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TRANSITIONAL MATTERS:
THE BODY NARRATIVES OF TRANSSEXUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

by

JAY PROSSER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1996

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5/16/96
Date

Chair of Examining Committee

5/16/96
Date

Executive Officer

Nancy K. Miller

Gerhard Joseph

Thomas Hayes

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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Introduction

On Transitions

> It is a matter of transitions, you see; the changing, the becoming, must be cared for closely.
>
> Leslie Marmon Silko, Ceremony

i. Personal

I spent the bulk of the first month of my transsexual transition from female to male teaching an undergraduate course on the contemporary American novel. Scheduled over an intensive summer session, the class met for almost four hours a day, four days a week. My hormone treatment, beginning the week before the course, was comparably intensive. My endocrinologist believed in shocking my body into transition, starting me up on massive dosages of testosterone and leveling these off once my body had adjusted. Under this program, not only did I experience rapid dramatic somatic changes, some of these changes became immediately apparent. My face squared off and my neck thickened; accumulating facial "fuzz" required shaving every few days; and, while it didn't crack, my voice certainly deepened.

Although the minutiae of these changes might have bypassed my students, I have no doubt that I failed to cut a clearly gendered figure in class. I was already passing as male almost consistently, yet my profile at the college would have led students to expect a female teacher. For the entire month, my poor students remarkably, collectively, assiduously, and awkwardly, avoided referring to me with a pronoun or a gendered title. (The two exceptions occurred not in speech but in writing -- in my absence -- in the logs students handed in weekly: one "Miss" which, quite viscerally, I circled; and one "he" which I left unmarked.) I cannot believe that, individually, other students did not make up

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their minds about my sex (how could one not?). Rather, their careful avoidance must have stemmed from their lack of consensus as a group -- perhaps even their collective awareness that I was going through some kind of significant transition.

Their predicament, their all-too-obvious uncertainty regarding my sex, earned my immediate sympathy. Even so, in no way did I seek to resolve their confusion; I felt unable, too caught up in my own predicament. I did not feel I could present as a man in a department in which I had been known as a butch woman for five years; and, for profoundly personal reasons, I was so relieved to be moving away from femaleness, that nothing could have persuaded me to anchor myself back to it, even provisionally. The obvious alternative -- to have come out as a transsexual -- apart from feeling like too denudingly personal an act, I believe would have rooted rather than alleviated their confusion and discomfort. For, in the common perception, to name oneself transsexual is to own precisely to being gender displaced, to being a subject in transition, moving beyond or in between sexual difference. So I left them uncomfortably (all of us horribly uncomfortable) leaving me to my ambivalence; and as the class progressed, this not attributing me with a gender, in my experience, became more and more glaring -- a kind of deafening unspoken. In this gendered non-zone, I felt too embodied (only body) yet also disembodied: for what on earth did I embody? Not surprisingly, I was massively relieved once the course was over, and I sensed the students felt similarly.

Toward the end, one student gave a dazzling presentation on Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony, tracing the theme -- of all things -- of transition. Of the five novels assigned, Ceremony clearly frustrated students. It made them feel unconfident, uncertain of how to read. They couldn't place it: its hybrid characters; its plot which mixes and yet

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refuses to merge realistic historical moment and mythic quest; and the novel's genre, its shifting affiliation to a modern psychological novel and a traditional Native ceremony. Staking its value to the course topics and to her own reading pleasure on its treatment of transition, the presenting student mounted an inspiring defense of the novel. Confronting the class rejection of the text, she argued that it was Ceremony's layered investment in the theme of transition which students were constructing as their stumbling block, even as the importance of understanding transition was the novel's very point. An intermediate, non-zone, transition represents the movement in between which threatens to dislocate our ties to identity places we conceive of as essentially (in every sense) secure. Transition provokes discomfort, anxiety -- both for the subject in transition and for the other in the encounter. Yet, paradoxically, transition is necessary for continuity, it is that which moves us on.

