member of the opposite sex

.

If transsexuality was a pathology, *per se*, then controlling access to treatment by psycho-medical professionals would seem quite appropriate, and their identification of contra-indicative traits would

number of former patients who actually regretted proceeding through to surgery is much lower than the residual 20% quoted above would suggest.

also be prudent. Screening out non-transsexual persons, whose conviction of "being transsexed" is driven by a non-genderal mental pathology, such as schizophrenia is also justified in the DSM-IV (APA, 1994, 537). However, I argue in the next chapter, that transsexuality is not pathological in terms of overall mental health, but that the pathology is that of the *location* of an otherwise healthy engenderment within a socially inappropriate sexual embodiment.

If my argument for a revised model of gender was accepted, then, after an initial assessment of overall mental health, the ongoing use of psycho-medical gatekeepers to control access to surgery by persons who had no other "pathology" *but their transsexuality* would be ill-founded. In a "healthy mind/gender, wrong body" model, the suffer needs a surgeon, not a psychiatrist[11]. In the case of a person with *both* a transsexual condition *and* a separate mental pathology, they are carrying two distinct burdens[12]. It is possible, if my model of engenderment is valid, that removal of one burden (transsexuality) may lead to a better quality of life overall. Jane Fry's story illustrates that most existing "gender" programs do not accommodate candidates with mental illness, and in doing so, they may be closing down possible means of alleviating their distress.

7.2.2.1 Responsibility, Effectiveness and Propriety

I want to make it clear that I am not advocating a *complete* abandonment of psycho-medical control of access to transsexual surgery. I believe, however, that neither the effectiveness, nor the propriety, of such control has been evaluated as thoroughly as it should.

[11]To the non-transsexual, the transsexual "project" may *appear* pathological, and it is treated accordingly. Perhaps in performing this task, the psychiatrist is addressing a different society-wide pathology, which Riki-Anne Wilchins somewhat facetiously calls "Genderpathophilia: (1) An obsessive fear or need to pathologise any kind of gender behaviour that makes you feel uncomfortable; (2) A dread disease that strikes nine out of ten American psychiatrists" (1997, 225).

[12]The story of Jane Fry is an example (Bogdan & Fry, 1974)

There appears to be no systematic research performed on the outcomes for those transsexuals who are rejected, or constrained by such screening processes. Does the current gatekeeping process filter transsexual patients for a socially-acceptable level of "success", while ignoring, or denying treatment to those which it rejects? If my revised model of gender has some application to understanding the transsexual condition, then it would follow that the efficacy of *all* current participants in the project should be re-evaluated. It may also be the case that the 80% "success" rate touted by Walters et al (1986, 146) may have occurred *in spite of* the psycho-medical control, or that while some sort of gatekeeper (*any gatekeeper*[13]) may be necessary, such vetting need not be the preserve of psycho-medical professionals. Further research may show that other forms of gatekeeping might be not only more effective, but might demonstrate a level of propriety which the current arrangements deny.

7.2.3 Agency of Transsexual "Patients"

The model of psycho-medical gatekeeper/transsexual patient is predicated on granting only limited agency to "the patient". The transsexual autobiographies in this study re-iterate the author's agency in defining and managing the "problem" of sex/gender discontinuity. It is doubtful that many of the authors would have ever reached the professional's door *without* the exercise of a high degree of agency, introspection and desperation. Even where the criteria laid down by the existing gatekeepers might reflect attitudes and attributes which contribute to a healthy engenderment in the wider population, it would be naive to expect that the transsexual candidate would not offer up *whatever* evidence that they believed was required to meet those standards.

Unlike many other types of encounters between psychiatrist

[13]For example, the candidate's peers or co-workers

and patient, the transsexual patient is not seeking *direct* therapy for an "aberrant" mental state. The task for transsexual candidates for surgery is to present a *limited* and *convincing* set of signs of mental distress which will convince the psychiatrist to authorise a *physical* solution, namely, surgery and hormones. Unlike a non-transsexual patient who engages with a psycho-medical professional to alleviate a mental problem directly, there is no incentive on the part of a transsexual candidate to be open or honest about their feelings with their doctor. While part of the therapy for other mental disorders may involve a *suspension of agency* on the part of the patient, the transsexual cannot afford to do so. Psycho-medical gatekeeping becomes part of the rite-of-passage for many transsexuals, a test of endurance and resourcefulness, rather than of mental suitability. Ironically, for those candidates who are both transsexual *and* mentally ill, disclosure of any non-gender-related problem may be regarded as such a liability that it will be suppressed[14].

7.2.4 Occupying the "Achieved" Gender

While their internal conviction of engenderment may have remained constant throughout their transition, transsexuals need to mount a sufficiently convincing case to have their claims to re-located genderal legitimacy accepted by the people that they interact with. Now that surgical and hormonal procedures are available in Western society, bodily transformation becomes one of the accepted *markers of commitment* and legitimation. As the tolerance of homosexuality and a diversity of sexual performance has increased, the transsexual autobiographers have placed less emphasis on being

[14]It has been my experience during the time that I acted as peer-support for local transsexuals, that many of them felt a need to unburden significant personal worries onto an *amateur* such as myself, because they felt unable to discuss these issues to their psycho-medical gatekeepers, in case that disclosure disqualified them from approval for surgery.

"straight" after transformation. If transsexuals are successful in their project of having their achieved engenderment legitimated, it is because they have had their efforts of transformation accepted as being their "best shot", given the public understandings of "gender" (EUG) and the technology available at the time.

7.2.4.1 Accommodating Historical Baggage from the "Other" Gender

For non-transsexuals, having a congruent gendered history is a given. But how do post-transition transsexuals access their past without undermining their present occupation of gendered space? Dealing with parents, family and children presents special problems, as any ongoing relationship is based on historical events which occurred in their previous embodiment and socially-attributed gender. Accepting a relationship with these people necessarily means accepting reminders of one's previous social engenderment. Sometimes there is no dilemma about accepting this history after a period of adjustment. However, some of these reconstructed relationships are often intimidating for the non-transsexed, and rejection of the transsexual by family and friends is not uncommon.

7.3 Sexual (Re)orientation

The transsexual project is directed at changing the markers of sexual embodiment to achieve congruency and legitimacy (SGL) with an internal sense of core gender identity (CGI, ISG). Whatever the outcome of that re-embodiment, it will have some bearing on the social aspects of sexual orientation, even if, as the transsexual project usually claims, one's internal sense of engenderment (ISG) remains constant. The issue is complicated by the popular notion of "queer". A transsexual may be read as "queer", without even addressing their sexual orientation; *being transsexual in itself* is often

enough grounds for a "queering". Although "queer" may be a relatively clear and stable term when referring to the non-transsexed, denoting sexual preference, expression and performance, it assumes a consistency of sex and gender. For transsexuals, questions are raised about whether "queerness" (or, indeed, "straightness") is primarily generated by one's gender, or one's sexual embodiment. Furthermore, a "queer" identity may serve as a *social* holding-place for transsexuals who do not regard themselves as "queer" at all, raising yet another question of *where* the "queering" (or "straightening") takes place. Is "queering" an internal process of self-acceptance, or is it an external act of either social regularising, or articulating, an acknowledged sexual "transgression"?

7.3.1 Becoming "Ordinary", or Transcending Hyper-Queer?

The transsexual narrative focuses on personal conflicts between gender identity, gender role and sexual embodiment, but, for the most part, the authors attempt little more than a superficial examination of their sexual orientation. Until the recent advent of "radical" transsexual writing, the transsexual autobiographers had little to say about "queerness", despite their often very visible transgression of existing gender-coded "norms".

Many of the autobiographies contain fragmentary references to encounters with queer "others"; gay males and lesbians, and various forms of transitory cross-dressers, who are often similarly marginalised. Although some of the authors have initially grasped onto these identities to explain their own "condition", before discovering a specifically "transsexual" identity, they usually attempt to distance themselves from these "other" sex/gender transgressors in their texts.

The discussion of sexual relations, particularly in the early works, is constrained and subordinated to the discourse on gender dys-

phoria. The "queerness" or "straightness" of accounts of sexual intercourse is predicated on the author's gender identity (ISG), and not primarily their sexual embodiment. In this section, I also examine stories where one partner regards the relationship to be heterosexual, while the other person sees the same encounter as homosexual, in an attempt to uncover a "queerness" within.

I question whether transsexuality, an *apparently* "radical" process of social and bodily transformation, which nevertheless usually pursues "the ordinary" as its end-point, can be correctly termed "queer" at all.

7.3.1.1 Defining "Queerness", "Transsexuality", and "Transgender"

This thesis explores transsexual identity and story-telling. I am not specifically addressing "transgender", or "transgenderist" identities or performance, even though these terms are often treated as synonymous by outside observers. The people that I have studied have had *some* sort of bodily transformation, and have expressed *some* sort of permanent commitment to "ordinary" gender-space. Therefore, I will not be addressing the "queerness" of gender-fuckers, transvestites, or other people who, although they may expressing *something* coded as "gender" within (or even outside) the gendered landscape; do not, have not, or can not, value or even seriously consider "gender-in-the-ordinary" as a lived experience. A metaphor for these "genderal fellow-travellers" might equate with the exotic tales of tourists and invaders, rather than that of the transsexual narrative of how they, as immigrants, challenge the assumptions of the native-born, .

7.3.1.2 The Relationship Between "Queer" and "Transsexual" Identities

There has been a curious relationship between "queerness" and transsexuality, even before the relatively modern phenomenon of surgical and hormonal transformation of sexual embodiment. On one hand, gay theorists and historians such as Jonathan Katz and Walter Williams have sought to appropriate examples of gender-transgressive historical individuals and cross-cultural accommodations to *some* sort of gender-unease, as part of constructing a "gay" identification and history. Conversely, some transsexual individuals have spent time in "queer" space, either because:

1. At least some of the gender-expression attached to a gay identification was in accord with their own, or
2. Their sexual practice was accepted in accordance with their birth-sex, even though they saw their sexual orientation as heterosexual because they gave primacy to their gender-identity, or
3. They gained some support from a similarly marginalised group (even when their needs were mis-interpreted and/or the support was mis-directed), or
4. They had nowhere else to go; until the relatively recent visibility of a "gay", and later, a specifically transsexual identity, only gay ghettos provided a social venue for gender-deviance. Caroline Cossey described the despair of not being welcome in *any other* space:

> It should have been safer to stick to gay clubs. But even there we experienced hostility. There were few places that would let us in dressed as women, and those that did were not overly friendly. We belonged nowhere. (Cossey, 1991, 31).

Apart from a few accounts that are designed to titillate, the substance of the autobiographies usually concerns *legitimisation* of the authors' claims to gender, and to serve as educative accounts. For the first transsexual autobiographers, the telling of their stories as a process of genderal validation was made very difficult by the limitations of the language of the time of writing. They were addressing a concept of "gender identity", as a separate, ethereal entity at the time when the distinction between sexual embodiment and gender, and even sexual orientation was blurred. To explain their pain, the discovery and management of their solution, and to validate their achieved sex/gender, these authors needed to separate "gender identity" from sexual orientation, and from sexual embodiment, in ways which was constrained by the contemporary discourse on these topics.

The early authors made strenuous efforts to distance themselves from "queerness" and the "pathology" which had been associated with homosexuality until recently. Today, a less strenuous statement (that they were driven primarily by other than issues of sexual performance) would probably suffice. This was not the only border-keeping exercise that the earliest authors engaged in; they also made claims of some form of intersexuality (see 4.5 on page 212). Christine Jorgensen's statement that: "I was an individual belonging to the 'highest degree of intersexuality; male organs in a female body'" (1968, 173) may have been a reaction to the sustained undermining of her legitimacy as a woman during the 15 years between her surgery in Denmark in 1953 and the publication of her autobiography in 1968. The statement "male organs in a female body" could be interpreted as "a woman trapped in a man's body", that is, Jorgensen may have been refuting accusations of being a transvestite. In *most* cases, these early writers were not intersexed, at least not "intersexed" in the way that most members of the present-day intersexed community would understand the term. I would argue that they were not "mistaken" about bio-

logical details, or even deliberate "liars". When there was no way of articulating differences between gender, sexual embodiment, and sexual performance; *and* where the public resistance to, and lack of understanding of, their claims to gender-legitimacy was greater; their claims to "asexuality", "heterosexuality", or "intersexuality" would seem to be a pragmatic approach for them.

7.3.2 Sexual Orientation Before the Sex/Gender Distinction

So, what could be inferred from these writings by a small, marginalised group, about a larger group who also experience marginalisation? Unlike the "innocent" sex/gender identities assumed by non-gender-dysphoric heterosexual people, the transsexual story tellers have examined their gender and sexuality to a greater depth than normal, in order to survive. Because "gender", or at least "gender-legitimacy" has been bound up with sexual performance, the autobiographers needed to distance their claims to gender-legitimacy (SGL) from their sexual orientation, or at least to privilege such gender identity over sexual orientation. I have located four stories by male-to-female lesbians, all published recently, but no *full* accounts by female-to-male gay males. It would seem that *becoming* a homosexual as part of transsexing one's body would, by its nature, remove any suggestion that sexual orientation drove the desire for bodily transformation, at least if one assumes that "heterosexuality" is the only *desirable* state. Still, it was not until Kate Bornstein published a semi-autobiographical work, "Gender Outlaw", in 1995, that transsexual story-telling was mature enough to explore sexual orientation in this way. So, what went before, in the project of gender-legitimisation through story-telling? Many authors avoided discussion of their sexual performance at all, while some, such as Jan Morris and Roberta Cowell, seem to have proclaimed themselves to be effectively asexual. Michael

Dillon attempted a single relationship in his life, with a male-to-female transsexual, Roberta Cowell, but she spurned him and he never pursued a sexual-liaison again, instead becoming a Bhuddist monk. The depth of Roberta Cowell's conviction that she was "intersexual" (and essentially female) rather than what would later be known as "transsexual" is illustrated when she recalled a proposal of marriage during her relationship with Michael Dillon: "as far as I was concerned, it would have been two females getting married" (Hodgkinson, 1989, 87).

While the transsexual condition is distinct from an identity primarily based on sexual orientation, one's sex/gender status affects one's "queerness". The *way* the narrators negotiated "queerness" raises the question of whether one primarily fucks with their *sex*, or their *gender*. Christine Jorgensen had a problem with "queerness"[15], because if she had followed through with her desire for sexual contact with a male friend prior to surgery, s/he would have been confronted with the "moral" consequences of hir inability to differentiate between sex and gender. Later writers were able to manage their internal conviction of sexual orientation on the basis of the primacy of their gender identity (ISG), even where it conflicted with their physical embodiment.

Even when an author admitted that s/he enjoyed sex in hir new body, s/he emphasised that it was because of newly-acquired bodily appropriateness. After two marriages, Nancy Hunt was quite clear about the separation and conflict between hir birthsex and hir gender identity, but left hir exploration of sexual performance as a woman until just *before* surgery. She claims a period of apprehensive innocence before she was "ready" for heterosexual sex:

> Most of these adjustments occurred during the sum-

[15]S/he seemed to be "phobic" of transvesticism, transsexuality and homosexuality, hence hir claims to be an intersexed person who *never* dressed as a woman, or had sexual contact with a man until her sexual/genderal status as a woman had been legitimised by the US State Department (see 3.1.9 on page 170).

> mer and fall before my surgery and were entirely psychological. I had no physical life as a woman ... Sexually I remained as innocent as a novice in a nunnery, a condition that was to trouble me more and more when at last I made my appointment with the surgeon. Why the surgery? Why acquire a vagina? Merely to complete the trappings of femininity as a sort of transcendent cosmetic? A vagina, bought at such cost in pain and money, should serve some purpose, and surely that purpose should be sexual. But what if I didn't like sex as a woman? How was I to know?
>
> A few days after Christmas, just six weeks before my operation, I found out (Hunt, 1978, 173).
>
> I had liked it. Liked it? Hell, I had loved it! It was going to be all right! My sexual orientation conformed with my gender, or at least was askew in the same direction. Now I knew what I was going to do with my new vagina, and given half a chance, I was going to do it often (Hunt, 1978, 176-177).

Nancy's commitment to impending surgery gave her the confidence and legitimacy to pursue a "heterosexual" encounter. In turn, the satisfactory "outcome" of this encounter *legitimated* her desire to become female-genitalled. . . Much to her relief, she wasn't going to be "queer" after all!

7.3.2.1 "Queerness" as a Default Sexual/Genderal Identity for the Transsexed

Until recently, the information on a "queer" identity was far more accessible and comprehensible than information on transsexuality. While it is relatively easy to locate their unease *somewhere* in the sex/gender landscape, proto-transsexuals needed the language and the means to discover themselves, *as transsexuals*:

> Jane, of course, could not define herself as a "transsexual" until she knew the term existed. . . Is a person a "transsexual" or of any similar designation, for that matter, before they define themselves as such or before others define them as being of "that kind"? . . . The availability of definitions, concepts, and terms is central in understanding how people come to define their feelings and themselves. It is the control of these definitions that is central in understanding the politics of being different (Bogdan & Fry, 1974, 231).

Many of the transsexual authors did not have sufficient information about transsexuality in their childhood and adolescence to recognise the underlying cause of their unhappiness and social isolation, and instead, explore the possibility that their as-yet-unexplained gender dysphoria may be due to a 'queerness'. All of the twelve autobiographies of female to male transsexuals that I have located describe some experience resembling lesbian contact, and some actually identify as lesbian for many years before they re-identify as transsexual. Very few male-to-females make equivalent admissions of "gayness".

Although George, later Christine, Jorgensen had recognised an attraction between hirself and a friend since childhood, Tom Chaney, s/he would not countenance a "male-to-male" sexual encounter. Although s/he mentions that there was something counterfeit about hir male embodiment elsewhere (indeed, s/he re-iterates claims to be some sort of "intersexed" person) it is curious that s/he uses the term *"another man"* when dismissing a possible encounter with Tom:

> I knew, conclusively, that I could never give myself totally to love and affection for another man.
>
> During the months in [military] service, I had seen a few practicing homosexuals, those whom other men

> called "queer". I couldn't condemn them, but I also knew that I certainly couldn't become like them. It was a thing deeply alien to my religious attitudes and the highly magnified and immature moralistic views that I entertained at the time. Furthermore, I had seen enough to know that homosexuality brought with it a social ostracism that I couldn't add to my own deep feeling of not belonging (Jorgensen, 1968, 38).

Even as s/he edges closer to a realisation of "being trapped in the wrong body", and the potential for a far more profound marginalisation, Christine's efforts to distance hirself from "queerness" resurface when discussing Eric Larsen, a Danish seaman:

> We moved to a dimly lit bar on the other side of the hall and I slid onto an empty stool. Eric stood close behind me and ordered drinks and I leaned away from the strong smell of whiskey and cigars that surrounded him. Then he leaned forward and whispered in my ear, "Y'know, if I was a little queer, I could go for you!"
>
> Even now I can recall my feeling of shock and disgust. I remember that I didn't answer him. Suddenly my throat constricted and for a moment I thought I was going to be sick. I spun away from his lumbering figure and pushed blindly through the crowd of young people into the darkness outside . . . I leaned over the pier and vomited.
>
> . . . once again I'd been singled out and made to feel my strangeness anew by an unexpected and vulgar remark, which I knew to be half a statement and half an invitation (Jorgensen, 1968, 83).

Christine Jorgensen did not make a distinction between sex and gender in the way that later authors were able to; therefore, hir

notions of "homo"sexuality were in relation to an undifferentiated whole; a *homogeneously* sexed/gendered person. Parts of this "whole" were tainted with maleness, so *any* sexual encounter with males must also be tainted with "queerness". While Christine may have been trying to say that hir bodily transformation was not driven by sexual desire, just as she is also adamant that it was not driven by a desire to cross-dress, s/he could not allow hirself to admit that gender-wise, the several near-misses of sexual encounters with men could have been construed as "heterosexual". To Christine, "homosexuality" was simply one of the named, discrete and homogeneous identities in the sexual landscape, and she had decided that she did not belong there:

> At least, I thought, I had progressed far enough to want to face my problems honestly and in a constructive way. But just what were those problems? I restated them squarely to myself. I was underdeveloped physically and sexually. I was extremely effeminate. My emotions were either those of a woman or a homosexual. I believed my thoughts and responses were more often womanly than manly. But at that point, I was completely unaware of the many variations and combinations of masculinity and femininity, aside from homosexuality, that exist side by side in the world (Jorgensen, 1968, 43).

Likewise, Nancy Hunt was able to maintain *both* a conviction of heterosexuality and a discomfort with homosexuality throughout hir life. During hir adolescence in the 1940s, putting a distinct name to hir condition would have been almost impossible (although a few, such as Elbe, and Dillon had done so by this time). In the absence of any knowledge of transsexuality with which to address hir *gender identity* anguish, Nancy contemplated "homosexuality" as a blanket term for sex/gender deviance, but was repelled by an identity based on *sexual performance*:

> Not having heard of transsexualism, I supposed I must be homosexual, and the thought sickened me. For years in dormitories and barracks I had lived among male bodies, and they appalled me. In the shower room I averted my eyes. At the urinal I could not perform in the presence of anyone else but had to sit on the toilet and void like a girl. To contemplate homosexuality, to imagine the embrace of sinewy arms and hairy legs so like my own dismayed me (Hunt, 1978, 68-9).

In the conclusion of her book, she discusses and dismisses options which might have seemed to her audience to have been "softer" options to surgery. She tried acting in a hyper-masculine role and in secret cross-dressing, which only made hir anguish worse. She also dismisses the prospect that a homosexual sexual performance (as a male) would have resolved hir gender anguish:

> If I wanted the love and admiration of men, I could have *become* a homosexual. But I had no sympathy for homosexuals and felt a positive revulsion for the coupling of two male bodies. Though I later slept with men, I remained a devout heterosexual (Hunt, 1978, 262 *emphasis added*).

Hunt's use of the word "become" in the above passage is significant. When discussing possible alternatives to surgical transformation, she treats the adoption of a sexual orientation *as agency*, to *become* a homosexual. Nancy's use of this word, "become" (suggesting that the deliberate adoption of a particular sexual orientation is possible) is both a *mis-reading* of her conviction that sexual orientation could be as hard wired as gender identity, and a recognition of the fundamental distinction between the two components of "sexuality" and "identity". Nancy fucked with her gender, but only as far as it was *validated* by her sexual embodiment (or her impending embodiment). It is curious that Nancy did not regard hir previous sexual

engagement with hir wives as "lesbian" (even though s/he needed to *visualise* hirself as a "woman" to become sexually aroused), neither does s/he dismiss hir married relationships as "a mistake", or even particularly expedient (beyond conforming to the social pressure expected of a "heterosexual" male). Nancy's discourse is confusing insofar as it only *partially* unpacks the distinctions between sexual embodiment, sexual orientation, and gender identity. At the time that she wrote her story, such separations were rarely made. She is making observations of sexual performance in two ways, firstly to dismiss sexual orientation as an imperative for embarking on transsexual re-assignment, while also offering up her post-surgical heterosexuality as part of her case for admittance into the category of "ordinary" women.

The later authors had less difficulty in compartmentalising their sexual orientation, gender identity, and sexual embodiment. Often, the male-to-female stories recount how they could only have satisfactory sexual encounters pre-operatively when they imagined that they were already embodied as female. April Ashley, while still embodied male, could manage encounters with men and still remain "heterosexual" by her own lights:

> My mind had made an internal choice of sex to which the external did not conform. My male genitals were quite alien to me. I would never let anyone touch them, not even when we slept together . . . The elimination of these organs became essential to my finding life tolerable (Ashley & Fallowell, 1982, 75).

Likewise, Mario Martino simply denied that there was anything about his embodiment that made him a "lesbian". He had a deficiency of male genitals, rather than expressing "ownership" of the female genitals of his birth:

> Any resemblance to lesbianism on our part was due to my lack of the proper organs (Martino, 1977, 134).

Others, like Caroline Cossey, maintained a *socially* heterosexual relationship by avoiding *sexual* contact with her partners until after genital surgery, although at the cost of enduring an unbearable frustration:

> The relationship developed, and I could feel myself once again caught up in a web of deceit. As we saw more and more of each other, Claudio became increasingly amorous. He was never overbearing but naturally when he got close he would want to express his desire for me. I felt like a goalkeeper fending off the shots. . . I tried to stop seeing him. But he would become upset and bewildered, and I missed him terribly. Finally I told him that I was waiting for an operation, and was unable for the time being to make love. It was as close to the truth as I dared get. There was no possibility of telling this man the whole truth . . . I was playing a dangerous game. 'If I can just buy a little time' I thought, I can get to Casablanca, have the operation, and then he never need know' (Cossey, 1991, 87-88).

Having made a successful transition into *social* womanhood, Caroline was no longer prepared to engage in any form of sexual activity which would undermine that status. Perhaps ironically, although she did have sex with Claudio after her genital surgery, she subsequently broke off the relationship after several months because of the very thing that she had struggled to maintain while in a pre-operative state; "ordinary" heterosexuality: "I was terribly fond of him, but I had years of catching up to do. I wasn't ready to settle down, and certainly not as an Italian housewife" (Cossey, 1991, 105).

7.3.3 Becoming "Queer"

Very few rationalisations about sexuality would have been possible within Christine Jorgensen's homogeneous sexed/gendered landscape for those transsexuals who became lesbians or gay men after bodily transformation. Although at least four autobiographical works by trans-lesbians have been published in the 1990's, no first-person story from a gay-identified trans-man has been published yet. A few biographical fragments by "trans-fags" have been written: Although, in 1990, Louis Sullivan wrote about an *historical* gay transperson, Jack Bee Garland, the author tells us comparatively little about himself (see 2.1.29 on page 114). Perhaps he died before he thought the world was ready for his story. The psychomedical gatekeepers were not able to accept that a person would want to *become* queer, so soon after "homosexuality" was removed as a mental pathology from the DSM-111. He certainly encountered difficulty in obtaining surgery in the early 1990s because he admitted that he did, and would, continue to identify as a gay male after surgery. Before he died of AIDS, he declared:

> "I took a certain pleasure in informing the gender clinic that even though their program told me I could not live as a gay man, it looks like I'm going to die like one" (Califia, 1997, 187).

At the time of hir marriage, Jennifer Spry could make a distinction between hir gender, hir sexual orientation and society's expectations about the sort of sexual encounters which were deemed "legitimate" for someone born in a male body.

> The society that I grew up in mandated that I, as an apparently heterosexual man, should marry . . . I also felt that marriage would cure me of what I had been taught by society to believe were my 'perverted needs and delusions'; my delusion that I was a woman.

> The more honest part of me, the part that was Jennifer, knew that I would always strive to be a woman. Deep down I wanted to marry a woman so that I could live with her and be her closest friend, her partner, and share a life together. Jennifer's fantasy of marriage was to enter into something that would approximate, for her, a lesbian relationship (Spry, 1997, 49).

This superficially workable arrangement temporarily put Jennifer's abstracted "queerness" into the background; satisfying the outside world that all was well and "heterosexual", and allowing Jennifer to have at least an ethereal "lesbian" relationship. Not that the pre-operative Jennifer knew what "being a lesbian" amounted to. For someone raised as a male, this identity was even more elusive than for hitherto-heterosexual genetic females:

> I did not know any lesbians at the time so I could not measure my day to day relationship in my marriage with the reality of the world, but I knew as surely as I ever had that I was not interested in having sex with men (Spry, 1997, 51-52).

The marriage collapsed only after Jennifer's agony over the realities of sexual embodiment and the gender-role expectations that that embodiment generated drove her to seek surgery.

7.3.4 *Not* Becoming "Queer"

With the distinction between sex and gender which had been articulated by De Beauvoir (1953) and Stoller (1968) and the wider feminist discourse, other positions within the sexual landscape were possible, without directly addressing whether one was "queer" or not. Other transpeople maintained that they were different from lesbians or gay males, because of the primacy of gender identity

over sexual orientation, despite their outward appearances prior to surgery:

> I am often asked whether, if lesbianism had been as publicly accepted in my youth as it is today, I would have continued my quest for sex reassignment. Yes. No qualifications. Unlike the lesbian I did not want to be a woman and I felt that I should never have been one, that I could only be content in the male gender. The lesbians we know have no wish to change their sex. They want only to be women, and the idea of changing anything that might interfere with their woman-to-woman relationship is unthinkable to them. This is in complete contrast to my feelings: I have always wanted, will always want, only the male-to-female relationship (Martino, 1977, 246).

Even in the 1960s, "queer" was a catch-all term for deviance in sex/gender space. Canary Conn's brief acceptance of the label "queer" stemmed from ignorance of a specifically *transsexual* identity, which she immediately identified as her own when she became aware of the "condition". Canary confessed to her mother:

> "I . . . I think I'm queer. I don't know exactly what's wrong with me but as long as I can remember I've had a feeling inside that I was a girl." Conn, 1974, 57).
>
> About six months I had told my mother, we noticed an article in Redbook magazine, written by the mother of a person who had changed sexes. We snapped it up. Parallels were inevitable. . . One thing the article had mentioned helped me. A transsexual was someone who had the anatomy of one sex but had a total identification with the other. That was me. I knew it. Now I had a name for myself. And it wasn't "queer". Conn, 1974, 59-60).

7.3.5 Separating "Transsexual" from "Queer"

Being "transsexual" and being "queer" are two different things (although an individual can be *both* transsexual and "queer"). Lack of information, or lack of insight, on the part of evolving transsexuals allows a temporary primacy of sexual orientation over gender identity, which makes the adoption of a transient "queer" identity an obvious choice. Prior to Stoller's published work on the distinction between sex and gender (1968), the language and conceptual framework made it difficult to articulate a transsexual identity that was distinct from a "queer" label. Furthermore, there is a sub-gender-identity that attaches to a queer identification which *appears* to be more of an enduring holding-place for female-to-males (lesbian) than male-to-females (gay males), (see 6.3.3 on page 276)because of the nature of the transsexual "project" and the differing underlying attitudes to female and male sex/genderal legitimacy.

7.3.5.1 Re-Assessing Hetero/Homosexuality After Re-Embodiment

Not all of the autobiographies address the author's sexuality, particularly after transformation, often leaving the reader with the presumption of becoming, by default, heterosexual. Only Jan Morris admits to a constrained sexuality:

> At last I look at [men] with my sexuality unbound, and my attitude unpretending. I am asked sometimes if I plan to marry[16] one, but no, the men I have loved are married already, or dead, or indifferent. Too late! (1974, 144).

Of the five male-to-female lesbian-identified narrators, three claim to have been sexually attracted to women *as lesbians* before trans-

[16]As a result of the *Corbett vs Corbett* judgement of 1970, there would be no prospect of the UK-born Morris legally marrying a man within UK jurisdiction, in any case.

formation (Griggs, Nettick and Wilchins) and the other two engaged with heterosexual women and married *as heterosexual men* (Bornstein and Spry). Holly Devor's study of female-to-male transsexuals indicates that some of the gay-identified transmen took a period of time to build up the self-confidence as men before they engaged in homosexual relationships:

> Interestingly, those participants who desired sexual encounters with men tended to be well established in their lives as men. They were, on average, seven years into their lives as men when they wanted to engage with men on sexual levels . . . Thus most participants who spoke about their post-transition attractions for men were probably well enough grounded in their identities as men that they could confidently feel that their sexual interests were from one man to another (Devor, 1997, 509).

7.3.5.2 Levels of Sexual Agency Before and After Transformation

Whatever level and type of sexual agency may be expressed in the narratives, it is a reflection of the sexual agency accorded to women and men in Western society, and modified by the realities of transsexual embodiment. Some female-to-male transsexuals, such as Patrick Califia claim a large degree of *apparent* sexual agency prior to their transition as a Sado-Masochist "top" (Califia, 1996, 4). Many pre-transition male-to-females married women more than once (Bornstein, Hunt, O'Keefe, Richards, Rutherford, Spry) as part of their attempt to solve their gender-anguish by working harder at "being male". After transformation, the male-to-females express a wide degree of variance in their sexual agency, from almost none (Morris) through to sexual promiscuity (Carmen). The female-to-males do not always disclose their sexual performance (as distinct from their heightened libido). Mario Martino

observes:

> I know of no female-to-male who has reported an unsatisfactory sex life in the new gender. Even without phalloplasty, each attributes his satisfactory orgasms to the psychological change: Now he is at ease with himself - and having his mate respond to him as a male is a dream fulfilled. With phalloplasty, some female-to-males claim a wild new urge to "sow oats", but, for the most part, they are content with mild flirtations and remain faithful to their wives (Martino, 1977, 265).

Martino's statement is not inconsistent with the other accounts by female-to-males (except, perhaps, Max Valerio's expressions of bisexuality). In the absence of a published narrative by gay-transmen, their situation is unclear; however, given the compromised results of female-to-male genital surgery, their agency (as homosexual males) would be limited by their ability to negotiate sexual encounters as "ordinary", within a phallo-erotic sub-culture. For male-to-female transsexuals, their usually acceptably convincing genitalia is less likely to be a limitation to sexual agency, as lesbians. More often, their overall appearance ("passability" as women) may constrain them during the social encounters which *might* have led on to sexual relations.

7.4 Commonalities Between MtoF and FtoM Transsexuals

If, as I argue in the next chapter, the condition recognised as transsexuality fundamentally stems from a hard-wired mismatch between an internal sense of engenderment (ISG) and one's sexual embodiment, then there should be a pattern of similarity between

female-to-males and male-to-females in those aspects of engenderment which are internal, and not dependent on socialisation and/or language. If, on the other hand, gender is *purely* a social construct, then the transsexual condition would have to be a manifestation of a "failure[17]" of gender-socialisation, and a pattern of defective gender-socialisation *should* be apparent in the stories.

7.4.1 Statistics

The estimates of the occurrence of transsexuality vary so widely that they are little more than speculation based on, at best, a narrow range of clinical experience and, at worst, the prejudices of the author. Furthermore, the condition of "gender dysphoria", describing the *mental* pain stemming from transsexuality is something different to the *social* discordance of gender identity and embodiment: Transsexuals, more often than not, diagnose themselves as such, and seek out relief from the pain of gender-anguish, by pursuing the most likely prospect of offering such relief. Whatever statistics are collected, they represent the occurrence of the *presentation* of mainly self-diagnosed candidates seeking hormones and genital surgery to a psycho-medical gatekeeper, and those candidates are probably reluctant to consider any more than a very limited range of "other" forms of relief (such as aversion therapy, or psychoanalysis).

7.4.1.1 Differences

Quite apart from the obvious physical difference between women and men, and the mechanics of transforming the external appearance from one to the other, there are social differences, based on the differing ways that gender is negotiated for men and women in

[17]It is difficult to imagine *any* situation where deliberately socialising a person into a gender-identity *opposite* to their sexual embodiment could convey any advantages to the recipient (if, indeed, it was possible to do so).

society. I am not aware of any Western legal jurisdiction that applies differentially to female-to-males and male-to-females, when it comes to recognising their legal status, although the mechanics of satisfying the requirements for that recognition are not necessarily the same (there is, however a considerable variance *between* jurisdictions in how the the law is applied to transsexual of *either* sex/gender).

7.4.1.2 Commonalities

The DSM-IV is not gender-specific about gender dysphoria. Given that female and male genders are substantially different *in their manifestation* (I will argue in Chapter 8 that the notion of "gender" is dependent on a recognition of "difference", rather than on the specifics of difference) an apparently *symmetric* discomfort with one's birth-gender is perhaps, at first sight, surprising. Anticipating my discussions in the next chapter, I offer the following observations:

- "Gender-dysphoria" is an ill-defined description of the mental state underlying the transsexual condition. I will argue that *Sexual-embodiment-dysphoria* would be a more appropriate term. However, the discomfort with one's sexual embodiment stems from the *social* consequences of having what is regarded by the transsexual, as inappropriate sexual markers.

- That the pain of transsexualism stems from having one's internal conviction of gender-legitimacy (ISG) undermined or contradicted. The *need* for gender-legitimacy is not generally or culturally specific, but the *process* of obtaining that legitimisation is socially-constructed and contextual.

It is significant that some female-to-male transsexuals, such as Mario Martino, recognised their condition after reading accounts of

male-to-female transsexuals, such as Christine Jorgensen (1974, 162). Even though the publicity surrounding Christine's transformation would have offered no information about the mechanics, or availability, of female-to-male transformation, Mario Martino was able to recognise both the gender-anguish that Christine felt while in a male body, and the solution to that pain (bodily transformation).

Raymond does not accord symmetricality to the two conditions. Her argument of conspiracy against women depends on that asymmetry. Female-to-males are dismissed as "tokens", mutilated female victims of male privilege, rather than beneficiaries of it. In different parts of her book, she asserts that male-to-female transsexuals are both victims *and* beneficiaries of the same process. By this manoeuvre, she undermines the *possibility* of legitimacy of the male-to-female transsexual condition:

- Males are disproportionately represented in other paraphillias, therefore transsexuality can be more easily branded as a "deviance", rather than an unfortunate arrangement of "ordinary" sex and gender;

- Male-to-female transsexuals can be seen as deviant "victims" because in choosing to become women, they are giving up male privilege and thus behaving *irrationally*; female-to-male "tokens" are simply making a superficially *rational*, if desperate, grasp for "male" privilege;

- As Raymond brands the whole transsexual process as a patriarchal attack on "real" women, male-to-female and female-to-male transsexuals must play a different part in her reading of "the plot". While male-to-females cannot *become* "real" women because they have been tainted by male privilege, female-to-males *remain* "real" women, despite being able to avail them-

selves of much the same male privilege[18] in adulthood.

7.4.1.3 Ratios Between MtoF and FtoM Transsexuals

There are "political" aspects to what would otherwise seem a matter-of-fact statistic: i.e., the relative numbers of male-to-female, and female-to-male transsexuals. Raymond claims that the relative proportion of female-to-male transsexuals, compared to male-to-females is so small that she labels them "tokens" (1979, 27-28). Transsexual theorists, such as Wilchins, insist that the ratio must be around 1:1, on transsexual-friendly, but nevertheless, "political" grounds (1997, 59-62). Walworth, who works as a counsellor (rather than as a gatekeeper) to transsexuals, also believes that there are approximately equal numbers of MtoF and FtoM transsexuals (1998, 6). Such a ratio of near-parity would dismantle the argument that transsexuality is caused by faulty socialisation into a defective, socially-constructed gender-landscape. Wilchins' position does, in my opinion, allow transsexuality to be regarded a value/guilt-free (if unfortunate) arrangement of sexual embodiment and gender identity within an individual in such a way that they are discordant. Cromwell also claims that female-to-male invisibility is deliberately "political":

> It is because FTMs and transmen are treated by the medico-psychological practitioners as a homogeneous group that there appears to be a disproportion in numbers. By assuming that transmen and FTMs are homogeneous, clinics are able to ignore and disregard the wide range of signs that individuals may exhibit. Yet that is not the only reason there appears to be a prevalence of MTFs/transwomen over FTMs/transmen. Other contributing influences are

[18]Even allowing for the shortcomings of female-to-male genital surgery, a "passing" transman would probably be able to avail himself of the "male privileges" of personal safety in public spaces, of employment, and of self-expression.

> the focus of most researchers on the so-called sexual dysfunction of men; transmen's and FTMs' ability to pass more easily; their awareness of the reality of the quality of genital surgeries and frequent rejection of them: and the fact that transmen and FTMs have primarily sought care from private physicians and therapists (Cromwell, 1999, 198).

Steinbeck recognises that the numbers of female-to-male transsexuals presenting to gender clinics may not reflect the ratio between FtoM/MtoF gender/dysphorics:

> Female transsexuals seem less common than male transsexuals but this may be more virtual than real. None the less, the lesbian-style relationships in which many of them are found may give more comfort or solace than the male homosexual relationship. Furthermore, they have more outlets for their personality and come to terms with their problem earlier because of the female sex drive (1986, 77).

Although this passage does not mention the different outcomes of genital surgery, the differing *prospects* of satisfactory surgical outcomes could explain why less female-to-males present to clinics. While male-to-female genital surgery usually provides a satisfactorily functioning vagina, the results of phalloplasty for female-to-males is far less "natural" and functional (*and* much more expensive). Furthermore, the more common forms of female-to-male transformation, hormones, mastectomy, and hysterectomy can all be provided *within* existing medical structures. Unless a female-to-male desires phalloplasty, s/he would not need to seek out a *specialist* gender-clinic to obtain transforming surgery, thereby becoming a female-to-male statistic. Another point raised by Steinbeck in the above passage and rarely discussed elsewhere is that

of sex drive. Differing average levels of libido[19] prior to hormonal treatment between persons born with male bodies and those with female bodies could exacerbate the gender anguish for male-to-female proto-transsexuals and drive more of them to the clinics.

7.4.1.4 Socio-Cultural Differences

Comparatively little data are offered on the social and cultural background of persons seeking surgery *within* a Western context. Lewins gives an indication that the profile of candidates at one Australian gender program is skewed *away* from people from non-English-speaking backgrounds and skewed towards professionally qualified people (1995, 11). The Monash clinic in Melbourne operates within a relatively egalitarian public health system (provided the transsexual candidates are covered by health insurance). In this context, the disparity between surgical candidates of different ethnic backgrounds may be a closer reflection of *cultural* attitudes to transsexualism than in societies, such as the USA, where *economic* factors would be more of a determinant of access to health-care[20] (and the relative cost of surgery would be higher, in any case). Although New Zealand no longer offers access to publically-funded genital surgery for transsexuals, it is notable that two of the four NZ-based autobiographers in this study were Maori[21] (Carmen and Georgina Beyer) *neither* of whom had surgery in New Zealand (both make not-wholly-convincing claims[22] of having surgery in

[19]Although few of the transsexual authors discuss changing libido through hormonal/surgical transition, in this author's experience, it is a frequent topic of conversation *amongst* themselves.

[20]I do acknowledge that there is some connection between the "cultural" and the "economic".

[21]A former police officer, Rana Waitai (1983, 136) draws on his experience in Wellington to estimate that 75 percent of the "drag-queen" population are Maori, despite being only 8.3 percent of the population at the time. Waitai includes within the category of "drag-queen" an unspecified number of transsexuals, whom he defines as *all* having had genital surgery.

[22]Carmen devotes most of a chapter to "On Becoming a Woman" (1988, 209-221) in which she evasively describes "her" surgery by way of her friend, "Liz",

Australia). The only one of the NZ-based narrators who had genital surgery in this country was Denise Tilling (1999), who was UK-born, and who had accumulated sufficient funds during her years at sea to be able to afford the Christchurch-based surgeon's fees.

7.5 Primary and Secondary Transsexuals

Psychologists such as Docter (1988) Stoller (1985) and Blanchard (1985) make a distinction between those transsexuals who express a cross-sexed engenderment from an early age (primary transsexuals) and those transsexuals who enter adulthood displaying *to the outside world* a gender-role which is appropriate to their birth-sex, but who declare themselves transsexual in middle-age (secondary transsexuals). Primary transsexuals make little, or no effort to ever adopt the behaviour appropriate to their birth-genitalia and childhood socialisation. In contrast, secondary transsexuals often adopt a hyper-masculinity (the above authors are primarily addressing male-to-female transsexualism), while assuaging their gender-dysphoria by secret-cross-dressing. While Docter recognises primary transsexuals as a distinct group with an unequivocal *gender identity*, he assumes that secondary transsexuals represent one end of a gradation of *gender-expression* which extends through to fetishistic transvesticism.

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rather than first-hand. However, she later admitted that she had not had genital surgery after all. Although she had considered surgery in Egypt in the 1970s "when it was fashionable", she felt that she was now too old for it (interview, *In Touch With NZ*, Radio National, 2 Dec 1996).

Georgina Beyer claims to have obtained surgery through the Monash Clinic in Melbourne in 1984, after minimal gatekeeping: "So I went through the assessment, and they considered me over a seven-day period and then gave me the green light" (Beyer, 1999, 101). Lewins' statement that this clinic required a *minimum* period of two years of monitoring (1995, 92) is borne out by anecdotal evidence that I have heard from other transsexuals who have used this clinic.