Needless to say, engrossed in my personal circumstances (the experience of teaching at this most transitional point in my transition; within two weeks of the course ending I was living as a man, documents all reflecting this new unambivalent status), I heard this presentation as a poignant meta-commentary on my own dislocation in the course. Indeed, I found it incredibly hard to focus on the student's presentation as a reading of the novel. With uncanny precision, she cut through (and revealed in cross-section) the thick layers of anxiety that had coated our discussions. And even when the student added an autobiographical postscript to her presentation and articulated her own relation to the transitional, I found it impossible to disown or disembody the subject. For in revealing her emotional entanglement in her interpretation of the novel and the class reading, the student described the significance of *her own status* as transitional: in her

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identity, consciously and complexly in between Native, Spanish and Irish cultural heritages; and at this period of her life. My course marked her transition from college to beginning graduate school the following semester. It was part of her transition to making this kind of reading and thinking her career.

Instead of moving me away from my personal through hers, my student's revelation brought into relief (again, in my perspective) my own silence. My body had brought transition to the surface, embodied it in a way that transsexual bodies like no others do. Crucially because I represented transition in some disconcertingly literal way, I had remained unable to remark on it, to reassure others over it. To articulate my transsexuality seemed then (still seems) like an impossible task. How to explain, to narrate this transition *between* sex? How to even conceive it? What language to name the subject of transsexuality? It felt as if the experience of transsexuality obturated any expression of it, exceeded the grounds of its own speakability.

This dissertation is testimony to those transsexuals who have not found the task of articulating their transsexuality insuperable. The question of how to represent the transitions of transsexuality, of how to put into narrative its remarkable bodily trajectories, of how to tell the story of the transsexual body, is the preoccupation of these narratives -- and thus of the theoretical narrative of this project -- as much as it was mine in my summer class. My hope is that this dissertation does a better job at putting that body into words. Without doubt, my turning as critic to transsexual autobiography represents a kind of displaced autobiographical act: "I chose to work, academically, *on* autobiography, because in a parallel direction I wanted to work *on* my own autobiography" (Philippe Lejeune 132). And working on the autobiographies has been a way of working on my

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transsexuality. For transsexuality is itself autobiographical work, always requiring the re-molding of the life into a particular narrative shape.

ii. Material

Transsexuality consists in entering into a lengthy, formalized and normally substantive transition: a correlated set of corporeal, psychic and social changes. As the insider joke goes, transitioning is what transsexuals *do* (our occupation, as consuming as a career). Transition leads as both the subject of this dissertation and its prevalent figure, recurring in each chapter. While thoroughly interwoven in the body of my text, five senses of transition in application to the transsexual trajectory and its inscription in autobiography may be separated out here as a means of introducing the goals of this project.

My primary purpose in reading transsexual autobiography is to introduce into cultural theory transsexuality as a trajectory which foregrounds the bodily matter of gender crossings. In its most substantial sense, transition denotes the ontological condition of transsexuality: the term transsexuals use to describe their physical, social and psychic transformations that constitute transsexuality. Second, in documenting the origins of transsexuality, I use transition in a historical sense: to describe the developments that take place in and between discourses which enabled the transsexual to emerge as a classifiable subject. The specific circumstances of this historical emergence underline the investment of transsexual identity in soma. Third, I enlist transition in its narratalogical sense: transition as the definitive property of narrative, the progression and development that drives narrative and coheres its form. Reading transsexuality through autobiographical narratives allows me to address how transsexual subjectivity is made

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possible through the narrativization of transsexuality, both clinical and individual; how somatic transitions are made possible through narrative transitions. Fourth, I consider how transition as a geographic trope applies to transsexual autobiography: that is, transsexuality as a passage through space, a journey from one location to another. In this sense, transition serves as a key means by which transsexuals represent their relations not only to gendered belonging but to sexual communities and politics (lesbian, gay, straight, queer and now transgender). To what "home" does transitioning lead the transsexual? The act of tracing the occurence of such metaphors provides a means to consider the "place" of the transsexual subject, how s/he informs the relations between these communities, politics and theories. Finally, I conceive of transition in a conceptual sense, that is, in terms of changes in theoretical paradigms. The larger theoretical contention of this project is that we need to make conceptual transitions in our theory to make room for transsexual narratives. In order to understand the ways in which these different meanings of transition (somatic, historico-discursive, narrative and political) are enmeshed in transsexual accounts, we need to revise our paradigms for theorizing gendered and sexual subjectivity. This dissertation uses transsexual autobiography to galvanize some conceptual transitions -- specifically for thinking gender, sexuality and the body.

The subject of transition is by no means new to cultural theory. Since the eighties, different areas within cultural theory have represented figures of transition -- of crossing, intermediacy, borderlands -- as a vehicle for undoing the discrete binaries that structure identities. Transition became a much-used critical trope because of its perceived potential for moving discussions of the construction of subjectivity away from the fixity of seventies' identity politics: politics based on the body as the home of identity. Some of

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the earliest uses of transition as a theoretical metaphor appear in feminist work on racial and national identities, particularly in collective and collaborative writing. Seeking to make connections between the writings and experiences of women of color, Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga's anthology, This Bridge Called My Back (1981) elected as its central motif the act of crossing bridges. Similarly, Elly Bulkin, Minnie Bruce Pratt and Barbara Smith's Yours in Struggle: Three Feminist Perspectives on Anti-Semitism and Racism (1984) attempted to carve out the anti-racist possibilities of feminism through the dynamics of cross-racial identifications. Most influentially, Anzaldúa's Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza (1987) made of the crossing and movement in between geographic, national, linguistic, cultural and generic locations a subjectivity, a "new mestiza." And in a neighboring arena, poststructuralist theory was also beginning to thematize identity mobility, in particular, cross-gender mobility. When it appeared in his On Deconstruction in 1982, Jonathan Culler's deconstructive model of "reading as a woman" was central in sparking much debate on the value of this cross-gender movement.[1]

Queer studies began in the late eighties with a spate of writings on the subject of transitions and crossing. These tended to combine both parts of this crossing legacy. That is, queer studies examined transitional / border / crossing figures in a way that brought together crossing as troping a politics based on affiliations rather than identities; and

---

[1] Although as the "female feminists" in Alice Jardine and Paul Smith's Men in Feminism point out, the traffic was overwhelmingly one way, with men passing as, into and through women. Rosi Braidotti's new denotation, "female feminist" (appearing throughout her Nomadic Subjects), suggests that this phenomenon of gender crossing has made it necessary to distinguish *who* is in feminism on the basis of sex.

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crossing as troping a deconstructive reading practice. With the focus on the subject who transitions across gender, transition became the lever to loosen the fixity of gender identities enough to enable affiliation and identification between gay men and lesbians. Queer came to signify both the deconstruction of gender and this new cross-gender alliance which it founded.

My dissertation takes off from this moment -- both sprung by it and beginning with it. Chapter 1 attends to the foundational place of the figure of transgender in the early canon of queer theory. I argue that transgender functioned as queer theory's transitional object, the means not only to challenge sex, gender and sexuality binaries, but to institutionalize homosexuality as queer, to effect the transition of queer politics into academic theory. Queer theory's focus on transgender makes my reading of transsexual autobiographies possible. Transgender wouldn't be of the moment if not for the queer moment of the late eighties - early nineties. Yet the limitations of queer's focus also make my project necessary. Queer has written of transitions as discursive; it has not explored the subject's experience of transition. In fact, in its attention to the transitional body as an effect of the sex / gender system and this body's effects on this system, queer has approached transition overwhelmingly as a figure or metaphor, conventionally, for the (Lacanian) fictionality or impossibility of gender identity. It has not addressed the bodiliness of transgendered crossings, the experience of somatic passage, and the ways in which transition can serve as the route to becoming an identity (and not to its undoing).