7.5.1 An Adequate Explanation?

The separation of the transsexual "condition" into two distinct classes is dependent on several assumptions by the psycho-medical gate-keepers:

- That all gender-dysphoric people have equal compulsion and opportunity to express their "true" gender identity, and if they do not do so at an early age, then the strength and validity of their conviction of being "a woman trapped in a man's body" is suspect. Prior to their self-diagnosis as "transsexual", the reaction of some of the authors to their gender-anguish was initially not directed at *accommodating* their inner conviction of gender, but at suppressing or driving out the *source* of their pain. Given the social sanctions which applied (and still apply) to *serious*[23] gender-transgression, this reaction to the anguish of a proto-transsexual engenderment could be seen as a "rational" course to take.

- That all gender-dysphoric people have access to knowledge about how (and how much) physical and social transformation is possible. Some of the autobiographers recognised themselves as transsexual *only* when they learned that there was a way out of their despair, by way of bodily and social transformation.

- That *any* prospect of cross-sex/gender expression, however limited, which *appeared* as being available to a young proto-transsexual would be an adequate way to accommodate their gender-anguish. Many of the authors express a high value on "the ordinary". While occupation of an unowned "ordinariness", however painful, in their birthsex would have been obvious to them; many of the authors expressed fears of entering

[23]As Garfinkel has recognised, *non-serious* transgression *is* acceptable when "ceremonially permitted" (1967, 125).

an unknown state of "freakhood" if they embarked on the road to changing their sexual embodiment.

- That the "condition" is characterised by what is observable by outside experts, such as psychologists. In the "expert" theorising on the "condition", the agency and range of coping mechanisms that the transsexual authors describe is subordinated to the belief of the psycho-medical gatekeepers that *their* agency to define and treat the condition is what makes a *potential* transsexual into an *actual* transsexual.

The diagnostic separation of the two groups has repercussions for those seeking treatment within the established gender-programs. "Primary" transsexuals are much more likely to be accepted as suitable for surgery (some gender programs exclude transsexual candidates who have *ever* been married in their birthsex). It also helps to shore up the existing gender-construct: primary transsexuals can be regarded as never "*properly*" occupying gendered space according to their birthsex and so have a relative "innocence" about the occupation of their acquired social engenderment; secondary transsexuals *appear* to know far too much of the "other" gender to ever be able to claim the sort of "innocence" which characterises indigenous, non-transsexual engenderment.

7.5.1.1 Identifying "Primary" and "Secondary" Narratives

The majority of male-to-female transsexual narrators would either be classified by Docter as "secondary", or at least, as having a *compromised* diagnosis as "primary". This observation may indicate that a transsexual, who is psycho-medically labelled as "secondary" would have both more *need* to write an autobiography, and more *substance* to include in their story. Caroline Cossey, although almost certainly meeting the criteria for a "primary" transsexual, would not have written her autobiography unless unusual

circumstances had prevailed (she was exposed by the tabloid press on two occasions, she had her marriage annulled, and she sought (unsuccessfully) to have the UK laws pertaining to transsexuals' status changed by the European courts: see 2.1.22 on page 106). In most cases, "primary" transsexuals would have little incentive to forfeit their privacy as part of a rite-of-passage into their achieved sex/gender (as there would be much less tangibly *social* investment in their birthsex to address, or to put to rest). In most cases, there would also be less of a *physical* story to tell; for the "primaries", changes to their physical embodiment would more closely resemble the "ordinary" maturation process of their achieved gender, as they would have started hormones early in life. Furthermore, most "primaries" would have usually faced less resistance to their demands for surgery by the psycho-medical gatekeepers than the "secondaries" (and it is this "resistance" which forms a substantial part of many narratives, e.g., Renee Richards, Jane Fry, Jan Morris, Mark Rees, Raymond Thompson).

7.6 Social Markers of Sexual/Genderal Legitimacy

One factor which adds to a transsexual's genderal legitimacy is their presentation *as if* they are legitimate in the first place, that is, they appear to be occupying gendered space under the same terms as the non-transsexed. They are "passing" as ordinarily gendered because they appear to *belong* in the gender in which they are claiming. This "genderal legitimacy" also confers the presumption of "*sexual* legitimacy" within that gender, even where, in the case of passing pre-operative transsexuals, they do not *actually* possess that quality. When referring to male-to-female transsexuals, Lewins sums up this process as:

> [T]ranssexuals' confident presentation of themselves as women as the principal factor in the public's attribution of their gender provides further confirmation of the advantages of viewing gender more as a process or managed accomplishment than a quality (Lewins, 1995, 120).

While it may be possible for a *transgenderist* to make some sort of claim to gendered space which is outside the gender binary, it does not follow that they acquire any *equivalence* of the "terms of occupation" of gendered space that non-transsexuals and "passing" transsexuals enjoy. The "gender-fucking" transgenderist's claims are neither socially acknowledged as "natural" or as permanent (which is usually the precise aim of the "gender-fuck").

Garfinkel describes that state of "naturalness", which I accept as "the ordinary" occupation of gendered landscape as being rigid, immutable and comprehensible:

> From the standpoint of persons who regard themselves as normally sexed, their environment has a perceivedly normal sex composition. This composition is rigourously dichotomised into the "natural", *i.e., moral,* entities of male and female. The dichotomy provides for persons who are "naturally", "originally", "in the first place", "in the beginning", "all along" and "forever" one or the other (Garfinkel, 1967, 116 *emphasis in original*).

This model is as *intolerant* of change as it is vulnerable to "subversion". The only terms of *legitimate* occupation (as distinct from mere tolerance) possible within this model are to "pass" as "indigenous", that is, to present as unequivocally and innocently indigenous (rather than as the equivalent of a "knowing" tourist, invader, colonist, or refugee).

Genital surgery serves not only as a way of granting "near-native" status to a post-operative transsexual, it also serves as a

"*naturalising*" end-point to an otherwise incurable condition which is regarded as permanent, and existing from birth, namely, the *psychological* category of gender-dysphoria. The underlying condition (gender dysphoria) and the solution (bodily transformation) bring the "terms of occupation" of gendered space *as near as possible* to that of the non-transsexed. Resistance to the legitimacy of this revised "quasi-indigenous state" occurs when the *validity* of either the "underlying condition", or of the "solution", are not accepted (see 1.8 on page 46).

7.6.0.2 Resistance to Transsexual "Naturalisation"

If one subscribes to a theory that gender (EUG) is socially constructed, then the *underlying condition* did not, and could not, exist from birth. *Even if* such a theory was valid, it does not necessarily follow, however, that such a conviction could ever be *re*-constructed in adulthood[24]. To suggest that *whatever* drives transsexuals to seek transformation is either recent, or impermanent, is to undermine their claims to "indigenous" status[25]. Hausman criticises the current transsexual discourse as "demanding subjectivity" (1995, 110-140), that is, a transsexual *becomes* a transsexual because they *demand* sexual transformation, which in turn is recognised as a treatment *for* transsexuality. Greer is even more dismissive: "The only way a man can get rid of healthy genitals is to say that he is convinced he is a woman. Then another man will remove them and gladly" (Greer, 1999, 64). Raymond adds *political* motivation[26] as an "illegitimate" reason for claiming indigenous

[24]Walters *et al.* report that both psychotherapy and aversion-therapy are ineffective in "treating" transsexuality: "None of the . . . psychological techniques has been shown to have any significant measure of success in even a moderate-sized group of transsexuals, and the disadvantages of such methods have not been determined" (1986, 149).

[25]As it would do in the case of a "racially" or "culturally"-based claim to be indigenous.

[26]Which, again, runs counter to understandings of "indigenous" within a racial/cultural context.

status in the gendered landscape: "In its attempt to wrest from women the power in female biology, transsexualism is not an isolated or aberrant biomedical procedure" (1979, xvi).

7.7 Redefining Gender?

Do transsexuals redefine gender? I would argue that they do not change the core *substance* of gender (CGI), but they challenge our *understandings* of how gender is negotiated and legitimised. They appear to be gender-conservatives because the social construction of gender (EUG) *demands* rigid conservatism, as part of the gender-legitimisation process. The genderal "conservatism" of transsexuals *appears* to be more profound, because their case for occupation of the "ordinary" *is more profound* (and visible). Because they are one of the few groups who are vulnerable to having their "indigenous" status challenged, they need to *appear* to be unchallengable, i.e., "indigenous", or *belonging* within the rigid binary, rather than merely occupying it under "natural" terms which although "comprehended", are not readily "articulated". Even where a transsexual's past is known, "playing the game" is one aspect of a process of making *all* "indigenous" people *comfortable* about their engenderment (EUG). "Each has as an enduring practical task to achieve rights to be treated and to treat others according to the obligated prerogatives of the elected sex status" (Garfinkel, 1967, 118).

7.7.1 Negotiating Garfinkel's Gender Schema

The transsexual phenomenon, as it is expressed by either the transsexual narrators or the gatekeepers charged with their "treatment", cannot be accommodated within Garfinkel's "natural" assumptions about gender without some re-working of the model[27]. While "nor-

[27]Which is what I attempt to do in Chapter 8.

mals" may define the transsexual identity as "deviant", that is, outside "normal" sexual/genderal function; the transsexual narrators either *reinterpret* their engenderment to fit within existing structures (the "conventional" transsexual narrators), or attack the construct as being overly restrictive (the "radical" or "transgenderist" transsexual theorists 4.6.1.1 on page 224).

7.7.1.1 Playing the Sex/Gender Dichotomy Game

"Conventional" transsexual narrators address the apparent contradictions between Garfinkel's model[28] of "natural" gender and their sexual/genderal/social transformations by accommodating themselves within it:

- They address the contradictions with attitude 2 (One's gender is invariant) by claiming that their essential, core gender was *always* in accord with their achieved sex;
- They draw on attitude 3 (Genitals are the essential sign of gender) both to justify their need for genital surgery and to use their transformed genitals to strengthen their claim to gender-legitimacy;
- They counter attitude 5 (There are no transfers from one gender to another) by stressing that their sexual embodiment was changed to accord with their *invariant* core gender identity;
- They often describe their difficulties in negotiating the psycho-medical gatekeepers, which reflects attitude 7 (The male/female dichotomy is a natural one[Males and female exist independently of scientists' criteria for being male or female]). The narrators are not engaging with psycho-medical professionals merely to have their convictions of engenderment "legitimised"

[28] I will refer to Kessler and McKenna's version (1978, 113-4) of the model in this discussion, because it is more concise than Garfinkel's original articulation.

only within the artificial doctor/patient relationship. The authors describe the gatekeeping doctors as one of the *barriers* to be overcome[29] in their quest to gain legitimacy within the wider, "ordinary" gender-landscape;

- They offer up stories of their struggle as a rite-of-passage *to stand in the place of* the notion of the "natural" construction of gender in attitude 8 (Membership in one gender or another is "natural").

The social acceptance of transsexuals *as legitimate members of their claimed gender* is largely dependent on how comprehensible and palatable these claims are made to their intended audience.

7.7.1.2 Is There a Third Sex, and Do Transpeople Represent It?

Despite the rhetoric of "radical" transsexuals, I question whether transsexuals, *as transsexuals*, could ever represent a "third sex". And why would they want to? If they succeed in their efforts to *legitimately* locate themselves within their achieved sex/gender, then they simply move from one side of the *existing* binary and the other. If they *do not* succeed in their gender-legitimation bid, whether from their own shortcomings in presentation or those of societal accommodation, then a *new* binary is set up between "normal" and "freak", or "failed male"/"failed female", and the assumptions about the "ordinary" construction of the gendered landscape remain intact.

"Radical" transsexuals, such as Bornstein, Whittle and Stone probably find it easier to move on from their experience of destabilising *embodied sex* to apparently destabilising gender (EUG) itself, but do they act *as transsexuals* in the classic sense, or merely as

[29] I have observed, while acting as a peer-support contact, that some transsexual candidates will offer up *whatever* presentation (no matter how deceitful) that they believe will convince the gatekeepers to approve surgery.

people whose grasp on their investment in bodysex and the superficialities of gender roles has been loosened by their experience? Transsexuals demonstrate that sexual embodiment *as a signifier of sexual/genderal "truth"* is by no means "stable"; and that the nexus between *notional* "sex" and "gender" is weaker, less "natural", and more conditional than many non-transsexed people may assume. But if *binary gender* is to be destabilised, the agents may be situated *elsewhere* in the gender landscape. Transsexuals, being driven by gender, *and within gender*, and priviledging gender over all else (sexual embodiment, social legitimacy, legal status, etc.) are perhaps some of the most poorly-equipped agents to undertake a "project" of gender-destabilisation. Their dearly-won sexual re-embodiment is not driven by a "natural", *physical* imperative[30], but is undertaken to accord with their core gender identity (CGI). Ultimately, transsexuals are left with *notional* "gender", and gender alone, to justify their claim to legitimate occupation of sexed/gendered space. Transvestites, by contrast, do not have the same social investment in the "gender identity" in which they *purport* to be when cross-dressed. They can always fall back on *notional* "anatomy" to support their claims to "gender legitimacy", which would be, as a default, in accord with their birthsex[31]. Margorie Garber claims that a *multiplicity* of "sexes" and "gender"s are thrown up by cross-dressing, as a "category crisis" (1992, 16). However, I believe that a (re)representation of *notional* sex/gender as a "third" is not the *creation* of new genders, but only the re-articulating new (or re-cycled), unstable, *gender-categories* within a strategically-placed "legitimate"/"illegitimate" binary, such as "natural" men *and* women/"unnatural" *representations* of both men

[30]Within an understanding of a conflated sex/gender model, the early transsexual narrators made "physical" claims of "intersexuality", as their imperative for bodily change (see 4.5 on page 212).

[31]And they frequently *do* leave a tell-tale sign of their "real" anatomy, by way of a deliberate flaw in presentation: "The transvestite never forgets - and never allows us to forget - that he is a man in woman's clothes" (Ackroyd, 1979, 20).

and women.

Although Epstein & Straub state: ". . . and what is more post-modern than transsexualism?" (1991, 11), transsexuals are more usually sex/gender "conservatives". Despite their much longer history, it may be that *other* forms of gender-transgression, such as transgenderism and transvestitism (rather than the modern, medically-mediated, phenomenon of the "transsexual") are more likely to act as the "post-modern" *agents* of gender destabilisation.

Chapter 8

Mapping Gender:

Towards a More Inclusive Theory of Engenderment

8.1 Grounding My Theory

My PhD thesis is focussed on transsexual story-telling. The 64 biographical texts that I have located serve several purposes, but primarily to re-inforce the authors' claims to be *legitimate* members of their claimed sex and gender. Although several of the more recent transsexual writers have taken on board some notions of gender-fluidity and attempt to question their hold on gender[1], the autobiographers are, on the whole, making claims to the *same* gendered space as the non-transsexed. But the existing construct of natural gender does not accommodate their claims. In Garfinkel's model of "ordinary" understandings of the gendered landscape (1967, 122-

[1]While I do not totally discount these claims of gender-fluidity, the same authors also make declarations of genderal legitimacy which are not dissimilar to the earlier, or to the concurrent "conventional" transsexual narrative. Rather than *wholly* denying the binary nature of gender which drove them to bodily-transformation in the first place, these authors may feel sufficiently secure in their now-resolved engenderment that they are able to undertake such explorations with similar confidence as their non-transsexed contemporaries.

128), sex/gender cannot be changed, and one is always the gender of one's birth, while any other claim to engenderment that lies outside this assumption *must* be deviant and illegitimate. In negotiating the transsexual narrative, one of the dilemmas that I have faced is how much legitimacy do I grant to the substance of their stories, and thereby, how much legitimacy do I give to their claims to gender-legitimacy. Do I treat the transsexual condition as pathological, as some feminist theorists, and many psychologists, have done? Or do I give their claims an *initial* legitimacy and examine how the existing construct of gender fails to account for their engenderment in a non-pathological way? Firstly, I would like to explore some of the existing models that *purport* to account for the transsexual phenomenon.

If I chose a model that assumes that transsexuality *is* a pathology, two further choices present themselves: I could accept the psycho-medical model that the pathology lies in the incongruity between mind (gender) and body (sex)[2]. Specialists in the field of transsexual gatekeeping resort to the expedient of *controlled* transition to the patients' claimed gender (surgical, hormonal and legal sanction given to a desire to change sex which does not respond to any other known treatment). Alternatively, I could use the "radical" feminist position, as voiced by Janice Raymond, that transsexuality is a pathology in and of itself, and that current methods of treatment are inappropriate at a personal level and serve to re-inforce existing oppressive gender-regimes (1979, 18). Neither models admit to the possibility of the transsexuals having any agency in constructing and managing their own engenderment.

[2]While I do acknowledge that there is, in fact, an incongruity between gender identity and sexual embodiment, I do not believe that it is a manifestation of a pathology, of the sort which, if it could be identified, could be treated by simply addressing the source of the "damage". In this section, I argue that transsexual gender-identity, however misplaced in respect of sexual embodiment, is nevertheless a *healthy*, i.e., non-pathological, manifestation of engenderment which is not necessarily different in substance to the terms of engenderment of the wider population.

8.1.1 A Psycho-Medical Model

The first, psycho-medical model devalues the transsexuals introspection and agency, but places the *pathology* in their gender identity: their hold on gender is *damaged*. In general terms, this model of gender assumes that gender must be congruent with sexual embodiment and that expediency demands that individual transsexuals *might* be better off if, after professional screening and management, their bodies are brought into line with their minds[3]. In respect of Garfinkel's schema, this model holds that exceptions *do* exist, and that the only way to eradicate the pain of gender dysphoria is to bring the individual back to within the normal construction of gender, by psychoanalysis (to accept the "reality" of ones birth-sex) or surgery/hormonal change (to bring one's body into congruence with one's mind). Closure is having a concordance between gender and sexual embodiment, by whatever means, with no sustained challenge[4] to the existing binary gender construct.

Most of the authors have had to negotiate this model of gender, because psycho-medical professionals act as gate-keepers to whoever seeks access to transforming hormones and surgery. Despite there being no place for agency and introspection on the part of the "patient" within this conventional doctor-patient model, many of the authors claim that they "managed the managers" in order to survive the imposition of a model which demanded that they conform to unreasonable stereotypes of gender-role performance to "pass". The stories frequently recount the difficulties faced in gaining approval from an almost exclusively male, relatively con-

[3]This "caution" in bringing the sexual embodiment of adult, consenting transsexuals into accord with their gender identity contrasts with the pro-active surgical intervention in the case of infants born with an intersexed condition.

[4]By formally pathologising the transsexual condition by way of controlling access to the process of re-embodiment by psycho-medical gatekeepers, very little modification to the assumptions in Garfinkel's gender schema needs to be made. "Properly" processed former transsexuals *are all special cases*, while the possibility of "ordinary" folk transgressing gender norms *remains* interdicted.

servative, medical establishment. The transsexuals' agency in negotiating this obstacle includes presenting what appeared to be the "correct" transsexual story prevailing at the time:

> It took a surprisingly long time - several years - for the researchers to realise that the reason the candidates behavioural profiles matched Benjamin's so well was that the candidates, too had read Benjamin's book, which passed from hand to hand within the transsexual community, and they were only too happy to provide the behaviour that led to acceptance for surgery (Stone, 1991, 291).

The apparent naivete of doctors during this "middle period" of transsexual treatment/gatekeeping suggests that the professionals assumed that transsexuals were, as patients, powerless to the point where they could not exercise agency. However, the transsexuals often expressed *more agency* in defining the problem and controlling the discourse than many of the doctors:

> Transsexuals are a notoriously well-read population, primarily because their success in obtaining the medical treatments that they seek depends on the ability to convince doctors that their personal history matches the officially sanctioned etiology. In a context where telling the right story may confer legitimacy upon one's demand and the wrong story can foil one's chances for sex change, the autobiographies of those transsexuals who have successfully maneuvered within the strict protocols of the gender clinics constitute guide-books of no mean proportion (Hausman, 1995, 143).

Amongst the pre-operative transsexual community, the autobiographical guide-books of their peers served to counter the perceived "dishonesty" of the psycho-medical gatekeepers in setting

overly-rigid, stereotypical and outdated criteria for the "acceptable" candidate for surgery. The psycho-medical model does not allow for agency by the transsexual authors and seems so bound to reinforcing stereotypes that it seems a rather inappropriate tool for exploring the boundaries of gender and its performance. Whilst the motivation for the minority of doctors' involvement probably varied from genuine compassion, scientific curiosity, through to a desire to control the untidy, there were limits, and the professionals sought to cover themselves:

> Gender identity clinics are not regarded with favour by the medical patriarchy. They were established in spite of the opposition of the most respectable elements of the medical profession, men who regarded transsexualism as an even more disgusting aberration than does Janice Raymond, if that is possible. Their reasons are diametrically opposite to Ms Raymond's, since for them transsexualism seems to threaten the natural order of things, while she believes it reinforces the order. The clinics developed under the intense and unremitting pressure of transsexuals who would go to any length to obtain an operation and for whom no treatment, other than the operation, was satisfactory. The clinics thus came into existence *in spite of* the medical patriarchy, but, like all marginal institutions, they strove to justify themselves by their conformity. Hence, all the ghastly gender-amendment training which transsexuals have to suffer (Riddell, 1996, 178-9 *emphasis in original*).

8.1.2 A Radical Feminist Model

The second, radical feminist position also denies the agency and autonomy of the authors (see earlier discussion at 1.8 on page 46). If I accepted Raymond's model, I would have to re-interpret the

introspection and agency of the authors as simply part of the delusion foisted upon them by the patriarchal psycho-medical "empire". To Raymond, a lack of real introspection is the pathology which makes transsexuals victims of the empire. There is evil abroad, and these poor souls do not have the moral stamina to resist. In general terms, this model of gender assumes that gender is a socially constructed consequence of sexual embodiment and cannot be changed, and that there are no legitimate exceptions to the normal construction of gender. While Garfinkel's schema (1968) offers a similar *description* of the everyday understanding of gender, Raymond applies this "natural" model *proscriptively.* Closure is acceptance of the gender that is consequent from one's birthsex, together with a general revision of the wider gender-construct. I use the word "revision" here, rather than a radical change, because I believe that the *structure* of gender is not challenged by Raymond, who advocates a simple inversion of the politics of exclusion, hierarchy and proscription purportedly in favour of women, or at least, of women holding similar views to her own. After dismissing those women who advocate tolerance towards transsexuals as "expressing a false sympathy" (1979, 176) Raymond issues a call to the less "sympathetic" to seize power:

> It is a critical time for women-identified women. Medicalized transsexualism represents only one more aspect of patriarchal hegemony. The best response women can make to this is to see clearly just what is at stake for us with respect to transsexualism and to assert our power of naming who we are (1979, 177).

Raymond's plea to "assert our power of naming who we are" in respect of the transsexual phenomenon also implies that her supporters would be entitled to the power to name who are *not* women (or men). Given the primacy of gender-legitimisation which is expressed in the transsexual narrative, she is advocating an exclu-

sionary process which is little different from that which other feminist theorists[5] have identified as being used by patriarchy *against* women. By insinuating transsexuality into the feminist discourse as a specifically "feminist" issue, she has, to some extent, succeeded. When delivering papers on this topic, I have felt obliged to address the position of Janice Raymond and other anti-transsexual theorists, again and again. I conclude that it is not possible to both give credence to the transsexual story-tellers[6] *and* accept the arguments of the "radical" feminist essentialists, because these arguments deny any possibility of the legitimacy of either the process of transsexual transformation or the autonomy of the transsexual narrators. While I am uncomfortable with continuing to privilege Raymond's exclusionary doctrine over the words of the people that I am studying, her now-dated publication still haunts some transsexual narrators. In this section, I will attempt to "quarantine" these essentialist critics with part of an address to Janice Raymond by Riki-Anne Wilchins, a transsexual theorist:

> Your attempt to rest gender categories upon biological foundations is similarly indefensible. Within the category of those living as women are infertile women, women without wombs, women without breasts, women with XY chromosomes, women whose blood flows primarily with testosterone, hermaphroditic women, intersexed women with both genitals, transgendered women, stone butches and diesel dykes, passing women, incredibly hot drag

[5]For example, de Beauvoir's notion of the "Other" (1953, 16-21).

[6]While I concede that they too, are advancing a claim to genderal legitimacy based on a notion of some form of genderal *essence*, most of them are not using that same essentialist argument to exclude others from the same category (male or female) that they claim to occupy. The exceptions to this relatively benign application of genderal essentialism are some of the early, purportedly "intersex" authors, such as Allen (1954) and Turtle/Somerset (1963/1991). Morris (1974, 154) also condemns many of her fellow transsexuals to a life of misery, but on grounds, which although unclearly defined, seem to lie outside that of "gender", perhaps more in notions of class, education, or moral fortitude.

> kings, female-to-male preoperative transsexuals, and even gendertrash rejects like me. When you arrogate to yourself the work of policing the borders of this diverse class, you re-institute the very strictures of coercion and control, of exclusion and limitation, that feminism seeks to overthrow.
>
> Moreover, just as feminists have charged that patriarchy made women's bodies a site of contested meaning, and then appropriated women's flesh and experience as a tabula rasa upon which to inscribe their constructions of a subordinated Other, just so, you have made of our bodies a site of contested meaning, and then appropriated transsexual flesh and experience as a tabula rasa upon which you inscribe your constructions of us as subordinated Other. Once again, you are reenacting the very oppressive mechanisms from which feminism is seeking emancipation (Wilchins, 1997, 60).

Raymond's border-keeping discourse uses not only a similar language to that labelled as "patriarchal", it also gains similar advantage from the asymmetry of the power to define and legitimate *within* the argument. Male-to-female transsexuals, such as Wilchins, do not wish to exclude Raymond from the category, "woman", but attack her *arguments* for excluding them from genderal legitimacy as women[7]. In Raymond's circuitous argument, male-to-female transsexuals are *not* women, therefore they are suffering from a fundamental delusion, which precludes them from genuinely experiencing socialisation as a woman, which is one of the criteria for being a legitimate woman in the first place: "the transsexual short-circuits transcendence by taking false leaps and by endowing his or her selfhood with artificial reality" (1979, 170).

[7]Wilchins' criticism of Raymond does border on challenging her legitimacy as a "feminist", however.

The notions of "false" and "artificial" in respect of gendered experience assumes that a transformed transsexual, no matter how genderally committed, or physically convincing, would somehow *consistently* generate "false" gendered transactions throughout their life-course. Conversely, this assertion also assumes that for the non-transsexed[8], otherwise similarly-gendered social transactions would *consistently* take place with a quality of "truth", or "authenticity" which transsexuals can never experience. While Raymond offers no explanation for this disparity, transsexuals usually make an effort to come to terms with their discordant personal histories (discussed at 4.2.4 on page 191).

8.1.3 A Post-Modern Model of Gender

Until now, the only model which does avoid branding transsexuals as "pathological", is the model which brands the gender construct itself as "pathological". By declaring that there are more than two genders, or that gender is fluid, or even illusory, the *individual* transsexual appears to have been spared the label of "deviant". But what of the transsexual authors' autonomy and self-introspection in unravelling their condition, and what of their agency in negotiating an often hostile psycho-medical system to obtain the solution to their largely self-diagnosed problem? The consistent claims in the biographies that the authors were driven by a irresistible urge to transcend the gender attached to their birthsex counts for very little. If gender is merely a fluid, multi-faceted social construct, then why go to the pain and expense of bodily and social transformation[9]? Agency is allowed transsexuals, but only to deny or

[8]Or, for those proto-transsexuals who took up Raymond's exhortation to forgo surgery and remain in their birthsex.

[9]If, indeed, the gender-landscape was less restrictive, the degree and/or number of social transactions which generated gender-anguish among transsexuals may diminish. The imperative for gender *legitimisation* as female or male would remain, however: Only the level of policing of transgression would alter. Furthermore, in a less-rigidly dichotomous gender-regime, the issue of genital surgery

subvert the problem which lies at the core of their unease with the gender of their birth. "The ordinary" is forever denied to them, because "the ordinary" is devalued for everyone. This model runs counter to the theme of almost all of the autobiographies, that is, of a claim to be, as nearly as possible, ordinary women and men, despite the authors' incongruent gender-history. This "fluidist" model holds that the understandings about gender which are described in Garfinkel's schema are illegitimate, and there is no real problem with the incongruities associated with what we know as transsexualism. Closure is the subverting and diffusing of the existing gender construct, presumably together with an expectation that all forms of gender dysphoria will thereby disappear.

The early transsexual authors predate post-modernism (the first authors even predate an articulated distinction between sex and gender) so they do not address this model. Many later transsexual authors express an unease with postmodern theorising on gender, specifically as it applies to the transsexual condition. Because I accept the authors' claims to "ordinary" gender, I also refuse to read the stories as subversive accounts of self-sacrificing sexual agents-provocateurs of gender destabilisation politics that seems to fascinate some post-modernists. Halberstam recognises the problem of depersonalising transsexuals to serve as metaphors in gender-theory, after criticism of some of her own work on the topic from the FTM community:

> Transsexuality has become something of a favoured topic for gender studies nowadays because it seems to offer case studies for demonstrations of various gender theories. Because transsexual self-accountings are all too often left out of the theorisations of gender variance, some critical animousity has developed between transsexual and non-transsexual theorists (1998,145).

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would diminish as a threat to the existing order, and be less of a matter for regulation and debate than it is for transsexuals in today's world.

Despite the transsexual authors' frequent claim to "gender-in-the-ordinary", and the importance to them of sexual re-embodiment, Garber sees transsexuals as challenging the binary and as a useful *tool* for destabilisation:

> The transsexual body is not an absolute signifier of anything. Yet it makes the referent ("man" or "woman") seem knowable. Paradoxically, it is to transsexuals and transvestites that we need to look if we want to understand what gender categories mean (1992, 110).

Although my own study also draws on accounts of the transsexual condition to explore gender in the wider society, I do so by accepting the transsexual's claim to genderal legitimacy as a starting point, rather than not being "an absolute signifier of anything". There is a growing cynicism amongst transsexuals about the value of theorising by non-transsexuals about transsexual issues. Claudine Griggs gives more weight to a lived experience than theory:

> I watched my femininity rise each new day - as a child, as a teenager, as an adult - even when I vehemently fought its ascent. I recognised unconscious manifestations at age sixteen with my first pregnancy dream, yet I hoped, "Maybe I only dreamed what I dreamed". Character unremittingly staked its claim. Neither maleness, nor ostracism, nor self reproach could prevent it.
>
> Differences between men and women are all around us. Some are represented by variant role expectations, but *the* difference is inside us. Gender identity is the primary sex characteristic. It is real. It has a pulse. It wails in three dimensions and in the electrochemical substance. Postmodern gender theorists can neither create nor undo this reality (1998, 140, *emphasis in original*).

Griggs' statement insists that a transsexual experience of engenderment does have some validity, and that "difference" is inescapable. In the following sections, I will propose a revised model of gender which not only recognises "difference" as a characteristic of the gender-landscape, but argues that at its core, gender *is* the irreducible recognition of that difference[10]. A body of theory, such as post-modernism, which yields to the temptation to set aside, or devalue, that notion of "difference", even as part of a transitory process of deconstruction, would have difficulty with the recognising the *autonomy* of the transsexual narrative. The transsexual stories contain many references to persistent, compelling sexual/genderal "differences" which are negotiated *within* the existing gendered landscape. At an individual level, there is little which is genderally subversive in these texts[11]. On a broader social level, they do challenge our "naive" *terms of occupation* of the gendered landscape, but not the *structure* of the landscape itself. While, of course, all narratives are subjective and their language and meaning can be dissected and critiqued in many ways; to read most transsexual stories as patently subversive tools in the deconstruction of gender requires a negation, or *inversion*, of the substance of that narrative.

8.1.4 A Clash of Gender-Models?

Each of these existing approaches may serve to nullify perceived threats to the existing gender-order posed by the transsexual phenomenon. Even where these "public service" discourses *appear* to be radical, at least in a mechanical sense, they still offer a useful tool to defend "the ordinary" from the *counter-ordinary*. De-

[10]And if core-gender is limited to *no more* than a recognition of that difference, then Griggs' above statement, "It is real" is as valid when referring to her sense of engenderment as it is to anyone else.

[11]Except, perhaps, that the texts exist at all, and in such numbers, and that they are somehow considered to be worthy objects of scrutiny by gender-theorists.

"Understandings" about the Mutability of Sex and Gender

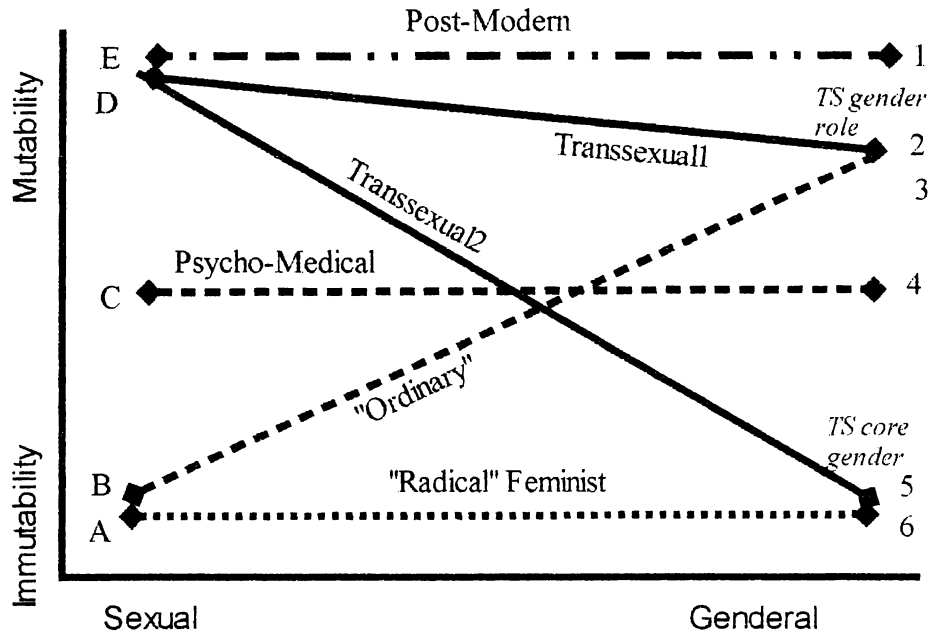

Figure 3: "Understandings" about the Mutability of Sex and Gender. The transsexual "project" is often incomprehensible to the non-transsexed, because of the "understandings" which underpin other discourses on "gender":

- The transsexual narrators make a distinction between an immutable, core gender identity (CGI) and the performative aspects of gender expression (GRB) which is often used by them as a tool in the process of seeking gender legitimisation (SGL).
- The "ordinary" understanding of gender (EUG) assumes that sex is immutable and "gender" is primarily represented as a socially-constructed role (GRB) then neither the imperative for change to either of these two nodes, or the validity of the change itself is comprehensible.
- For transgenderists and some post-modern gender theorists, who argue for sex *and* gender as fluid, the transsexual argument, that the immutability of core gender identity (CGI) is the imperative for sexual re-embodiment, is not comprehended.
- The essentialist, "radical" feminist position, as articulated by Raymond (1979) argues, somewhat inconsistently, that there is an immutable "essence" to being a woman which spans both the sexual and the genderal. This notion is applied in a strategic manner to exclude transsexual's claims to genderal legitimacy.
- The attitude of the psycho-medical gatekeepers is often that of a recognition of a *limited* amount of both sexual and genderal mutability (although John Money's now somewhat discredited position assumed a much greater degree of sexual, rather than genderal, mutability after an 18 month gender-identity "window" at birth had closed).

risive name-calling directed at the gender-disruptive may be the discourse of containment of the street[12], but is the post-modern "project" of celebrating a *compulsory* diversity of "gender" any less constraining for a transsexual who is striving for "the ordinary"? The transsexual project is directed at finding legitimacy *within* a fundamental binary (core gender CGI) by negotiating the mutable superficialities which serve to *represent* that binary (sexual embodiment and social process [GRB]). An imposed discourse of "diversity" legitimates the *use* of the tools, while subverting the *end* to which those tools are directed. In naming, describing, and evaluating the use of these tools, the "gender-diversity" discourse shuts down debate on genderal legitimacy, while *purporting* to engage in it.

Figure 3 shows the balances struck by different discourses on transsexuality regarding mutability and *representations* of things sexual or genderal[13]. Unlike the model of gender that I am proposing, "non-transsexed" discourses do not articulate multiple and quasi-independent *levels* of "gender", so that "gender" is either represented by two discrete points (homogeneous "sex" and homogeneous "gender"), or as an almost bewildering *multiplicity* of genders. In my revised model, a transsexual's hold on "gender" can be both *mutable* (gender-role behaviour [GRB] used a socially contingent tool of gender legitimisation) and *immutable* (core gender [CGI]). To each of the players in these discourses, the distance between each other's positions is seen as a *deviance*. Some of these "deviances" are:

- A:D; The disagreement between radical feminists (A:6) and

[12]Many of the narrators mention that the threat of street-harassment constrained or delayed their transition.

[13]I wish to make a distinction between actual and signified sex/gender. Most transsexual authors are realistic about the authenticity of the change in their sexual embodiment, while celebrating that their re-configured bodies *represent* something quite different on the gendered landscape.

transsexuals (D:3, 5) regarding the legitimacy of changes to sexual embodiment (while there being little dispute about a notion of core-gender 5:6) Hence, Raymond's call for transsexuals to be *agents* in her proposed reworking of gender (1979, 176).

- The psycho-medical model (C:4) sees deviance in the distance between "the ordinary" and the start (2:5) and end-point (D:B) of the transsexual condition. Transsexual core gender (CGI) is the *reverse* of what would be "ordinary" for one's birthsex. The "deviance" is the transsexual patient's inability, or refusal, to bring their conviction (ISG) in to line with their birthsex (i.e., the gender socialisation which was experienced during childhood has "failed"). The situation for "real" transsexuals is so desperate and intractable that the *unthinkable*[14] appears to be the only solution. Such "unthinkable" acts of genderal subversion are rendered more palatable where they are rigidly controlled by "experts", i.e., psycho-medical professionals[15].

- The post-modern discourse (E:1) *appears* to have some similarity to that of transsexuals (D:3, 5) but only in respect of *gender-role play* (GRB). The re-iteration of this "similarity" by some theorists denies the possibility of core gender (CGI) being recognised as the primary motivator for a transsexual to seek bodily transformation, and reduces the transsexual discourse to a sub-set of the "gender-fuck" project, albeit with *actual*, rather than *notional*, change to the fundamentals of

[14]That is, unthinkable within the "ordinary" assumptions about gender; i.e., one cannot "normally" change one's sex, and that in a mentally healthy person, "gender" naturally and inevitably flows from one's birthsex.

[15]If, as I have argued at 7.2.1 on page 313, "ordinary" gender is always an "amateur" pursuit, validated by one's equally "amateur" peers, then no matter how benign their intentions, the role of psycho-medical gatekeepers is inevitably pathologising and artificial. After surgery, the transsexual "patient" will, in all likelihood, never again encounter a psycho-medical professional to seek gender-legitimation. "Gender-in-the-ordinary" will be legitimated by a post-transsexual's peers, not within a contrived "doctor-patient" setting.

one's sexual embodiment. It is perhaps understandable that *some* transsexuals[16] seek solace within a structure which so readily accords them *some* limited "legitimacy" (even if this "legitimacy" extends no further than celebrating their proficiency in "subversive" gender-role performance (GRB), rather than recognising the immutable primacy of their core gender (CGI), which defined their condition in the first place (see on page 224)).

- The "ordinary" model of sex/gender (B:2) runs counter to *visible* aspects of the transsexual project (D:5). If the transsexual "project" succeeds (i.e., passing/acceptance as "legitimate" occupiers of gendered space), it does so to the extent that the post-transsexual *appears* to have adopted the "ordinary" model. The management of the transsexual "problem" by psycho-medical professionals represents a comfortingly pragmatic "middle-way" between two widely variant attitudes to sexual/genderal mutability.

The wide difference between the post-modern (E:1) and radical feminist (A:6) acceptance of mutability of sex/gender leads to an opposing view of how transsexuals affect the existing gender-order. Raymond claims that transsexual bodily transformations re-*inforce* existing structures (1979, 184), while post-modernists such as Butler (1990, 70-71) and Garber (1992, 93-117) claim that these same processes *subvert* the gender regime.

8.2 Towards a Revised Model of Gender

Although some gender theorists have attempted to de-construct the transsexual narrative as *as text*, none of the above models are

[16]Feinberg, Rothblatt, Bornstein, Wilchins.

grounded in the autobiographical literature by transsexuals themselves[17]. The model that I would like to explore is one where transsexual gender-identity (CGI) could be seen as intrinsically healthy (if misplaced body-wise), consistent with how it is expressed in the bulk of the autobiographical works. To achieve this, I would need to re-interpret the "normal" construction of gender to include the idea of a healthy mind in a healthy, but inappropriate[18], body. To grant legitimacy to the transsexual stories, I would also have to retain the binary nature of the gendered landscape into which they were born, which is the *site* where they encounter the pain of gender dysphoria, and where they ultimately transcend it. I am arguing that the existing model of gender contains redundant assumptions that only become visibly problematic when applied to people who are discursively relegated to the margins, such as transsexuals and intersexed persons. So, what would this revised model of gender look like?

An alternative, non-pathologising model which accounts for a range of "engenderments" (and the social processes which maintain them) seems to be possible if I make five assumptions:

- There is an *almost* universal[19], compelling need to "be gendered" (internal recognition (ISG)), and an equally insistent need to "be legitimately gendered" (external recognition (SGL)), and

- That at least some of the gender-role performance (GRB) expected of one during the "being legitimately gendered" (SGL)

[17]Although some transsexual theorists, such as Martine Rothblatt, Kate Bornstein and Riki-Anne Wilchins do explore post-modern notions of diffuse/multiplicity of genders, their accounts of their personal lives are fragmentary, and not in a "conventional" autobiographical format.

[18]That is, their sexual embodiment is "inappropriate" to serve as a tool in realising their need to have their internal conviction of engenderment (ISG) legitimated by society (SGL).

[19]I use the qualifier, "almost universal" here because I do admit the possibility that persons with some forms of severe mental illness may not have this need, or have that need distorted by their illness.

process is redundant[20], and

- The current construction of gender[21], when viewed as a "natural" and internally homogeneous dichotomy is an artifact that is not strongly challenged (if at all) by non-transsexual (or non-intersexed) persons, and
- That persons outside of, or on, the margins of "ordinary" gender need to articulate their claim to gendered space far more strongly than those at the centre, and
- There may be other ways of describing the structure of "gender" which would accommodate groups that are currently excluded from "legitimate" or "indigenous" occupation of gender.

8.2.1 Splitting "Gender" into its Component Parts

To make a theoretical framework to fit the transsexual stories, I saw the need to split gender into several components, and to explore the relationship between each part:

Core Gender: A organically- based, sub-linguistic conviction[22] that

[20]There is no single, universally accepted gender-role performance (GRB) which is valid in all social contexts. For transsexuals, some of their success in "passing" in their achieved gender is not wholly based on congruent histories, physical attributes or social skills, but also on their ability to assess *which* presentation, of *which* set of gender-coded markers, is appropriate in a range of different social contexts. A "drag-queen", or fetishistic cross-dresser, despite the amount of energy and expense which he may invest in his presentation as a "woman", may appear in public without reference to his gendered environment at the time, and stand out as "illegitimate".

[21]For the purposes of this exploration of gender, I accept the model articulated by Garfinkel (1968, 122-128).