The concomitant of this elision of the embodiment of transgender is that the transsexual did not interest queer studies in its early formulations. The figure who had center stage was the cross-dresser: whether transvestite, drag queen or butch woman,

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attention was fixed on the subject who crosses the lines of gender, not sex. When, in the exceptional instances, queer work did address the transsexual, it was always alongside the cross-dresser, and typically critics failed to distinguish between the subjects. Marjorie Garber's Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety exemplified this incorporative gesture toward the transsexual, simply including the transsexual as an extension of the cross-dresser. Epitomizing the bodiliness of gender transition -- the matter of sex the cross-dresser was applauded for putatively defying -- transsexuality represented queer's excess: what lay beyond or beneath its favored terrain of queer gender play. If there are signs that queer studies is beginning to attend to the transsexual as a distinct subject now -- and the publication last year of Bernice Hausman's Changing Sex: Transsexuality, Technology and the Idea of Gender might be read as such a benchmark -- it is still not in a way that gets to grips with the transsexual's experience of sexed embodiment.

In reading transsexual autobiographical accounts, this dissertation reviews and begins the task of redressing queer's elision of the experience of trans embodiment. If, for queer, transition is to be explored in terms of deconstructive effects (transition both as an effect of gender discourse and for its effects on this discourse), I read transsexual autobiography to explore the somatic experience of transition from the subject's point of view. It is important to read transsexual autobiography now precisely in order to substantiate the figure of gender transitions that queer has made prominent. My first chapter sets up its theoretical dialogue with queer on the subject of transgender. This dialogue runs throughout the dissertation; in every chapter, I read transsexual narratives with queer's representation of transgender as a backdrop. When laid over queer

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descriptions, autobiographical accounts of the material complexities of transition bring into relief queer's metaphorization and disembodiment of gender crossings. In transsexual narratives, the transition does not shift the transitioning subject or the reader away from the embodiment of sexual difference but more fully into it.

Chapter 1 moves to focus on Judith Butler's writings. Nowhere is the pivotal function of transgender in queer studies more evident or more intricate. Further, her interest in transgender undergoes its own transition. Her work progresses from using the transgendered subject to support its theory of gender performativity and to "trouble" the naturalization of heterosexuality and sex, to using the transsexual subject in particular to mark the limits of the trouble the subject in transition can cause the sex / gender system. Butler's complication of her initial formulations on transgender implicitly suggests the way in which transsexual subjects diverge from queer representations of transgender. The process of marking this shift in Butler allows me to begin this dissertation by sketching out the distinguishing material features of transsexual transitions.

Historically, the materialization of transgender in the body founded the all-important discursive context in which the transsexual could emerge as a classifiable subject. Chapter 2 posits turn-of-the-century sexology as the significant historico-discursive threshold: the turning point between models for thinking gender and sexuality at which the transsexual makes his / her first appearance. Sexology's nosology of inversion represented transgender as embodied and diagnosable: a somatic condition. In reading sexology as the medicalization of homosexuality, lesbian and gay historians have dismissed its cross-gender taxonomies as the constructions of heterocentric sexologists. However, individual case histories validate the sexologists' prioritization of the

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transgender framework -- the categories of cross-gender identification over those of same-sex desire -- and sexologists' sense of the embodiment of this transgender condition. The case histories reveal inverts, to varying degrees, identifying with, appearing as, living as, and, most significantly, sometimes seeking out the surgical means to aid a transition to, their non-birth sex. The sexual aim of inverts is most often one "symptom" of their cross-gender condition, an appurtenance to their inversion, not its equivalent. If medicalization is the bogy in the modern history of homosexuality, the medicalization of transgender that originates in sexology was essential for enabling the transsexual to bring about a somatic transition, and constitutive therefore of the history of the transsexual subject. This chapter attempts to distinguish the narrative histories of homosexuality and transsexuality and, concomitantly the categories of sexuality and gender -- for in both sets, each term intersects and is often mistaken for the other -- at this originative moment.