[22]This concept seems to equate with Stoller's mysterious "third component" of gender identity, of which he anticipates that: "Some day, such a force may be found to be the algebraic sum of the activities of a number of neuroanatomical centres and hierarchies of neurophysiological functions. At present we cannot be so specific" (1968, 73-4). It is significant that he locates this organic "component" outside language, in the way that I do with my reading of "core gender". It may be that a notion such as this would ineluctably present itself to persons

there is *a* binary[23], based on an *abstraction* of notions of sexual embodiment, sexual performance, and possibly reproductive potential (CGI);

***Being Gendered*:** A conviction that one has a *place*[24] within the binary (ISG);

Being Legitimately Gendered: A social contract[25] confirming one's conviction of one's place within the binary (SGL);

Gender-Role Performance: What one does (or does not do) as one's part in the social contract (GRB).[26]

8.2.2 A Four-Layered Binary?

My proposed structure of gender is based on a deep-seated notion of a binary, yet I have offered up a structure which contains at least four layers of engenderment, each distinct from the other. How can I then describe this model as "binary"? I am attempting

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(such as Stoller) working extensively with transsexuals because of the limitations of either a sociological or biological explanation for the condition.

[23] *Which* side of the binary is problematic for transsexuals, as it is opposite to their sexual embodiment

[24] Newborn babies would not have such a sense of *place*, "gendered" or otherwise, and neither would they have the ability of articulating that sense of location within the existing gendered landscape until later in childhood. Prior to accepting that they were transsexual, the authors in this study often believed that their *place* concurred with their birthsex and acted accordingly, no matter how uncomfortable they felt.

[25] The "contract" is socially and culturally specific, and Garfinkel (1968, 122-128) provides a working model of such an understanding, or "contract" in Western society, which I frequently draw upon in this thesis. Although I expect that non-Western cultures would have "contracts" which differ in *detail* from the Western assumptions described by Garfinkel, a cross-cultural exploration of engenderment is outside the scope of this study.

[26] While this *expression* of engenderment may be the most visible aspect of "gender", I am arguing in this chapter that it is erroneous to mistake this *component* for the *whole*. A large part of the process of a "successful" transsexual transition is to re-work this most socially accessible component of engenderment, so that it does *reflect* their "whole". After re-embodiment, their GRB *should* allow a process of SGL which is consistent with their internal convictions of CGI, ISG.

to show that the *notion* of binary opposition applies itself to different locations[27] *within* the gendered landscape, and does so under different terms. Rather than being either an arbitrary, or contingent, dichotomisation, *"gender"* IS *the notion of binary difference,* applied to human experience in a number of ways which are socially accepted as purportedly "natural", invariable, and incapable of misinterpretation. Unlike dichotomies based on race, class, politics, ability, wealth, or other attributes, a genderal binary *apparently*[28] has the characteristics of being "natural", invariable, and incapable of misinterpretation, which makes it seem to be the *only* stable platform on which to construct a sense of "self"[29]. Furthermore, the binary notion of "gender" endures through other dichotomous constructions. One is *still* a woman or man, even where one is also being categorised on the basis of race, class, politics, ability, wealth, or other attributes. The comfort derived from the apparent "naturalness", invariability, and clarity of the notional genderal binary is threatened by those comparatively rare occurrences which do not conform to the rules and assumptions supporting the binary. Therefore, the "exceptions", such as transsexuals and intersexed people, need to be *forced* into one category or the other, by the use (or denial) of surgery, theory, legislation, or punishment and coercion. If these "exceptions" cannot be forced into one end of the binary, they may be forced out of the categorisation process completely, to be branded as "deviant", or "pathological"[30]. The enduring nature of the *notion* of the gender binary is expressed throughout the gender landscape, from the molecular, through the

[27]Internal, sub-linguistic (CGI); Internal, linguistically-dependent (ISG); External, contractual (SGL); and External, performative (GRB).

[28]Garfinkel discusses the "constructedness" of these characteristics (1967, 122-128).

[29]At least for as long as humans construct identities as binaries. As a result of this study, I am tempted to speculate that it may be the case that an inability to construct a sense of "self" based on this form of gender-grounded binary may be at the core of some forms of mental illness.

[30]Even then, they may still be "failed" women, or "failed" men, that is, *illegitimate* versions of those situated within the binary.

Mapping Gender

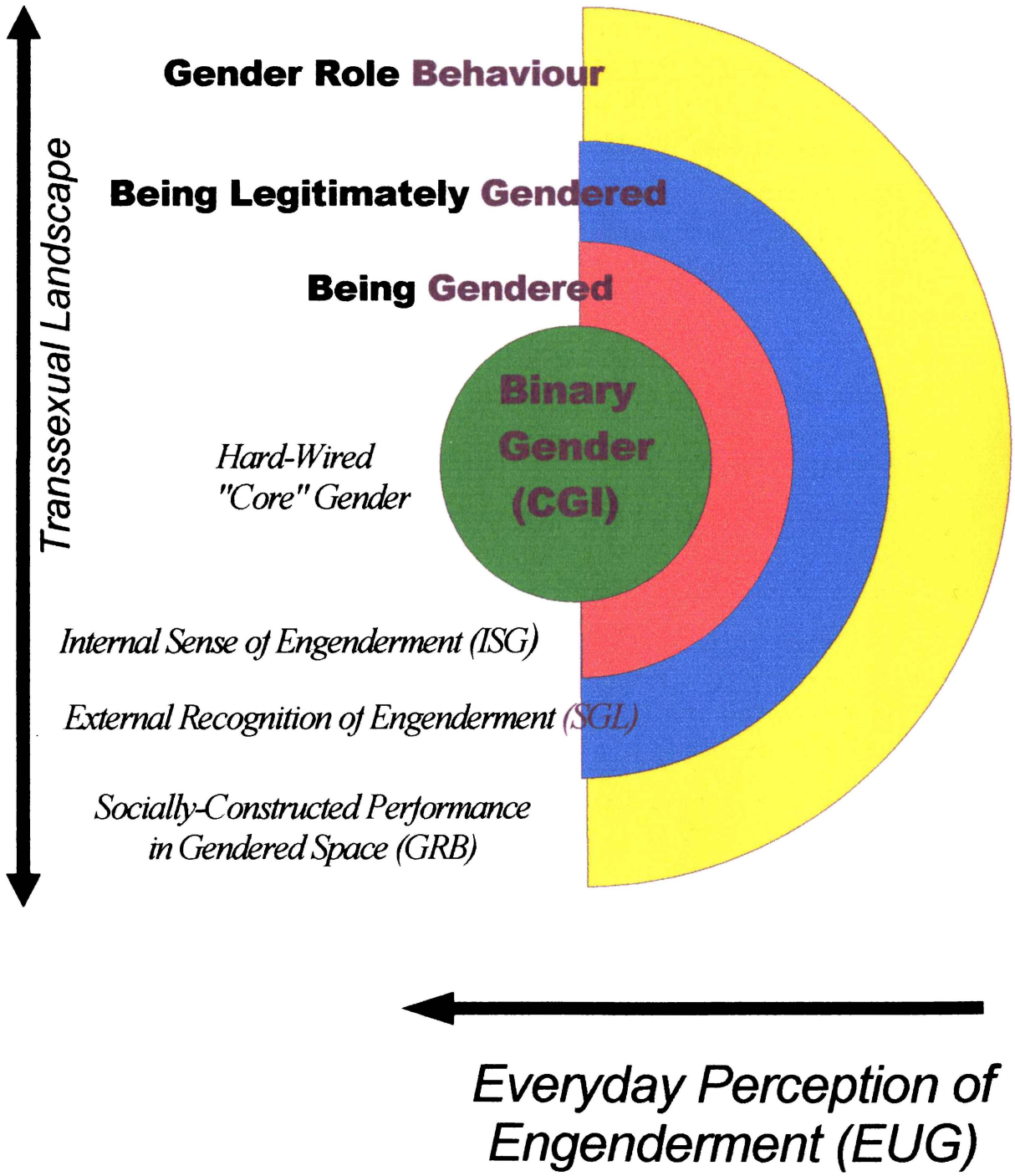


Figure 4: My Proposed Four Layers of Engenderment: Mapping the Transsexual and "Everyday" Understandings of Gender?

personal, to the social. Although the notion of "gender" remains binary *throughout* social/gendered space, the binary *location* of each layer is assumed to be congruent with the others, with all layers being binary in form. However, unresolved transsexuals experience the binary structure of engenderment, but without the congruency *between* layers.

8.2.3 Mapping the Layers of Gender

In an "homogeneous-block" model of gender, the most visible aspect of "gender" is the Gender-Role Performance (GRB), so the conclusion that gender is a social construct is perhaps unavoidable. In a model which is *not* multi-layered, the outer packaging *can* be taken as the whole. The socially-constructed homogeneous model falls back on 'victimhood' to account for anomalous gender presentations: bad childhood socialisation, or bad patriarchal society is held to be the root cause of gender-anguish. The diagram opposite shows an alternative, if more complex, reading of what is understood as "gender". None of the four layers are necessarily congruent with the layer above or below, as is the case with transsexed and some intersexed people.

Figure 4 shows the four layers of engenderment. Viewed from the right, the visible aspect of "gender" is the public performance of gender-coded acts (GRB). Even where introspection and enquiry render the layers of engenderment semi-transparent, the relationship between the layers may be obscured by language, while the word, "gender" stands for all aspects. The "transsexual project" demands the possibility of an inconsistency between different aspects of "gender", but how can something be internally contradictory when it is *signified* by the same word? Viewed from the left, this model of gender attempts to show that what is understood by "gender" is not only multi-layered, but that each layer is both

different in substance and in the source of its construction. Moving outwards from the centre, *Binary gender* (CGI) is biologically-based, *Being gendered* (ISG) is part of an individual's personality, *Being legitimately gendered* (SGL) is a social constructed contract, and *Gender role behaviour* (GRB) is a series of socially-sanctioned acts. Moving outwards, each of these layers is progressively less stable and more culturally-specific. The model reduces Gender-Role Performance to signify just that: *Performance*, without substance (the "substance" of gender is more deeply rooted). As a performance which serves to validate one's inner conviction of being gendered, it can be seen (particularly in transsexuals) as *agency*, rather than victimhood. For a transitioned transsexual, how one appears and acts on the gendered landscape represents agency: It can be seen as a pragmatic attempt to have one's internal conviction of being gendered (CGI, ISG) *legitimised* in all, or most social transactions. As few of the transsexual autobiographers had any deliberate childhood socialisation in their achieved gender[31], and they usually faced sanctions of varying degrees of severity in claiming their inner conviction of gender, it is difficult to regard their actions in adulthood as stemming from a socially constructed "victimhood". Rather, "gender-role performance (GRB), can be seen as a *social tool*, used with varying effectiveness by the transsexual narrators. Despite the naive assumptions underpinning "ordinary" gender; successful, consistent gender-legitimisation in the gender opposite to one's birthsex is not always an easy task. When transsexuals are *ineffective* in using these tools, their gender dysphoria remains unrelieved, or they engage in self-destructive behaviour in frustration.

[31]Renee Richards had *occasional* acts of genderal counter-socialisation imposed upon hir as a child by hir sister and mother. For most of hir childhood, however, s/he also received "conventional genderal socialisation as a boy.

8.2.4 Characteristics of the Gender Map

My "gender-map" in Figure 4 (opposite 8.2.3 on page 375) shows four layers of "engenderment", while the "commonsense" understanding (EUG) would treat "gender" as an homogeneous entity. While these four aspects of gender are usually congruent and relatively stable in the non-transsexed, this is not always the case in the transsexual autobiographies. The "everyday" understanding of gender is internally undifferentiated, because it is simple and it "works" for the non-transsexed. Furthermore, I feel the need to question the way the distinction made between sex and gender in some of the discourses on sex/gender, because the transsexual "project" requires a relatively complex negotiation of these concepts. While sex is generally held to be a concrete, stable "reality", gender is presented as its converse; as socially-constructed, contingent on one's birthsex, but somewhat mutable, at least in situations where it is problematised by transsexuality. While these assumptions fit with the essentialist model, they do not fit well with the transsexual narrative. There are are other differences between the substance of "sex" and that of "gender" which are usually left out of discourses on gender:

- Sex, meaning the *notion* of sex, rather than only the more visible aspects of sexual embodiment and function is complex, and multi-faceted, but given the application of enough scientific/medical muscle, each aspect is ultimately describable and knowable. The transsexual narratives argue that the *meaning* and *substance* of sexual embodiment is negotiable in a way that core gender identity is not. Many aspects of what is understood as "sex" are capable of being changed now; given sufficient will and resources, probably all aspects of "sex" could be changed now, or in the near future, at a price which may, or may not, be socially acceptable.

- Gender, at its core (CGI), is simple, so simple, that it is dif-

ficult to find language to describe it. It lies *outside* language and is probably "unknowable". Core gender (CGI) is probably immutable[32]. Zhou et al, have conducted a study on a small area of the brain that is claimed to be essential for sexual behaviour, and they have found that it is larger in men than in women (1997, 1). They also show that in a small number of deceased male-to-female transsexuals, this area is concordant with their *resolved* gender role and identity, not with their birthsex. Furthermore, they claim that the relative size of this region of the brain does not determine sexual orientation, as male homosexuals have the same brain structure as heterosexual males[33]. While the sample size in this study is not enough to make an absolute claim that transsexuals' (and everyone else's) brains are "hard-wired" for a component of "gender" at an early stage of development, these preliminary findings are consistent with the transsexuals' claims of an intractable conviction of gender, quite independent of social conditioning and the physical realities of sexual embodiment from birth.

- Core gender (CGI), is a conviction which is independent of language. At its most fundamental, it is the facility (potential or realised) to recognise a binary, which, *when articulated through language,* is located in that part of social space concerned with personal and social consequences of sexual embodiment, sexual performance and (possibly) sexual reproduction. The factors involved in this process of locating gender are not absolutely fixed, but vary in emphasis over time, and in different social contexts. The substance of gen-

[32]Even if it was, in some way, "mutable", that *potential* for modification would be inaccessible through social enquiry, because of its dependence on language.

[33]This observation may not be not particularly relevant to transsexuals, in any case, as some of them become, or remain, homosexual-identified after their physical transformation (see Patrick Califia 2.1.57 on page 143).

Footnote *

Milton Diamond (1968, 438) anticipated the possibility of an endocrinologically-based ``hard-wiring'' to account for the transsexual condition: ``While much more conclusive evidence is needed to consider them as such it is appealing to speculate that homosexuality and transsexuality might fit into this category of genetic-endocrine psycho-sexual problems'' While the Zhou et al. study seems to confirm Diamond's predictions in respect of transsexuality, it does not show the same connection between brain structure and homosexuality.

der probably lies beneath language, and is not, and probably can not easily be, expressed in common language: Instead, the *shadow* of gender, that is, *visually and linguistically accessible* aspects of sexual embodiment and of gender-roles are offered up in its place. The question of whether "gender" is binary *in structure* is somewhat spurious. Stripped of its socially-constructed outer shell, Gender *is* THE binary: It is the irreducible notion of "difference" applied to human selfhood. I have argued in 8.2.2 on page 373 that the *notion* of the gender binary has characteristics which distinguish it from other dichotomisations. The social (and even the physical[34]) consequences of "being gendered" are complex, but I believe that "essential" gender itself is reducible to very simple *recognition* of binary difference. All other notions of "gender" are social constructs, used to justify and/or police an individual's claim to occupation of the binary, contingent on social context, and not necessarily universal or transportable across cultures. To avoid confusion between my "bare-bones" interpretation of core-gender and the commonly held view of homogeneous gender (EUG), I have referred to the "fundamental" gender as core-gender, or (CGI).

Why do I insist that the *core* of gender is immutable and binary? Why am I convinced that there are only two *core* genders (CGI), despite the undeniable visibility of a multiplicity of forms of gender *-expression* (GRB)? I do so, because I can find no other way to interpret the transsexual texts, while granting the authors autonomy and agency[35]. Despite widely variant social conditioning as chil-

[34]Despite the gains of feminism, the process of recognising, and being recognised as "gendered" can still affect one's vocation, nutrition, and personal safety in ways which are not directly related to the realities of sexual embodiment.

[35]Of course, if I chose *not* to recognise their apparent autonomy and agency, I would have many other options open to me. However, quite apart from the misgivings that I would have over the proprieties of pursuing this course of enquiry, I would be re-visiting the work of other theorists and practitioners in the area of

dren, the authors generally knew at a surprisingly early age which side of the binary they *should* be located on, and actively filtered out, and gathered in, gender-specific messages that re-inforced, or threatened their conviction. Furthermore, as mentioned above, there is some evidence that a region of male-to-female transsexual's brains resembles that of women[36]. Of course, the implications that at least part of our brain is hard-wired for gender is only threatening if we regard "gender" as a single, homogeneous concept. The feminist project of challenging existing applications of "gender-in-the-social" (GRB) is untouched by a notion of an organically-based core gender (CGI) which never *directly* extends into the social[37]. Furthermore, the disciplining effect of the threat of losing one's genderal legitimacy could be diminished. If one is hard-wired for core gender, then one's status as a "real" woman need not be undermined by engaging in what might be termed, "unfeminine" behaviour[38].

8.2.5 The Distinction between "Gender Legitimacy" and "Gender"

At a personal level, almost every person[39] has a notion of "being gendered", that is, a recognition of one's place on the binary (ISG). While one might have convictions regarding a personal claim to gender, that is, "being gendered", without reference to the outside

transsexuality and engenderment.

[36]Zhou et al., 1997.

[37]Core gender identity (CGI) only becomes a distinct social issue by *proxy*, that is, when a person's CGI does not accord with their sexual embodiment, and they manifest themselves as transsexual. Their CGI remains outside the social, but the pain of genderal discordance may be detected in their narratives and behaviour.

[38]While behaviour deemed genderally "inappropriate" may still bring social opprobrium and delegitimisation within existing social hegemonies, it does not necessarily filter down to the distinct, and inviolate level of core gender identity (CGI).

[39]I accept that *some* persons with severe mental illnesses may lose this notion, or have it distorted by their illness.

world, the state of "being legitimately gendered" (SGL) is necessary to social intercourse, and requires the acquiescence of others. The social contract of "being legitimately gendered" requires the cooperation of at least one other person, before the binary of us/them has any meaning. A series of social transactions takes place in this legitimisation process, which often require the disclosure of information, or the assumption of non-disclosed information which is, in many encounters, superfluous to the transaction itself. By these means, we make assumptions about another person's genital arrangement, or about their history of being gendered, in situations where there is almost no possibility that there will be any sort of sexual/genderal encounter at a physically intimate level.

The main indicators offered up in the process of "being legitimately gendered" (SGL) are genital arrangement and sexual embodiment agreeing with one's claimed gender (being legitimately sexed), behaviour consistent with expectations of one's claimed gender (GRB), contiguous history in one's claimed gender, group affiliation with one's claimed gender, past/potential reproductive potential in one's claimed gender. Where these "facts" are not actually offered up for validation, *assumptions* are made that the individual involved does, indeed, have all or most of these attributes.

"Being legitimately sexed" is one of the tokens[40] offered up by transsexuals to justify their claims to *legitimate* occupation of their achieved gender. The requirements of "being legitimately sexed" is by no means constant, even within Western society. In a legal context, the notion of "becoming legitimately sexed" may involve rites-of-passage involving surgery, social and hormonal transformation, and in some jurisdictions, specific body parts have to be removed

[40]I argue that in a wider social context, the *notion* of "legitimacy of sexual embodiment" is used as supporting evidence of genderal legitimacy, and conversely, the recognition of *sexual difference* forms the basis and justification for a notion of *gender* as a binary construct. The meaning of sexual embodiment is thus, both *subordinate* to engenderment when engaging in the social process of gender-legitimation, and a substantive *precursor* to the notion of "gender" itself.

and others constructed before this legitimacy is recognised in law. In New Zealand, the 1995 amendment to the Births, Deaths and Marriages legislation does not specify *which* body-parts need to be modified, but leaves some scope for "medical experts"' interpretation of what being sexed female, or male, means. As well as the requirement for a stable gender identity, section 29(3)(B) demands that the applicant:

> Has undergone *all medical treatment usually regarded by medical experts as desirable* to enable persons of the genetic and physical conformation of the applicant at birth to acquire a physical conformation that accords with the gender identity of a person of the nominated sex (*emphasis added*).

While the desired end-point for male-to-female transsexuals (hormones and genital surgery) usually corresponds with *all medical treatment usually regarded by medical experts as desirable,* many female-to-male transsexuals do not proceed with "all medical treatment", because of the shortcomings of existing phalloplasty techniques, and the expense involved. I understand that to date, *no* female-to-male transsexual has succeeded in having his birth certificate amended in New Zealand.

In other countries, such as the UK following the *Corbett vs Corbett* judgement of 1970, *no* legal recognition is given to bodily transformation. In this *legal* context, "being legitimately sexed" is judged to be primarily an historical artifact, based on birthsex, even when sufficient bodily transformation has taken place to reinforce *social legitimacy* in the transsexuals' claimed sex/gender. For non-transsexuals, "being legitimately sexed" is simply an unspoken assumption underpinning notions of "being legitimately gendered".

The process of being legitimately gendered for non-transsexuals (or non-intersexed persons) is relatively problem-free. "Problems", such as they are, can be the subject of comedy, in films such

as *Some Like It Hot*, or *Tootsie*. The entertainment value of this movie-theme stems from the instability and awkwardness created when the characters take on "cross-gender" roles out of expediency, rather than gender-anguish. Such plots usually end with the characters being unable to sustain the "impossibility" of *legitimately* occupying the other gender, thereby assuring the audience of the "naturalness" of their own engenderment.

Conflicts between internal and external gender legitimacy are not only uncomfortable, they are unstable, even outside the transsexual context. In the movie, *Tootsie*, Dustin Hoffman plays a character whose internal sense of gender was male, but who managed to present to the outside world as a woman, in order to obtain regular work as a actor. The character had a *social* anguish, rather than an *identity* anguish of the sort which a transsexual would experience prior to transition. The "Tootsie" character was a man who wanted both work *and* the ability to interact with the world as a heterosexual male. His problem was that he could only find a stable acting role as a woman. The character was *vocationally* dysphoric. The story is based on the impossibility for "Tootsie" of maintaining these conflicting goals ("Tootsie" eventually sabotages hir acting career by "outing" hirself as male, thereby giving primacy to gender-attribution as male, *as supporting hir internal sense of genderal legitimacy*, over gender-attribution as female, *as a career-enhancing performance*).