My revision of sexology as a transgendered discourse prompts and undergirds my reading of the classic novel of inversion, Radclyffe Hall's The Well of Loneliness, as a narrative of female-to-male transsexual experience. Critics have attempted to contextualize The Well in the lesbian canon, all the while recognizing that the novel's investment in inversion -- its portrait of Stephen Gordon in all her transgendered embodiedness -- resists this location. Situating it in the genealogy of transsexual narratives that makes up dissertation, and alongside its contemporaneous sexological case histories in this chapter, I read the novel to elucidate the problematics of inversion in the text and the surrounding literary critical debates as transsexual.

The relation between medical discourses of transsexuality and individual transsexual narratives is a consistent concern of this dissertation. In isolating medical

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discourses to the exclusion of subjective accounts, critics of transsexuality have overwhelmingly represented the transsexual as subject *to* medical technology. The transsexual appears repeatedly as medicine's passive effect, a kind of unwitting product of gender's discursive contingencies. Janice Raymond's lesbian feminist The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male (1979) set the precedent by arguing that the transsexual is the gender stereotypical construct (and support) of a patriarchal medical establishment. Likewise, Dwight Billings and Thomas Urban's sociological critique (1982) insisted on transsexuality as medicine's invention: "a socially constructed reality which only exists in and through medical practice" (99). Billings and Urban drew on theories of the social construction of illness and postmodern culture to argue that, not only does the medical establishment reify the gender-disturbed into transsexuals, it commodifies gender, creating the transsexual as consumer of simulated sex who buys into "an alluring world of artificial vaginas and penises" (112). Most recently, Hausman's Changing Sex -- which represents itself as supplanting Raymond's book-length study only to replicate its key points -- has added the Foucauldian ingredient to this stew of constructionist theories of transsexuality. Hausman argues that the transsexual is an historically-contingent engineered subject. Her thesis is that the transsexual was produced by endocrinology from the twenties and thirties and plastic surgery after the second world war, when these developments in medical technology were brought together with the notion of authentic or true gender arrived at in the treatment of intersexuality in the same period. All these readings represent the transsexual as archetypal constructed subject *because of* his or her medical construction. The literal somatic constructions of gender reassignment have been shunted all too easily into radical culturo-technological construction.

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All theories fail to examine how transsexuals are construct*ing* subjects, participants and actors who have shaped medical practices as much as they have been shaped by them. Like Raymond, and Billings and Urban before her, Hausman attributes unequivocal ideological power to medical practitioners, imaging transsexuals as the "dupes of gender" (taking literally the invented category of gender identity), and duplicitous (attempting to convince everyone else that gender identity is inherent) (140). Consistently, approaches to the transsexual as a discursive effect -- whether figuring her or him as the pawn, victim or dupe of medical technology -- preclude a discussion of transsexual agency: that is, the subject's capacity not only to initiate and effect his / her own somatic transition but to inform and redefine the medical narrative of transsexuality. Although Hausman mentions transsexual agency, it is always only in conjunction with its being "problematic" (110, 118, 129). Since she never commits to exemplifying this agency, her gesture remains specious, lip service to the subjectivity of what she constructs as her prodigious objects of study. What may be said equally of all of these theoretical narratives transsexual feminist Carroll Riddell writes with wonderful directness of The Transsexual Empire: "My living space is threatened by this book" (189).

Prioritizing transsexual autobiography, both the published accounts of "public" transsexuals such as Christine Jorgensen or Renée Richards and the oral narratives of anonymous subjects transcribed in medical case histories, this project begins the work of rebuilding in cultural theory that "living space" of the transsexual subject. Transsexual narratives place us in a stronger position to understand how dynamic and complex are the relations of authorship and authorization *between* clinicians and transsexuals, and to reexamine this whole problematic of construction. Sexology's case histories are especially

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significant in this regard for they reveal the invert seeking out (and sometimes achieving) somatic transitions *before* the official invention of the transsexual as a discursive subject, before sex hormones and plastic surgery had been decided by clinicians as treatment for the condition -- indeed, before the condition had been recognized. The first transsexual to effect a full somatic transition (surgery and hormones) in the early forties did so several years before the medical diagnosis was written and intitiated his own treatment. Michael Dillon's harnessing of technology in fact contributed to the shaping of the medical narrative of transsexuality. Like other personal accounts, his story is radically significant for demonstrating how transsexuality constitutes an active subjectivity that cannot be reduced to a technological effect.

The transsexual was not officially "invented" until 1948 when David Cauldwell diagnosed a later female who identified as a man with "psychopathia transsexualis." In 1953, Harry Benjamin began to outline what would become in the psychiatric and medical arena the foundational theory of "transsexualism." Benjamin's first formulations emphasize its distinctiveness from transvestitism on the one hand (transsexuality is concerned with the soma) and homosexuality on the other (transsexuality is concerned with gender). Transsexuality came to be defined as a condition centered on the subject's feelings of the transgendering of his or her body. The course of treatment -- hormone therapy and reconstructive plastic surgery -- was designed in recognition of the incontrovertibility of these feelings. Chapter 3 considers the significance of transsexual body-feelings in transsexual accounts and the logics of gender reassignment. How do transsexuals represent their experience of their bodies? Is there a substance to gendered body image that it can motivate somatic transition? Does it make sense to speak of

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transsexuality as a body image? How do material reconfigurations enable the transsexual to "change sex" and feel sex-changed?

Outside the domain of psychiatry and psychology specializing in transsexuality, no writer has worked with autobiographical accounts of transsexual embodiment. Even though Changing Sex offers as one of its chapters the first focus on transsexual autobiography, Hausman admits that she seeks to work *against* these accounts. Her agenda -- to "subvert the official story put forth by transsexual autobiographers"; to reveal the narrating subjects "cover[ing] over" the technological construction of their transsex -- peremptorily forecloses the notion that transsexuals might speak from legitimate feelings of gendered difference (141, 173). Reading through the lens of recent work on body image from psychoanalysis and psycho-neurology, chapter 3 documents the claims made by transsexual autobiographers about gendered embodiment, before, during and after transition. This central chapter -- my attempt to read individual corporeal experience back into the debate about "the" construction of "the" body -- is my most important yet also most tentative: a map toward a theory of transsexual embodiment, a first sketch. Because it goes against the flow of cultural theory, the task of addressing how the material flesh resists cultural inscription may only be carried out at first, as Lynne Segal suggests, "with humbling tentativeness" (228).

The transsexual's capacity to narrativize the embodiment of his / her condition plays an essential role in mobilizing somatic transition. Transsexuality is caught up in autobiographical narrative, first in terms of transsexual autobiography's development as a historical form. Among turn-of-the-century sexological case histories appear the first transsexual autobiographies: oral narratives told to and transcribed by the clinician.

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Second, in contemporary individual accounts, the embodiment of gender in transsexual autobiography is enabled by the narrative act. In order to receive authorization for the hormones and surgery that constitute transitioning, the transsexual must narrate for the clinician a convincing transsexual autobiography. Chapter 4 explores how autobiography functions as the symptom of transsexuality, the text standing in for the body -- the clinician's only means of diagnosing the transsexual's wrong embodiment. Published autobiographies remain invested in the therapeutic - analytic origins of this first oral narrative: where transsexuality would heal the gendered split of transsexuality, the form of autobiography would heal the rupture in gendered plots by smoothing it into a continuous story. Narrative is not only the bridge to embodiment but a way of making sense of transition, the link between locations: the transition itself.

Whether narrative can perform that function of cohering the transsexual life remains in question, however, since transsexual autobiography dramatically ruptures the autobiographical subject through the divide of sexual difference. In transsexual autobiography, the difference between the writing and the written "I" is sexed. Telling the story of "sex change" (the sexed division between "me then" and "me now") undercuts in narrative what the subject seeks in transsexual transition: gendered integrity. Surely not by chance, the case history (in which transsexual autobiography finds its phylo- and ontogenetic origins) and modern autobiography coincide in their inception in the eighteenth century.[2] Both appear as attempts of narrative to attest to the continuity and

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identity of the modern embodied subject. Yet in both genres, this continuity and identity is threatened by the very properties of narrative: narrative's definitive movement (its transitions), and its constructedness (its textuality). How much more complicated these properties when redoubled by the sexual difference of transsexual autobiography.