Provided that women or men behave in a way consistent with their claimed gender, and that they have, and have always had, sexual embodiment expected of their gender, they will generally be accepted as "being legitimately gendered". In some societies, at some times, divergent sexual orientation and practice, or lack of fertility could compromise one's claim to be "legitimately gendered". Another aspect of this gendering process is that it is "innocent", in a way which eludes most transsexuals. Claudine Griggs describes this "innocence" as the tidiness and lack of challenge experienced

by non-transsexuals when growing into their adult gender roles:

> They [non-transsexuals] are born male or female and grow into men or women in expectation, conjunction and general harmony with their bodies. Sex and gender are always concordantly recognised, and the individual foresees such recognition (Griggs, 1998, 18).

It is the absence of this harmony between sex and gender which is the "pathology" of the transsexual condition. The transsexual "project" is centred on acquiring, as much as possible, this sense of harmony, through bodily and social adaptation. It is this discordance which also distinguishes transsexuals from transvestites, rather than the superficialities of clothing and gender-coded role-playing, which they may both utilise (to different ends).

- For transsexuals, the discordance between their personal sense of "being gendered" (as, for instance, a female) and society's acceptance of the person as "being legitimately gendered" in the other gender (in this example, as a male) leads to anguish, often called gender dysphoria. As the transsexuals' core sense of "being gendered" (CGI) is fixed, and barely accessible, and as society's reading of the individual "being legitimately gendered" is based on physical appearance and gender-coded performance, the transsexual"project" is to alter these visible cues to re-locate their socially-attributed gender to the other side of the binary.

- A transvestite (TV), by contrast, does not have a discordance between public (SGL) and private (ISG) genders[41]. The transvestite

[41]Ackroyd points out that transvestites do not seek legitimation as women, and maintain their sense of male identity, even when *apparently* presenting as "female": "He is indisputably and permanently male and he will, unconsciously or surreptitiously, leave clues to his male gender even within the most complete dressing up" (Ackroyd, 1979, 18).

is concerned with *being* discordant in respect of the gender-role behaviour (GRB) and visual representation of themselves, while leaving their core engenderment (CGI) intact. The *tools* used by the transsexual are an end in themselves to a transvestite.

- My proposed four-layer model of engenderment should be useful in distinguishing the difference between the transsexual and transvestite conditions. An unresolved transsexual has a discordance between their internal sense of engenderment (CGI and ISG) and the social genderal legitimation (SGL) that their birthsex generates. To resolve their gender-anguish, they use surgical, hormonal, and performative (GRB) means to bring the external, social process of gender-legitimation into line with their internal sense of engenderment. A transvestite does have concordance between their internal sense of engenderment (ISG) (usually male) and their "out-of-drag" social genderal legitimation. Whatever gender-anguish or confusion a casual transvestite may experience is on the level of *gender-expression*. This need to engage in an "inverted" gender-expression does not necessarily have to have a social component, as many transvestites keep their activities a closely-guarded secret throughout their lives. While I am confident that the model of engenderment that I am proposing does account for the transvestite condition, it is not the focus of this study.

- For a transsexual, the end-point, in terms of occupation of gendered space, is become "ordinary" and comfortable in the gender opposite to that designated for them at birth. For a transvestite, the "ordinary" gender remains that ascribed to them at birth: Particularly in the case of fetishistic and masochistic transvestites, their temporary occupation of the "opposite" gender is under terms which are definitely NOT "or-

dinary". Transgenderists[42] sometimes appear to be making declarations which preclude them from occupying *either* gender as "ordinary".

- For a pre-operative transsexual, very few of the "natural" means[43] of being legitimately gendered are available to them[44], and even after transformation by surgery and pharmaceuticals, a transsexual's occupation of their claimed end of gendered space is often open to challenge on the grounds of incongruent history, appearance (passability), lack of reproductive function, or presumed residual socialisation and genderal affiliations.

I believe that the above model not only provides a theoretical basis on which to explore transsexual biographies in a productive manner, but also to explain the reaction to the phenomenon by two outside groups, i.e., psycho-medical professional and feminist theorists. I also believe that the above model is only inconsistent with the "normal" construction of gender because of the redundant and unchallenged assumptions in the "normal" model. I am confident that this slightly different reading of gender will support my argument that transsexuals are claiming the *same* gendered space, and under *similar terms* as non-transsexuals.

My thesis has attempted to explore the ways in which the transsexual story-tellers first address their perception prior to transformation of being *superficially* legitimately gendered to the outside

[42]I do recognise that the term, "transgenderist" (and, indeed, "transvestite") covers a wide range of *expressions* of engenderment. As both of these groups fall outside the scope of this study, I offer up these observations to distinguish some the characteristics of transsexuals from other groups who are often conflated with them by the general public.

[43]That is, having appropriate sexual embodiment, or the ability to engage in sexual activities as "ordinary" members of their claimed gender.

[44]At the start of their physical transformation, they have the same tools available to them as the casual transvestite. Hormones have an impact on secondary sexual characteristics over time, which gradually makes their embodiment different from transvestites in both substance and permanence.

world whilst feeling illegitimately gendered internally. I then identify the mechanics of how the authors seek legitimisation of their counter-claims to engenderment. I have argued that the story-telling in this sub-genre is more than an historical account, or a guide-book to others, but that the stories stand in the place of a contiguous gender history demanded in the normal process of gender legitimisation.

At 1.8 on page 46 and 8.1.2 on page 360, I have also considered the above model within a re-reading of the sub-genre of feminist critics of the transsexual phenomenon.

So, is the requirement to have a congruent history an artifact to be disregarded, or is history *part* of being gendered? One thing that distinguishes a weekend transvestite from both transsexual and non-transsexual women, is that they have no history of being either sexually embodied, or of being *legitimately* gendered as women. Some transsexual authors grieve for the absence of a life-long, congruent gender history, even as they generate such a history in the short/medium term. While acknowledging that he has gained some social recognition as a man, Paul Rees still grieves over his disjointed and inauthentic history:

> My past is also that which sets me apart, which isolates me from the rest of the community. I was not reared as a boy or as a young man. My experience can include neither normal heterosexual relations with a woman or fatherhood. I have not shared the psychological experience of being a woman or the physical one of being a man. My apparent sex may have been that of a biological female but a woman is a female person. That I have never been. I don't know how it feels to be a normal woman. What changed at my role-assignment was the world's perception of me: my essence, my personhood remains. My gender role was re-assigned, my gender

identity confirmed. (Rees, 1995, 176.)

The "real" is constructed on notions of "innocence" and "naturalness" and, as a result of their transition, transsexuals know far too much about the construction of sex and gender to ever be "innocent" again. The loss of innocence can manifest itself as a feeling of loathing towards ever having a transsexual (i.e., a non-gender-innocent) history. Claudine Griggs, while in the depths of post-surgical depression, reflects upon this loss of innocence, in terms of being able to be a "natural" occupant of womanhood:

> I like my genitalia for the first time in my life. Unfortunately, There is no cure for transsexualism, and I accept the surgery as a great improvement but still regret that I will never be a natural female - this is a pain that no surgeon can remove. . . (Griggs, 1996, 196).

And later, despite having acquired the embodiment which allows her to function sexually and socially as woman in the present, she returns to her feelings of loss of an innocent, untroubled, and contiguous history as a woman:

> One thing that surgery does is solidify the realisation that there is essentially no cure for transsexualism; it is a disorder that can be treated, but there is no procedure possible to make me a natural female. I will never be the person I envision I would have been if I had been born female; I can never again return to 1953 and start life again; I can never have the childhood of a little girl, the adolescence of a young woman, the family experience of a young bride, wife, mother; I can never have a social history undivided by the change of life from man to woman.
>
> Syllogistically: I am transsexual; I hate being transsexual; I hate what I am. I have been trying unsuccessfully for decades to change the second premise. (Griggs, 1996, 202).

Because "normal" gender is built on historic artifacts, history both constructs and undermines the transsexual authors' claims to genderal legitimacy. They know that the popular notion of immutable sexual embodiment can, in most socially significant respects, be transcended. They have survived often relentless and brutal attempts at gender-socialisation in both childhood, and as adults. It seems that the "natural" construction of gender itself is compromised when it demands *ignorance* of its underpinnings. Agency and self knowledge are not "natural" parts of "everyday" gender. For those who have too much first-hand knowledge of its construction, their claims to legitimacy within it are potentially lessened. Although the post- operative depression which intensified Claudine Griggs' self- hatred of ever having been transsexual was later lifted, she still expects that her occupation of gendered space will be affected by it: " While I accept my transsexualism as fact, I do not expect that I shall ever be dispassionate about it" (Griggs, 1998, ix).

I see parallels with theorising about race here. Almost any model of race, with a significant number of redundant assumptions underpinning its "truths", will suffice in situations where a diversity of race is not present, or where "other" races are separated and/or marginalised. It will not be tested for redundancy, unless some non-core group has the need and the means to challenge the unspoken assumptions in the model.

I see circularities in the process of being legitimately gendered: *Having* a history as a woman (or man) (and no other) entitles one *to* a history as a woman (or man). Having a body of a woman (or man) (and having had no other) entitles one to claim a legitimacy as a woman (or man).

I partially agree with Judith Butler that gender is performative, but I cannot deal with transsexual accounts of "gender" as if it was a monolith. In their stories of how they negotiate the existing expectations of gendered behaviour of first, their birth-sex

and then their achieved-sex, the transsexual authors demonstrate that gender-role *behaviour* (GRB) is purely performative, while core gender identity (CGI), that is, the *ownership* of that performance, is effectively hard-wired, and possibly organic in origin. While the performance of gender-role play is a fluid social construct, I disagree with Judith Butler on the potential for multiplicity of (core) genders: She says:

> If gender is not tied to sex, either causally or expressively, then gender is a kind of action that can potentially proliferate beyond the limits imposed by the binary limits imposed by the apparent binary of sex (Butler, 1990, 112).

I insist that core gender is the binary of *notional* "difference" which lies in a space created by the acknowledgment of sexual difference and function; that is, the "reality" of sexual difference underpins gender-space, in a way that the reality of observable bodily and cultural difference might underpin race-space. Sexual legitimacy (amongst other attributes) is then offered up as justification by, and to, each gendered individual for their their untroubled and "legitimate" occupation of one of the ends of the binary.

8.2.6 Assumptions

As first principles, I am assuming that the transsexual narrative is *not* the story of people who are *wholly* damaged (or at least not of people who are sufficiently damaged to justify the casual dismissal of any part of their discourse which does not accord with existing theories of gender). I am also assuming that gender itself is not *wholly* illusory; I am treating the wider discourse on gender as having some "real" meaning in people's lives. Lastly, I am assuming that one's sense of "being gendered" is the primary and

Negotiating Within and Beyond the Linguistic Limits of Engenderment

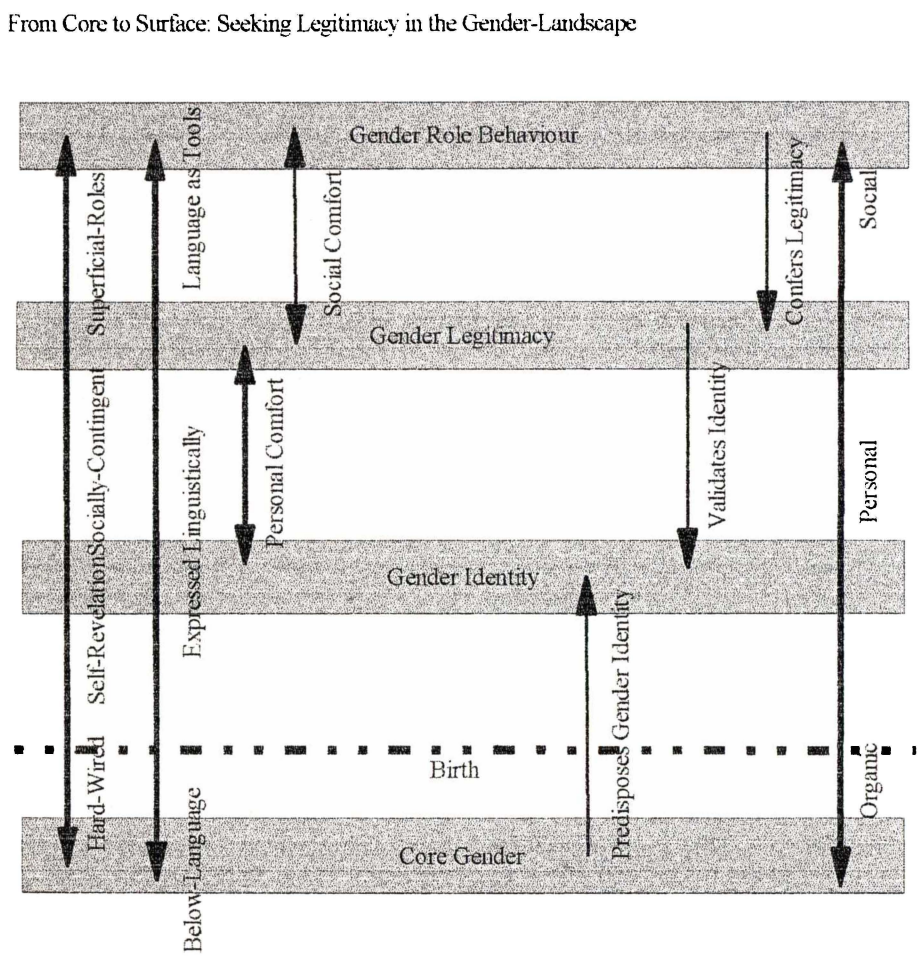


Figure 5: From Core to Surface: Seeking and Maintaining Legitimacy Within the Gender Landscape:The Tools and Processes of Engenderment

universally comprehended component that one offers up as a statement of "selfhood" (even where the *substance* of this engenderment is taken for granted).

8.3 The Gendered Landscape

Figure 5 shows a model of the levels of discourse surrounding gender. While the level of our understandings of "gender" may vary between "everyday" uncritical assumptions (EUG) through to deconstruction down to the limits of language, the basis for the transsexual condition remains elusive within a bi-polar, but unitary[45] model of engenderment.

The existing model of gender is built on a foundation of a fundamental binary (CGI) which, although often acknowledged, is below language and cannot be expressed in language in such a way as to be comprehensible. The visible face of "gender" (GRB), as it exists in everyday discourse, consists of many superficialities and social constructions and these constructions form the rules of engagement which are specific to each culture, and to each sub-group within that culture. Academic endeavours are directed at naming the constructions and the relationship between them, and explaining how these constructions are created and maintained. Superficialities, having been described, isolated and contextualised can be peeled away from the essence of gender, leaving little of substance at its core, when the limits of language are reached[46]. The trappings of engenderment *may* be socially constructed and contextual, but does it follow that "gender", at its most irreducible, *must* be a social construct?

[45]That is, unitary in substance: An assumption that whichever end of a bipolar gender one occupies, *all* aspects of that engenderment should be consistent and contiguous.

[46]As with Judith Butler's efforts to reduce gender to the performative (1990, 141).

The transsexual "condition" is a problem to the "naive", unitary model of gender, which is usually dealt with by assuming some form of pathology associated with the transsexual. Either they have not been socialised correctly; or that society has constructed an overly restrictive, or mis-interpreted model of gender, to which they are unwilling or unable to conform[47]. The transsexual condition does not, and can not be, accommodated as a rational state in EUG, and its resolution, bodily and social transformation, is almost unthinkable to a non-transsexual, because its driving imperative lies outside any *allowable* discourse on "normal" gender. To the non-gender dysphoric, the loss of fertility, family ties, continuity of personal history, physical pain and expense which transsexuals endure to achieve a state of "ordinariness", of which society is often reluctant to legitimise may be incomprehensible.

8.3.1 The Mechanics of Gender-Legitimisation

If the need to socially legitimise one's inner conviction of being gendered is accepted as a very strong determinant of human interaction, what are the mechanics that are used? While the actual actions and attributes that are offered up as part of the legitimisation process vary in different contexts, they include:

- *An appropriate sexual embodiment.* For transsexuals, who are not born with a body which can be used to support their claim to gender-legitimacy, the process of bodily modification gives them some prospect of being accepted as being appropriately bodied (i.e., *"passing"*). The drive to seek bodily transformation to strengthen one's gender-legitimacy is not

[47]Or, if "gender" is *only* performance, and has no substance at its core, as mentioned above; then the whole transsexual "project" of bodily transformation is futile. In the "fluidist" argument, if sufficient understanding about the performative nature of gender could only be reached, then any basis for gender dysphoria would somehow be undermined.

limited to transsexuals; non-transsexuals frequently use cosmetic surgery or dieting for the same ends;

- *An appropriate history of that embodiment.* In Chapter 3, I have argued that part of the transsexual narrative is directed towards re-constructing personal histories which can stand in place of the unproblematic stories of genderal/sexual continuity of non-transsexuals. Some transsexual theorists, such as Bornstein (1975, 127) and Wilchins (1997, 25), argue against offering up a *simulation* of a contiguous history, but instead claim that a distinct "transsexual" history should be accepted *instead* of a "conventional" one;

- *An appropriate socialisation to one's embodiment.* In Chapter 6, I have discussed the frequent claims by the transsexual authors that they actively managed their childhood gender-socialisation. Their stories also dwell on how they needed to re-socialise themselves as adults;

- *A public presentation of appropriate genderal role-play.* If one accepts the agency claimed by transsexuals, then they adopt whatever behaviour that is necessary to be accepted, or at least tolerated, in their claimed gender. The authors usually claim that this performance felt more "natural" than that of their birthsex. If, as Raymond claims, the transsexuals are "victims" of patriarchy who have no agency or autonomy, then their social performances could be no more than a forced parody of women, which would prove to be exhausting and destructive as a lifetime experience. The transsexual narratives give no indication that this is the case;

- *An appropriate gender-affiliation.* It is expected that one will articulate expressions of "us/them"during conversation and actions. Acceptance by one's fellow members of one's claimed gender is not only the end-point of the legitimacy process,

but articulation of that affiliation is part of the legitimisation effort. Raymond dismisses these affiliations and argues that the transsexing process is directed *against* women by "The Empire" that is, patriarchy (1979, 177);

- *An appropriate sexual orientation and performance.* When the discourse about sexuality became distinct from sexual/genderal legitimacy, the transsexual story-tellers no longer placed the same stress on having a "conventional" sexual performance (or of having virtually no sexual performance whatsoever after transformations, e.g., Jan Morris, 1974). Christine Jorgensen insists, somewhat unconvincingly, that she had experienced no trace of "homosexuality" either before, or after surgery (see 7.3.2.1). Even after a "homosexual" label ceased to undermine sexual/genderal legitimacy in the wider society, transsexual narrators did not disclose aberrant sexual behaviour, until the publication of the first work by an openly lesbian transsexual in 1995 (Kate Bornstein). The prospect of a surgically-constructed homosexuality *undermining* a transsexual's genderal legitimacy was exploited much earlier, by Janice Raymond who devotes a chapter to "Sappho by Surgery" (1979, 99-119).

The expectation of genderal legitimacy is not applied evenly across society. The aged are often discouraged in asserting their claims to sexual/genderal legitimacy too strongly. For children, some of these aspects are suppressed, or considered aberrant (such as precocious expressions of sexual orientation and performance) or they are expected to have a *comfortably different* version of adult behaviour (such the tolerance of "tomboyism" in pre-pubescent girls). Sexual/genderal socialisation is required *to be seen* as being taken up by children[48], and many of the transsexual authors mention

[48]Although a certain level of "tomboyism" is often tolerated, it may be because it is assumed that the girls will grow out of it, when they accept their expected,

that their childhood resistance to standard sexual/genderal socialisation caused great alarm amongst the adults around them (the *intensity* of the adult reaction was even more puzzling than the *substance* of the transgression). As these superficialities of "gender" are culturally-specific, a cross-cultural interpretation of genderal-role play may be mis-understood, even to the point of appearing threatening. It seems likely that an agreed understanding about the appropriateness of gender-role behaviour for, and between, members of society forms one of the essential building-blocks of what is understood as "culture". Part of the threat posed by the transsexual phenomenon is that these comfortable "understandings" are both exposed and undermined.

8.3.2 The Transsexual "Project"

The "project" of transsexual story-telling is to argue the primacy of an *apparently* hard-wired binary (CGI) in determining one's internal conviction of engenderment (ISG). Rather than one's physical embodiment determining which gender-role is appropriate for a person, the transsexual discourse pleads for public legitimisation (SGL) of their internal sense of gender (ISG), above all other aspects of engenderment. If public engenderment demands a body with appropriately sexed markers, or a re-worked history, or appropriate gender-role behaviour, then the transsexuals are driven to comply. This project of *re-construction* of a public engenderment runs counter to the "academic" project of *de-construction* of gender, and starts from a sub-linguistic, fundamental base (CGI) which is difficult to justify within the existing understandings of "gender". Therefore, the impetus for transsexual transformations may appear irrational because it lies outside any possible public

subordinated gender-status as adults (and/or perhaps because of the "entertainment value" of the parody of members of the "subordinate" sex/gender aping aspects of the priviledged engenderment of males).