Indeed, in their conventions, transsexuality and autobiography appear fundamentally in contradiction. The conventional narrative of transsexuality (both in its autobiographical and its medical inscription) is to pass as non-transsexual, to assimilate into gendered realness. Transsexual is here conceived as a transitional phase to pass *through* once the body can pass. In writing *as* transsexuals however, speaking from the "I," transsexual autobiographers write this body back out. In so doing, they reclaim transsexuality from abjected passage to ongoing identity. Speaking as a transsexual is one of the paradoxes at the crux of transsexual autobiography -- and perhaps one of the unrecognized paradoxes of transsexual transitioning itself. Why should becoming a man or a woman mean one is no longer a transsexual? At what point might transition be said to really end? When does the transsexual stop be(com)ing a transsexual?

Chapter 5 reads Stone Butch Blues, as a narrative about the explicit refusal to cede transsexual transition. Leslie Feinberg's fictional autobiography makes of transsexual becoming a transgendered subjectivity, and of the movement of transition a destination. In order to imagine a specifically transgendered community, Feinberg holds at bay the "home" of gendered realness promised by the transsexual trajectory. H/er departure from

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[2] For the origins of the case history see Julia Epstein, Altered Conditions, chapter 2. The classic essay on the origins of autobiography is Georges Gusdorf's "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography."

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conventions is symptomatic of a larger political transition underway: the creation of a transgender movement -- a politics and culture. Under the aegis of transgender, transsexuals are now speaking en masse (rather than occasionally) as transsexuals, forming activist groups, academic networks, transgender "nations." No longer typically assimilating and disappearing, transsexuals are overtly rewriting the narrative of transsexuality -- and of transsexual autobiography -- as open-ended, in effect redefining the respective conventions of transsexuality and transsexual autobiography.

The refusal to disappear should be understood as strategic. Its purpose is to produce transgendered and transsexual as specific and, importantly, allied subjectivites (with transgender as the umbrella term). In spite of sustaining its protagonist's gendered intermediacy, Stone Butch Blues, in common with transsexual trajectories, stages through h/er physical transitions a yearning for bodily belonging. This yearning for somatic home distinguishes transgender from queer. The irony of queer's deployment of transgender to figure moves away from identity homes is that every transgendered crossing remains crucially entangled with belonging, even if belonging remains in transsexual autobiography an unrealized fantasy. Transitional narratives such as Stone Butch Blues attest to the valences of cultural belonging that the categories of man and woman still carry in our world: what I term "gendered realness." The transitional trajectory of Feinberg's narrator produces not the celebratory revelation of the fictionality of gender categories but the sobering realization of their ongoing foundational power. Indeed, in accounts of individual lives, that is, outside of its current theoretical figuration, the intermediate (the transitional) proves a barely livable zone. What has made necessary the current transgender movement is queer theory's too thorough deconstruction of the categories of

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sex and gender. Transsexual autobiographies return us to the complexities and difficulties that inevitably accompany real-life experiences of gender crossing and the personal costs of not simply being a man or a woman.

iii. Categorical

If its critical purpose is to introduce transsexual narratives as a set of texts with shared concerns about transition, the theoretical purpose of this dissertation is to call for and initiate transitions in our paradigms for thinking bodily subjects. Many theorists have recently expressed discontent with contemporary discussions of the body, in particular, with their tendency to elide bodily materiality. Elizabeth Grosz contends that the "[t]he body has remained a conceptual blind spot in both Western philosophical thought and contemporary feminist theory" (Volatile Bodies 3). Her "corporeal feminism" attempts to angle the mirror so as to bring this blind spot into view. A host of other contemporary solitary and anthologized contributions to the "bodies" debate follow her example: to number a few among the spate of anthologies published last year simply with "bodies" in their titles, Deviant Bodies, Troubled Bodies, and Posthuman Bodies.[3] What's remarkable even from these titles (like Grosz's) is the consistency with which bodies are conceived as prodigious: destabilized and destabilizing the "normal"; the source and object of our fascination; not grounds for identity but illustrative of the impossibility of identity. The paradox of contemporary cultural theory's expatiation upon bodies is that it works not to

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[3] Jennifer Terry and Jacqueline Urla, eds., Deviant Bodies; Paul A. Komesaroff, ed., Troubled Bodies; Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston, eds., Posthuman Bodies.