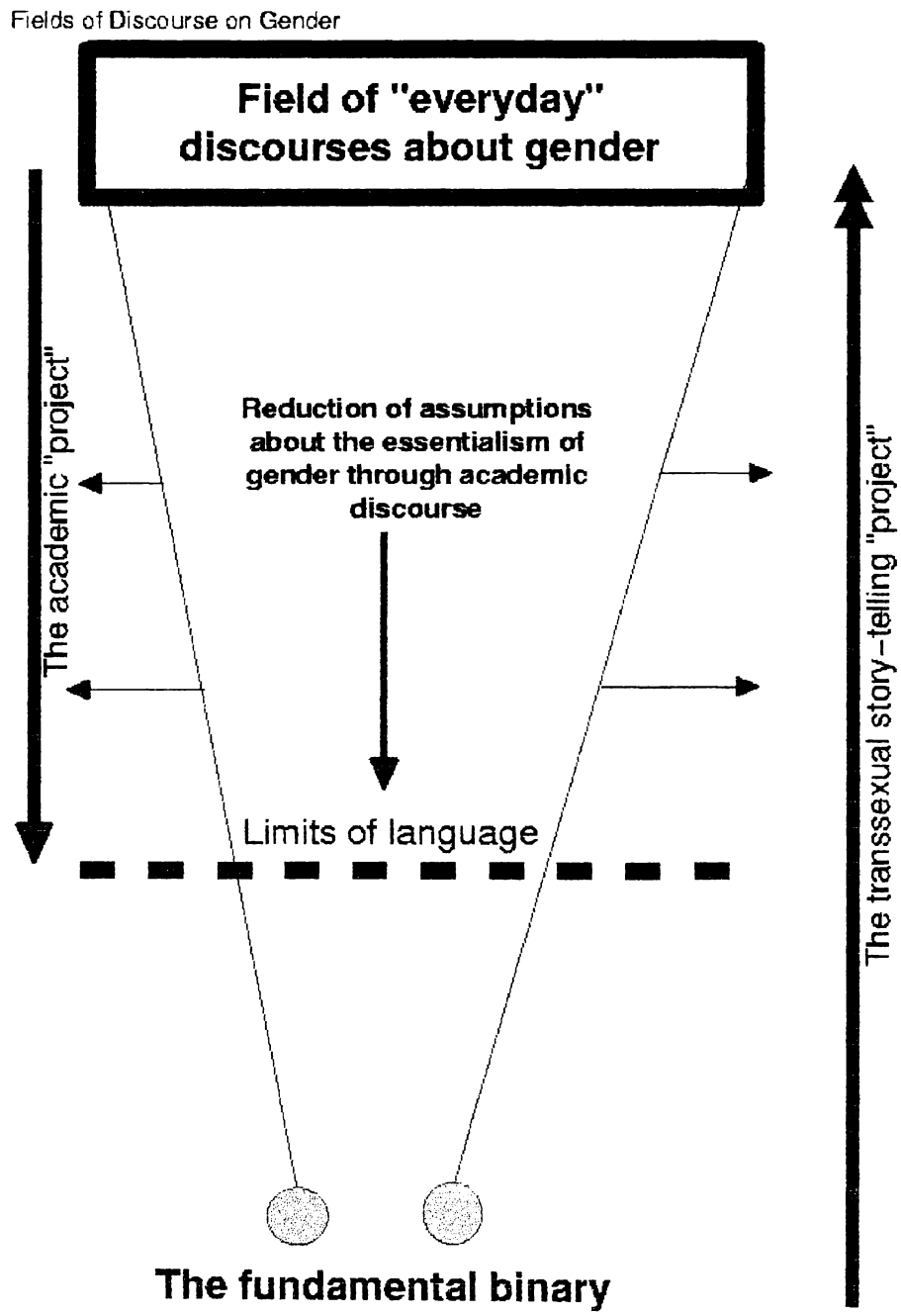


Figure 6: Comparing Fields of Discourses by Transsexuals and Academics About "Everyday" Gender

understandings of gender (at least those which it is possible to articulate and still be recognisable *as gender*).

In Figure 6, the transsexual "project" is attempting to place their discourse firmly with "the ordinary" i.e., to move their engenderment upwards in the figure, rather than simply to move this conviction into a de-constructed, "academic" understanding of "gender" where a "discourse" remains possible, and controllable. The stories are not *limited* to declarations that the transsexual has changed their legal status and re-configured their genitals, which would be sufficient to address some of the essentialisms that remain after a linguistic deconstruction. The expression of gender legitimacy by transsexuals *appears* conservative because they are often attaching many of the banalities of gender-coding to themselves in ways that the non-transsexed take as a given (at least outside some "romantic" novels, and Country and Western music).

8.3.2.1 Resisting the "Project"

The *placement* of the treatment of the transsexual "condition" within the psycho-medical establishment "formalises" the pathology of such potentially destabilising threats to the existing gender order. Either the transsexual "patient" is marginalised as "ill", by dint of hir relationship with the psycho-medical professional; or the mechanics of, and justification for, transsexual socio-bodily transformation can be managed within a "professional" process which can remain sufficiently obscure that its underlying mechanics need not directly challenge "everyday" assumptions about gender and sexual embodiment. Figure 3 (opposite 8.1.4 on page 368) shows different understandings about the *mutability* of sexual embodiment and "gender". While the transsexual project seems to be diametrically opposed to the "ordinary" (EUG), in terms of understandings

about the mutability of *core gender*[49] (CGI) and sexual embodiment, psycho-medical professionals can be seen as either a bridge between these discourses (as therapists), or as a means of regularising an otherwise unthinkable transgression (as gatekeepers).

8.3.2.2 The "Project" and Language

Transsexuals are driven by an imperative lying *beyond* the limits of language. On the other hand, the academic "project", directed at de-constructing gender, becomes constrained when the language on which the deconstruction is based ceases to function. At the floor of language, "gender" remains complex, unstable, and *appears* to be performative, because not all the components that are built over the binary have been unpacked. While at least *some* aspects of "gender" appear to be cultural constructions, the transsexual argument of the primacy of an immutable core gender identity (CGI) which justifies altered gendered performance appears illusory, if one is ultimately limited to recognising "gender" only in terms of what can be articulated through language. One of Judith Butler's problems with "gender" seems to stem from the linguistic limitation of the word "gender" itself. She says:

> If gender attributes and acts, the various ways in which a body shows or produces its cultural signification, are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction (1990, 141).

While the word, "gender" serves to describe not only the public expression of gender (GRB & SGL), but also the internal conviction

[49]There is not the same gap between them on understandings about gender *role* (GRB) except that for transsexuals, gender role is *both* a expression of a gendered self *and a tool for genderal legitimation.*

of being gendered (CGI & ISG), it denies the possibility that these two states *could* be contradictory within one person[50], and it assumes that both states are equally accessible (through language), and that the individual has similar agency (or lack of it) in expressing these "genders". Of course, "public gender" is performative, and it *purports* to indicate one's inner conviction of being gendered (or perhaps, of the *purported* lack of that conviction, in the case of a public "gender-fuck"). Many of the pre-transition transsexuals engaged in a public display of engenderment (GRB) which accorded with their birthsex, to varying degrees of success[51]. However, such displays generated a form of public gender legitimation (SGL) which was contradictory to the validation of their internal sense of engenderment (ISG) that they craved for. Frustration at this process of displaced genderal delegitimisation became intolerable, and drove them to seek bodily and social transformation. Following transition, they offered up what they understood was appropriately modified gender-coded behaviour (GRB) to support their inner conviction of gender-identity (CGI & ISG).

8.3.3 Stability of Gender?

The model of gender which I have described has an inbuilt stability. An "innocent" occupation of gendered space is still possible because nothing *within* the bounds of language can be done which will undermine its foundation. Whilst one can make "subversive" declarations about multiplicity, or fluidity of "gender", these dec-

[50]Except as a "pathology".

[51]Prior to transition, Paul Hewitt's, Nancy Hunt's, Kate Bornstein's expressions of gender in accord with their birthsex were vigorous, successful, and almost over-done. Many others, such as Canary Conn, Paul Rees, and Traci Fellows were much less convincing, and they were marked with the suspicion of some form of "queerness". Some transsexuals, such as Caroline Cossey, Raymond Thompson, and Carlotta, *never* seriously engaged in any public gender-performance in accord with their birthsex as adults, but they adopted a gender-presentation consistent with their internal sense of engenderment whilst still in their teens.

larations are made *within* language, by gendered persons *within* a gendered landscape. The process of gender-legitimisation (or de-legitimisation) requires the participation of two or more people, together with at least one common understanding of at least one structure governing that engenderment[52]. Conversely, without some degree of acknowledgment of the structure of gender, one cannot be excluded from it[53]. Furthermore, any form of display or declaration of "gender" could not fail totally *as gender* without the acknowledgement that one was engaging with gender in the first place. A male-to-female transsexual who fails to consistently "pass" as a woman in public does not *fail in* 100% of the mechanics of hir presentation as a woman: Whatever hir appearance may be, a *total failure* to convincingly present any of the "female" coded gender markers would be read as "male" (and hyper-male at that!) or as an expression of something totally unrelated to "gender" at all.

The need to be "legitimately gendered" (SGL) is fundamental and strong, as evidenced by the efforts of transsexuals to harmonise their internal sense of gender (ISG) with that of how outsiders regard that conviction. The strength of this need to legitimise how gender is represented can also be seen in how society treats *other* transgressions within the gendered landscape; particularly the proactive "treatment" of intersexed children, and the policing of the borders of allowable gender-transgression. The threat of losing

[52]For example, a single person stranded on a desert island would have no *legitimate* social gender for the period of their isolation, because they would be without the co-operation of at least another player, as a gendered peer. They could have a memory of having been gendered *in the past*, they could be aware of retaining the sexual embodiment which would entitle them the genderal legitimation *upon their rescue*, but the process of genderal legitimisation *in the present* would have broken down for as long as they remained alone.

[53]For example, Janice Raymond (1979) sees the need to mount an argument for the exclusion of male-to-female transsexuals from the category "woman" because transsexuals can, and do, argue *some sort of a case* for inclusion. The essentialists would not see the same need to declare non-transsexual genetic males "non-women", although they have other quarrels with "patriarchy" as an institution.

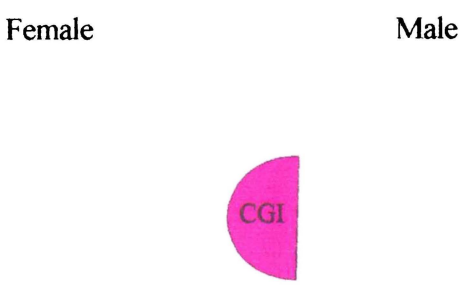
one's *public* gender-legitimacy[54] disciplines most of our social engagements. While other forms of "us-them" binaries do exist (based on race, class, age, or religion, for examples) they are usually less pervasive or stable than the gender-based binary. They are also less universally comprehended. Nevertheless, they all have a similar structure, a outer shell of "challengable" superficialities and an inner core which resists dissection.

Does the model articulated by Garfinkel (1967, 122-128) passively describe gender, *as it exists*, or is there a social need to construct and maintain such a structure on which an "everyday" notion of "gender" can be universally comprehended as a "truth", while its underpinnings remain concealed? Could a revised model, which was based on a different structure, retain and validate the sort of social encounters which are presently coded as "gendered", while allowing for conditions which are currently pathologised? Looking at the model in Figure 6 (opposite 8.3.2 on page 396) from the bottom-up, it could be seen that because the need to be legitimately gendered (SGL) is so strong in humans, a structure such as the one described by Garfinkel would almost inevitably be adopted to allow for an easy, *unchallenged* occupation of gendered space (except, perhaps, for carefully controlled and sanctioned ceremonial or discretionary "transgressions").

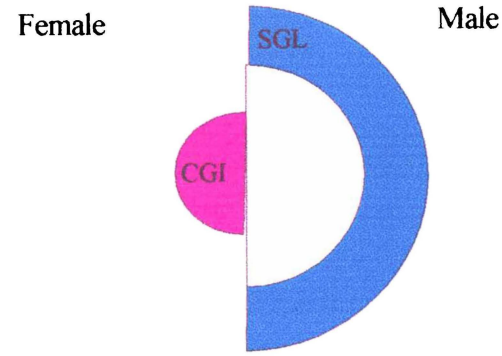
8.4 How Transsexuals Negotiate The Gendered Landscape

So, how does my model account for the transsexual condition? The following set of "maps" illustrates the progress of a "typical" transsexual, from a proto-transsexual baby through to post-operative

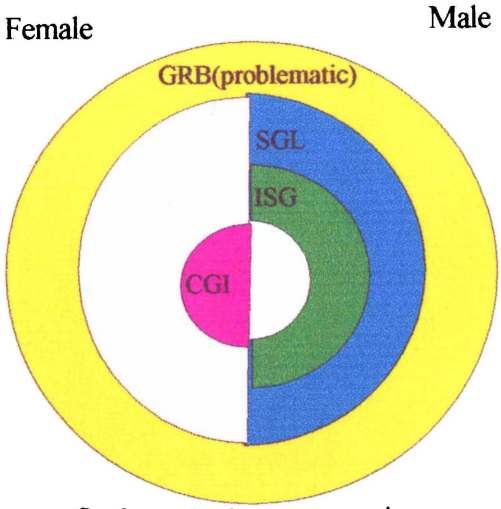
[54]It also provides a frisson of excitement for those who choose to engage in public acts calculated to "subvert" gender. It seems doubtful that anyone who did not have a confident hold on an internal sense of gender could afford to willingly attempt this "subversion" exercise.



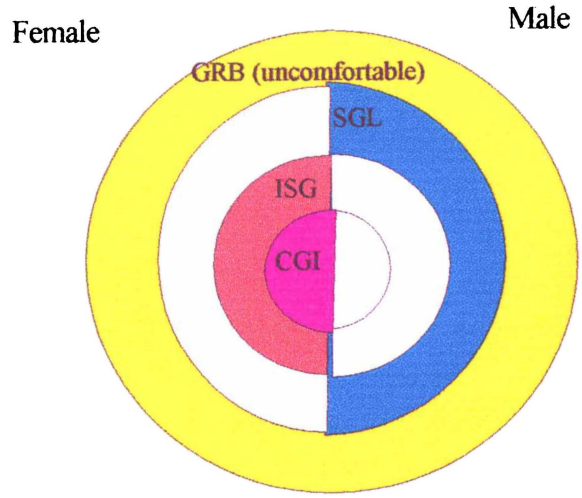
A. At birth, only a core gender identity (CGI) exists



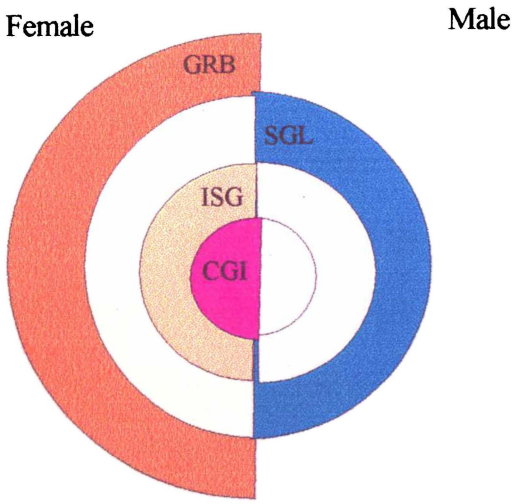
B. At birth, a **presumption** of genderal legitimacy is made, based on genitalia



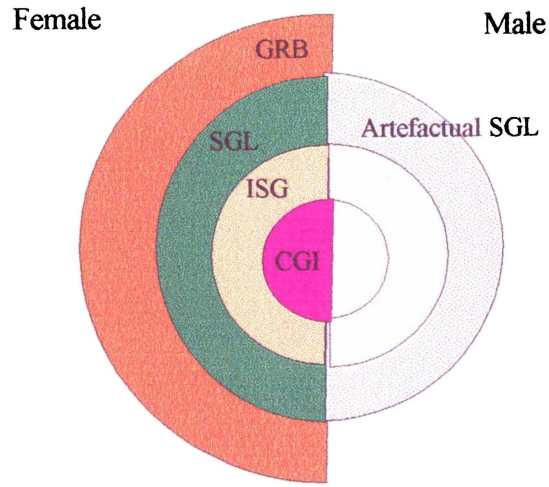
C. A proto-transsexual may **presume** gender identity accords with genitals. GRB may be variable



D. Upon acceptance of one's transsexuality, ISG becomes female



E. Transition: Engaging in transformation of gender-role, embodiment and presentaion



F. The end-point. Transformation completed and social acceptance of genderal legitimacy

Figure 7: A graphical representation of a male-to-female transsexual's transition across the gendered landscape in respect of the four levels of engenderment

resolution of their previous discordance between engenderment and embodiment. While this is, admittedly, an over-simplification of the transsexual condition described in the narratives, I believe that it does represent a distillation of the process of navigation of the gendered landscape. While we may be all born "innocent" of a sense of *detail* about that landscape (or even the existence of such a landscape, *as any more than a raw binary*) we are all "hard wired" with a need to be located within such a binary structure. Unlike the non-transsexed, proto-transsexual babies happen to have a sexual embodiment which will, as they mature, make their occupation of their gendered space contested, or pathologised. The "end-point" for the transsexual project, concordance of all four layers of engenderment, closely resembles the terms of occupation of gendered space that the non-transsexed have experienced since birth, subject to any residual gender-policing on the part of essentialists and the legal system.

8.4.1 Mapping Transsexual Transition:

Figure 7 contains a series of "maps" which show the location of each of the four levels of engenderment within the gendered landscape from birth, to realisation of gender identity (ISG), to transition, and through to final legitimation of engenderment (SGL) . I have used male-to-female transsexuals in this example. In the case of female-to-males, the appropriate "map" would be a mirror-image of this one.

Map A. Everyone[55] is born with a core gender identity (CGI) which is independent of language, and the socially constructed components of engenderment, and not absolutely determined by genitalia[56]. This first "map" shows the limited state of en-

[55]With my previously noted reservations about some people with a *severe* mental illness.

[56]The transsexual narrative suggests that the condition *may* be result of some

genderment of everyone at birth, devoid of all the socially-constructed and maintained genderal roles, values and understandings which subsequently develop over one's life-course.

Map B. This map shows the social *presumption* of genderal legitimacy (SGL), based on the observation of the baby's genitals at birth. For the non-transsexed, this presumption does correctly predict the baby's gender identity in later life. For the transsexed baby, this presumption as to the *location* of hir core gender identity is incorrect, although neither the baby, nor the adult observer would have any way of knowing this dis-location at this time. In the case of intersexed babies, this presumption *cannot safely be made*, and such a state of uncertainty is as immediately threatening to the "naive" construction of gender as the transsexual phenomenon becomes when it is expressed later by adults. The often urgent "correction" of the unruly genitalia of intersexed children serves to maintain this "naive" state of engenderment for the wider society, in a similar manner to the process of controlling or resisting the demands by adult transsexuals for physical transformation.

Map C. The proto-transsexual child or adolescent may be unaware of any possibility of physical and social transformation, and so may presume, as the adults around hir do, that hir gender identity *must* correspond with their genitalia. A solution to their anguish does not present itself until they comprehend the transsexual "project" and, depending on their level of discomfort, they may react to childhood gender-socialisation in

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sort of physiological failure during fetal development in matching core gender identity with sexual embodiment. Of course, in the case of the non-transsexed, their core gender identity *does* correspond with their sexual embodiment, and their gender-landscape does not need to be unpacked in the way that I am attempting to do in these "maps". Nevertheless, I am describing features of the *same* landscape, even where the each level of engenderment is seamless and congruent, as it is for the non-transsexed.

many ways. These uneasy and transitory adaptations to their childhood gender-socialisation range from grudging acquiescence, to rejection, to "secret" cross-dressing. In both Maps C and D, the individual adaptations vary widely amongst the narrators, but they all experience some degree of anguish about the gender role performance (GRB) that was expected of them prior to their transformation.

Map D. The transsexual has realised hir "true" gender (ISG), and the solution to their anguish. However, many of them delay transition because of family commitments, resistance from psycho-medical gatekeepers, fear of "freakhood", or the pain and expense. Many of the narrators, particularly the male-to-females, attempted to cope with their discomfort by denying their transsexuality and attempting a hyper-masculine gender role presentation (GRB) which only served to delay the inevitable urge for transition.

Map E. The transsexual has embarked on the process of bodily and social transformation. In most cases, social sanction of their claims to re-located genderal legitimacy does not occur for some time (if at all). For those transsexuals who never succeed in "passing", or who are public about their history, they may not progress to a state which the "conventional" transsexual narrators recognise as the "end point"; that is, social acceptance as "ordinary" (SGL).

Map F. The transsexual's claims to genderal legitimacy (SGL) have been largely validated by the society around hir. Sometimes there are artefacts of one's previous gender-status, such as legal constraints (such as entitlement to modified birth-certificates, marriage, pensions). Apart from such social artefacts (if they exist at all) and infertility, a transformed, "passing", transsexual's *terms of occupation* of the gendered landscape are similar

to that of the non-transsexed.

8.5 Transgressing the Untransgressable?

If my model of gender, which has at its core, a rigid, but simple binary is valid, then what of the many, and frequent expressions of gender-transgression which occur? I insist that every person[57] has a hard-wired sense (CGI) of being on one side of the fundamental gender binary or the other. This inner sense of engenderment is not rational, nor contextual. If this was the case, one's gender would vary over time, and given the way that Western "gender" is applied in society, many "rational" women would probably claim to prefer have a male gender because it would afford them access to increased power and personal security. However, the *significance* that this inner sense of engenderment plays in a person's life varies considerably, even to the point that they can not, or will not, articulate this sense publicly. Transgression of the *expression* of gender (GRB) is something quite different, and the inviolability of core gender (CGI) provides a relatively safe platform from which to "transgress".

The gender transgressive "project" involves claims to the effect that the transgressor has subverted gender, or blurred gender, stepped outside gender, identified or occupied a third (or fourth, fifth, etc) gender, has multiple genders, or has no gender at all. I question how much "transgression" is possible when the underpinnings of the transgression are not understood, or where the underpinnings of that site of engagement lie outside of language's facility to convey an understanding of its structure. To represent a variant *presentation* of engenderment (GRB), as a subversion of gender itself (i.e., "gender", as a totality), while the agent is still

[57] I again acknowledge the possibility that persons suffering from some forms of severe mental illness may lose any sense of the gender binary, or their place within it.

grounded within the "conventional" gender framework (retaining CGI and probably ISG), is to reduce gender itself to no more than a presentation[58].

8.5.1 Are Transsexuals Transgressive?

Almost all the transsexual stories stake a claim for the *same* gendered ground as the non-transsexed, so there is nothing transgressive about the *location* of their claims to gender-legitimacy. In the sense that the transsexual project challenges the "innocent" occupation of gendered space by the non-transsexed, they have "transgressed". The main "casualty" of the transgression (such as it is) is the naivete embedded in the "ordinary" understandings of engenderment (EUG). The transsexual loses hir naivete when s/he recognises hir transsexuality, and allows hir ISG to accord with hir CGI. The wider society loses *some* of its naivete when it acknowledges the existence of the transsexual phenomenon as *anything* but a pathology. Even in the process of delegitimisation of the transsexual's genderal claims *as pathological*, some naivete is lost. The boundaries of "ordinary", legitimate gender are well-policed and those labelled "deviant" are excluded from this category, but this police-action still requires the non-transsexed to take, and defend a position in a landscape which they had previously occupied more comfortably. However, as the transsexuals' object is to attain "the ordinary" ground within the gendered landscape, but without the same naive *terms of occupation* as the non-transsexed, they risk exclusion, unless understandings of the structure of gender are re-worked.

[58]If a gender-as-mere-presentation model was valid then there would be no justification for the transsexuals' drive for bodily transformation (i.e., an incongruent inner conviction of gender-identity could not be used as an argument for enduring the pain and expense of surgery). Conversely, the same model would allow "passing" transsexuals (and transvestites) a level of gender-legitimacy which society does *not* usually accord them; i.e., if one *looks* unequivocally like a woman/man then one *is* a woman/man.

I believe that this thesis may be useful in extending our understandings of gender, not by direct deconstruction, but by an examination of how the boundaries are policed, and of the nature of the claims made by the genderally marginalised for their inclusion within "the ordinary".

Chapter 9

Conclusions

The discourses on transsexuality appear to be complex and multi-layered. The relatively "conservative" narrative form of the transsexual autobiography represents a different and powerful account of the "realities" of lived sex and gender that unavoidably destabilises assumptions attached to the existing binary. As with Garfinkel (1967) before me, I have found the narrative of transsexuals to be a useful tool to examine "gender-in-the-ordinary". I have found that the use of a spatial approach was a useful way to examine both the transsexual condition, and its placement within a wider gendered landscape. Much of the critique of the phenomenon by non-transsexuals, particularly by some "radical" feminists, dwells unduly on *authenticity of re-embodiment*, which is rarely an issue for the transsexuals themselves. *Legitimacy of engenderment*, that is, the ease with which they are accepted into the "ordinary" framework of gender is a more central issue. By focussing on the *terms* under which transsexuals occupy metaphorical, social and embodied space, it may be possible to comprehend their narratives *as ordinary*, despite the limitations of language and the apparent rigidity of the existing sex/gender construct. The insights gained from the accounts of how transsexuals negotiate the gendered landscape can be applied to the wider population to question the assumptions

made about their gender as well.

This thesis is *grounded* in the transsexual narratives, rather than in one of the pre-existing theoretical models of gender which, although apparently serving adequately as explanations of "normal" engenderment, are characterised by complex border-keeping when applied to the transsexed (and intersexed). Of course, there are many different opportunities to dissect and critique the published transsexual narratives, but I had no desire to repeat the border-keeping exercises of the "radical" feminist essentialists, such as Raymond (1979). My primary purpose has not been to test the *veracity* of the transsexual narrative down to minute detail, but I remain confident that its main themes have sufficient stability on which to ground my enquiry. I have, therefore, accepted, as a first principle, that the transsexual autobiographers in this study are not mentally ill *per se*, and that they are probably as competent, honest, and insightful as any other marginalised group of narrators. In taking this stance, I have also deliberately denied myself the possibility of clutching at the label, "pathology" as a convenient way of avoiding the narratives' apparent "deviance" from the "everyday" understandings of gender. I have found this approach to be useful, because it *forced* me to consider the structure of "gender" itself.

In examining the family background of the transsexual authors, I could find no obvious pattern of defective childhood socialisation which would suggest that transsexuals are "made", either by parental shortcomings, or as dupes of a patriarchal "empire". In every respect *apart from their transsexuality*, they seem to reflect a microcosm of society, with many of them being high achievers (which would be inconsistent with them being crippled by mental illness since childhood). This observation, in turn, gave me more confidence that the narratives were written by persons who were, on the whole, capable of offering up sufficiently useful insights into gender on which to ground my study.

Agency is necessary for the transsexual narrators to survive and negotiate the gendered landscape, yet the "normal" construction of gender admits to little, if any, agency in the legitimation process. Nevertheless, I remain puzzled why, with so little convincing evidence that the transsexual condition is a socially-constructed "defect", that some gender-theorists offer *social-reconstruction* as a "cure" for transsexuality. These "social cures" range from group counselling of transsexuals in Raymond's "suggestions for change" (1979, 178-185), to an advocacy of society-wide genderal fluidity/depolarisation by Bem (1993) and Rothblatt (1995).

In this thesis, I have proposed that what is understood as "gender" in everyday parlance (EUG) is composed of at least four distinct layers. These layers are all congruent amongst the non-transsexed, but transsexuals experience considerable anguish because, in their pre-transformed state, these internal layers are contradictory with how the outside world reads their engenderment. I do not believe that there is anything in my mapping of the contents of these layers which is radically different in substance to the existing everyday understandings of gender (EUG). However, my model of gender is different to the extent that I place these understandings within four *distinct* categories and re-work the relationship between these attributes and actions.

The existing understanding of gender as a binary, with an homogeneous internal structure, usually serves the non-transsexed population adequately, at least until the rigidity and inequity of gender-roles (GRB) are challenged, particularly by feminists. As all of my four proposed layers of engenderment are internally consistent among the non-transsexed, the "innocent" discourse surrounding gender (EUG) rarely admits to an internal inconsistency as being anything other than pathological. Transsexuals have such an internally-driven, contradictory engenderment because they are born with a sexual embodiment which prevents them from socially legitimising their internal sense of being gendered "female",

or "male". Transsexuals primarily have a *body-problem* which is read, and pathologised, as a *mental problem* because "ordinary" gender is read as an homogeneous, internally consistent consequence of sexual embodiment and/or socialisation. Unease with gender-roles may have generated a response by some post-modern theorists that the binary nature of gender itself is flawed and oppressive, but this stance mistakes the visible *surface* of gender (GRB) for the *whole*.

I have attempted to build on Garfinkel's work (1967) to show that *genderal legitimacy* is the primary goal for us all within the gendered landscape. These *legitimated* terms of occupation of that space are not limited to merely the right to declare oneself to be "female", or "male"; but also extend to a comfortable, readily comprehensible, stable and "natural" *state* of engenderment. The transsexual phenomenon, when viewed through the "naive" understandings of homogeneous, "everyday gender" (EUG), threatens these "comfortable" terms of occupation. I have offered a revised model of gender, in the form of an abstracted "map", which accounts for the engenderment of the non-transsexed (albeit in a state of diminished "innocence") while admitting other groups, such as transsexuals, to genderal legitimacy *provided they mount a sufficiently strong case for inclusion*[1]. I have explored some of the mechanics of transformation which are described in the autobiographies, to consider what *meaning* is attached to various physical, mental and historical signifiers of genderal legitimacy. Not only do the narratives provide insights into these signifiers, but the narratives are, as historical accounts of negotiating the gendered landscape, one of the "truths" offered up in the authors' cases for genderal legitimacy. Just as a transsexual's reconstructed genitals *stand in place of* the "natural" organs of the non-transsexed, the autobiographies

[1]My revised model does *not* provide for the sort of transitory, weak, or subversive "claim" such as may be mounted by casual cross-dressers or "gender-fuckers".

stand in place of the missing histories of childhood innocence. Unlike the essentialist position, a spatial approach allows the acceptance of these "truths" as standing in the same place, for the same purpose, as "the real", without being diverted by the almost impossible task of deciding "authenticity", as it applies to gender in a social context.

I have also argued that many of the discourses *about* transsexuality are border-keeping exercises, designed to maintain the existing "naturalness" of the engendered majority. The legitimate/illegitimate binary which is maintained by these modern, "academic" discourses is little different from the notions which have served to police the borders of socially acceptable engenderment since before the transsexual phenomenon moved from the mythical to the actual. These police-actions can take the form of the delegitimisation, or of the reinterpretation by gender-theorists of the transsexual narrative as "subversive": In this process of de-naturalisation, whatever the transsexual narrative *might* be in actuality, it cannot be allowed to be *mistaken* for an "ordinary" discourse on gender. The transsexuals, *as patients*, are also subject to the discipline of restrictions to transforming surgery and pharmaceuticals by psycho-medical professionals, acting as gatekeepers on behalf of the wider public. In this model of medicalised immanence, a transsexual's transformation cannot be allowed to be mis-taken for *agency* in reconstructing "ordinary" engenderment, they must be adjudged to be worthy, if irretrievably damaged, *recipients* of engenderment. I also note that some transsexuals themselves, under the guises of "subversion" or "entertainment", are apparently willing participants in this "public-service" of maintaining the transsexual condition in a "de-naturalised" state.

Despite the dire warnings about the threat to feminism, and to the status of women given in Raymond's "Transsexual Empire", I remain a feminist. During the writing of this thesis, my attitudes to "gender" may have changed, but within the newly-revealed com-

plexity, one thing has become clearer to me. If there is a project to change women's status within *any* gender construct, then we must know what, in practical terms, it is possible to change, and what is next to impossible to alter, while having full regard to the social consequences of any tinkering that we may make. If "being legitimately gendered" (SGL) is a social construct which is changeable, and an internal sense of "being gendered" (CGI, ISG) is not, then a strategic form of social engineering of gender may be not only possible, but *safe*. If the *gestures* that are expected of women to legitimate our womanhood are recognised as fundamentally different from the current reading of "being gendered female" (SGL), then we may be freer to negotiate aspects of gender-role behaviour (GRB), piece by piece, and in any order that we choose.

Although I had long regarded the title of this thesis, "Someone Else's Gender", as only an interim label for work-in-progress, I now realise that it is far more relevant than I had expected. The legitimacy of *everyone's* gender depends on the acquiescence of the people with whom they interact. The threat posed by the notion of "transsexuality" is that it forces the non-transsexed to question the basis of their own gender-legitimacy and, to that extent, *both* groups have an investment in the terms of each other's engenderment. Just as with the occupation of geographic space, there is no form of engenderment which is totally autonomous from the surrounding society. We are all *amateur* players in a gendered landscape in which there are no detached observers. Whatever stance that we take, we are all dependent upon "Someone Else's Gender" for the comfortable occupation of our own.

9.1 Unfinished Business: The Way Ahead

During the preparation of this thesis, my own relatively comfortable attitudes to "gender" were challenged, and as the complexity

of the gendered landscape unfolded before me, it was often difficult to remain focussed on my chosen field of enquiry. My curiousity over some of the aspects of engenderment which I had to reluctantly quarantine from this study, remains unsatiated. Some of these unexplored questions and areas of enquiry which arose while writing this work may be worth pursuing.

9.1.1 Mapping Gender from the Core:

While my thesis has drawn inferences about the wider Western gendered landscape by examining accounts of a specific group of those marginalised from it, the exploration could be widened further by:

- Scrutinising a range of autobiographies of non-transsexuals to explore how those authors negotiated the gendered landscape. However, as the non-transsexed do not have the same need (or experience) to articulate engenderment in the same detail as the transsexed, this may be a labourious task of sifting for insightful fragments amongst prosaic, but nevertheless gendered, transactions,

- Conducting a survey of people born with an intersexed condition, who were "normalised" by early surgical erasure,

- Conducting a survey of both the "normal" occupants of the centre of the gender map (i.e., congenital women and men) and *other* groups who may be marginalised as sexual/genderal agents for reasons which are *not* directly related to sex/gender (such as the mentally and physically disabled) to test and expand some of the observations that I have offered in this work. I believe that this thesis has generated more questions than it has answered.

9.1.2 Mapping Gender from Terra Incognita:

As a woman who was born with an intersex condition, I have a special interest in how my peers and fellow-travellers negotiate the gendered landscape. Although I was initially discouraged from exploring this topic because of the apparent lack of published material, and my own personal sensitivities, these are no longer insurmountable issues. The same gender-edifice which struggles to manage, police or assimilate the unruly engenderment of the transsexual condition also deals with people with unruly sexual embodiment (the intersexed). Although the psycho-medical establishment or the gender-theorists may be called upon to address a similar level of gender-unease as that generated by the transsexual condition, their response is, ironically, almost the *exact opposite* of that meted out to the transsexed. While transsexuals often spend years arguing, or pleading for genital surgery, the sight of of a sexually-ambiguous infant will send the medical establishment and parents frantically racing for a scalpel. There will be no psychological assessment, no consent, no agency, no delay for the intersexed recipient, all of which are claimed to be *essential* to manage the transsexual condition. While a successfully transformed transsexual may dread public exposure of their birthsex, people with an intersexed history are often denied any acknowledgement of their past embodiment.

Exploring how society accommodates *sexual* ambiguity would be a valuable, parallel study to this one. Such a study would provide how another marginalised group[2] negotiates the same gendered landscape without, in most cases, anywhere the levels of agency expressed by the transsexual biographers.

[2]That is, people born with an intersexed condition, some of whom have escaped surgical intervention, and are marked by an "unruly" embodiment as adults, and others who have received "normalising" surgery as children, often at the cost of an "unruly" personal history.

9.1.3 Mapping Gender Elsewhere:

Cross-Cultural Gender Mapping: My study is limited to an examination of transsexuality and the social structure of "gender" within a Western context. If my arguments about the structure of the gendered landscape are sustainable, then the *immutable* aspects of engenderment (CGI) should persist across cultures, while the *socially constructed and maintained* aspects (EUG) would vary, depending on the cultural context. I would expect that the *imperative* for social confirmation of genderal legitimacy (SGL) would be as strong in any culture, even where the *expression* of that engenderment (GRB) was fundamentally different from a Western understanding of what "gender" is, or means.

9.1.4 Re-mapping the Gateways:

A re-assessment could (or, perhaps, *should*) be undertaken of how and why psycho-medical assessment and management of transsexual candidates for surgery is conducted (if at all). Given the almost inevitable involvement of psycho-medical professionals as gatekeepers for transsexuals, a realistic acknowledgement of the agency and self-awareness of their "patients" would not only be *ethical*[3], but an opportunity for recognition and re-valuation of the forgotten half of the diagnostic tools available in the relationship.

[3]I use this term in the sense that the current understandings of a doctor (expert) and patient (supplicant) relationship are *unethical* when applied to the transsexual condition, at least where it is uncomplicated by other factors, because the existing relationship often distorts, even inverts, the knowledge/agency/responsibility of each of the players.

Chapter 10

About the Author

I share with the majority of the transsexual authors in this study a loss of gender innocence. As with most of these narrators, I do not take my genderal authenticity lightly. I am a woman who was born with an intersex condition, which has largely been erased. I present to the world as a tall, rather heavily-built, middle-aged, more-or-less heterosexual woman - *Almost* convincing as a "regular" woman, yet still a little "odd"; odd enough to cause unease amongst some folk. Individuals with an intersexed history usually have two options when dealing with the social consequences of their conditions:

- Erasure and denial: With the help of medical science, many of the "untidy" aspects of an intersexed embodiment can be removed or disguised. We are encouraged to deny our past ambiguities, and live as "normal" and "straight". Such an existence; with the grieving over lost fertility and body-parts, the deception, the incongruent history, compromises our access to the "innocent" occupation of the gender landscape that the non-inter/trans/sexed enjoy.

- Becoming publicly intersexed: We can come out, and attempt to celebrate our different embodiment and history. In doing

> so, we risk becoming the property of every armchair gender-theorist; queering ourselves at a molecular level. Any sexual performance (or the lack of sexual performance) is claimed to be either "queer", transgressive, or perhaps even more insultingly, as "brave". We are declared to be "third sex", neither sex, or both. The "ordinary" is denied to us, and how our gender identity is expressed during social or sexual performance counts for nothing.

I have become increasingly uncomfortable in either of these "ready-made" genderal spaces, and I want to re-negotiate the terms of my occupation of the gendered landscape. In the past few years, I have tried to claim both my history *and* my right to occupy gendered space as an "ordinary" woman. If my history of sexual embodiment appears to disqualify me from genderal orthodoxy, then I *insist* that there is something wrong with our existing model of gender. Ironically, in staking such a transgressive claim, I am probably as guilty of a "queering" as if I acquiesced to a ready-made intersexed freakhood. To queer, or to be queered? The difference is in the agency involved, as it is with the accounts of transsexuals' encounters with notions of queerness and genderal legitimacy.

I chose to study transsexual autobiographies as a proxy for what I believed was my own narrative. When I proposed to study this topic for my PhD, I was unaware of *any* first-hand accounts of intersexed persons. Even now, the stories of my peers which I have uncovered exist mainly in fragments, and I doubt whether the available material could ever be moulded into an acceptable thesis in the way that I have been able to do with the published transsexual narrative. During the period of writing this thesis, I watched with apprehension as the feeding frenzy reflected by the number of publications about the transsexual condition which had occupied armchair gender theorists for the past two decades seemed to be turning more squarely toward that of people born with an inter-

sexed condition. I noted that although the majority of the works were, on the whole, sympathetic, this increased interest signalled that *my* history and identity was now "open season". When, almost inevitably, in 1999 Germaine Greer pronounced that I, and my peers were not "whole women", I winced, but I had heard it all before. In a chapter titled, "Pantomime Dames", she conflates the range of intersex conditions with that of transsexuality. When referring to women with an AIS intersex condition she declares,

> AIS 'females' have no female organs and not a female cell in their bodies. We need to be sure that their being classified as female is not a reflection of a refusal on the part of entire males to recognise these damaged males as belonging to their sex. Cruel and unsympathetic though it may seem, women should not automatically accept all those who do not wish to be male as being *ex gratia* females (1999, 70, *emphasis in original*).

Regardless of what my chromosomal state *may* be, I could argue that as I have a sexual embodiment which allows me to function as female, and is largely accepted as such on a social level, then I *do* have a female organ (my body, as a social entity) and every cell in my body *is* female, because that body belongs to a female (myself). While I have argued in Chapter 8 that genderal legitimacy does require social acquiescence, it does not normally involve such paranoid and rigid policing. Terms that Greer uses in the above border-keeping exercise, such as "*We need to be sure*", and "*women should not automatically accept*" are not part of the everyday process of gender-attribution. I hope that this thesis, along with earlier work by Garfinkel and others, will show that we do not need to *sure* about gender, we only need to feel *comfortable*.

Although, on a personal level, I feel quite comfortable about my own engenderment, I recognise that others (thankfully, a minority) do not always do so. Nevertheless, I become so wearisome about

being almost solely responsible for managing that discomfort in others. It should not be *solely* my problem. I should not *have* to make allowances, or to understand why some people feel the need to behave badly toward me. And I don't need to accept that Germaine Greer has any more entitlement to pronounce on my genderal or sexual status than anyone else.

I have not had an easy time during the writing of this thesis: Within academia, I have experienced verbal abuse, ostracism, denial of basic facilities and tutoring work, even physical assault. It is perhaps significant that my experience of academic alienation increased markedly at the time when the focus of my thesis moved from a somewhat voyeuristic exploration of transsexual story-telling, on to an examination of the mainstream gender landscape in which my narrators lived. On several occasions, I have had my competency to study gender questioned, as if having had an experience of critically examining my personal engenderment disqualified me from ever being able to enter and dissect "ordinary" gender.

My epiphany occurred at a conference in the USA, midway through my study. After presenting a paper on my revised model of gender (as set out in Chapter 8 of this thesis) one woman in the audience, about half my age, produced a detailed set of notes re-interpreting the wording of almost all the personal commentary that I had offered as part of my introduction. In the rather tense meeting that followed, I pointed out to her that her re-interpretation in no way reflected my own sense of engenderment, and that I was puzzled how she had gained these remarkable insights into my identity. Was she intersexed herself? No, she had never knowingly met an intersexed person before, but she intended to write a PhD on the topic, nevertheless. A verbal dance between subject and object ensued; I insisted that I said what I meant, she said that that was impossible; I insisted that her re-interpretation reflected her feelings about her own sense of engenderment, she said that she had

the sort of detached objectivity that I was incapable of. I offered to interpret her account of her own sense of engenderment, she said that I was just being silly. The object would not submit to scrutiny *as object*, so the subject was convinced that this resistance represented the tragedy of her objectivity. The object was angry. When it comes to my gender, and the gendered landscape that I inhabit, I mean what I say. I insist upon doing so.

After digesting the autobiographies on which this thesis is built, I am struck by how important a sense of being legitimately gendered is to the authors[1]. The authors often sacrificed family, friends, careers, security, and legal status in the pursuit of something that most of us take as a given, a mere consequence of sexual embodiment at birth. Some people even seem to resent the inevitability of such genderal tidiness; the writings of some post-modern gender theorists deride the *stability* of a gender-binary as oppressive, but they do so from the safety of the very structure that they claim to undermine.

Gender legitimacy as a woman is important to me. The process of writing this thesis has reminded me of what a valuable thing it is. Just as persons who have lost (or who have lived with a credible threat of loss of) good health, freedom, citizenship, those states-of-being are especially precious to them, usually far more so than to individuals who have enjoyed an unquestioned occupation of these categories, so I, too, treasure my own engenderment. The accounts of the transsexuals in this study made me aware of this sense of being genderally-legitimate as a distinctly-bounded quality and component of social interaction. While many transsexuals have felt a need to mount a strong, and transparent claim to gender-legitimacy in their achieved sex, I have rarely felt the same drive to do so. The legacy of my "innocent" childhood socialisation as a girl persists into middle age, even though the substance and

[1]And, judging by the reaction of others to their transformation, to the wider population as well.

relevance of that training have largely vanished from my consciousness. Making the same sort of naive assumptions about "being a woman" as the wider population, I have been frequently puzzled, not to mention resentful, about the hesitant acceptance, even resistance, to my occupation of the "ordinary" ground of the gender landscape. After undertaking this study, I am more convinced of my right to occupy that ground, while at the same time, I now appreciate the threat to the "naive" occupation of gendered space that people without a intersexed or transsexual history perceive from those who do have experience of either of these conditions. When it comes to my gender, I am female. I insist upon it, even if that very act of insistence runs counter to the comfortable, unchallenged terms of occupation of the same gendered space that other women enjoy.

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