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fill in that blind spot so much as to enlarge it. That the human body has become centralized in our theory is a sure sign, as Cécile Lindsay astutely observes, of "our postmodern sensibility['s] desires to make contact with some ground, with the physical stripped of metaphysical pretensions. This physical ground would be the body" (cited in Epstein 180). Yet the focus on bodies as effects or products of discourse ironically re-metaphysicalizes bodies, placing their fleshy materiality even further out of our conceptual reach.

The emphasis on the body as discursive is our Foucauldian-Lacanian legacy. According to both thinkers, materiality certainly figures but *only* figures, that is in reference to discourse: in Foucault, to institutions, technologies, ideologies; in Lacan, to language. In neither does materiality refer to the flesh. In Foucault, the materiality of the flesh seems to recede as the discursive constraints said to produce the body materialize. Bodies That Matter represents one of the most overt recent adaptations of this Foucauldian sense of materialization, Butler's premise, that "what constitutes the fixity of the body, its contours, its movements, will be fully material, but materiality will be rethought as the effect of power, as power's most productive effect" (2). Materiality is our subject, but the body is not an object; it is our route to analyzing power, technology, discourse. As Somer Brodribb remarks in her eccentric materialist feminist critique of postmodernism (of which she conceives Foucault and Lacan along with Derrida as founding fathers), "[w]ith the modern alchemists, the flesh is made word" (136). We have signification without referents, and -- as I suggest specifically of Butler's work in my first chapter here -- "genders without sexes" (143). Tracing the "contemporary fetishization of 'discourse'" specifically to Lacan's return to Freud, Marcia Ian argues similarly of

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Lacanian psychoanalysis that it has effected "the conflation of *soma* and *seme* typical of fetishism" (178). The materiality of language in contemporary thought has taken the place of the materiality of the body, as, in Freud's scene of fetishism, the boy mistakes his projection for the referential mother. Thus "[t]he body itself, reduced to being an idea -- and somebody else's idea at that -- joins the ranks of the unknowable" (185)

The importance of making transitions in our conceptual paradigms for thinking bodies simultaneously with attending to the transsexual subject becomes clear when we examine how transsexuals have been represented thus far. When the body is conceived as a discursive effect, a product of institutional power, the transsexual is read as either a literalization of discourse -- in particular the discourse of gender and sexuality -- or its deliteralization. In operation has been a binary pivoting on the literal: surely the most repudiated category in poststructuralism, whether in its association with the body, experience or language. When figured as literalizing gender and sexuality, the transsexual is condemned for reinscribing the primary categories of ontology and the natural that poststructuralism seeks to deconstruct. For if gender, like all identity, is not literal, transsexuality's mistake, according to the following recent readings, is in believing it so: "[T]ranssexualism literalizes the loss patriarchy tropes as woman" (Tyler, "The Supreme Sacrifice?" 163). "The transsexual may look like a woman but can never feel like or be a woman" (Grosz, Volatile Bodies 207). Transsexuals "*essentialize* their genitalia. 'The absolute insignia of maleness' [the penis] *is* for them the index of male identity" (Garber, Vested Interests 98; italics in original). "In their requirement of truth . . . transsexuals are the victims of error. They confuse the organ and the signifier" (Millot 143). "A word about transsexuality: it works to stabilize the old sex \ gender system by insisting on the

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dominant correspondence between gender desire and biological sex." (Reich 121). If the transsexual is conceived as literalizing in accounts which seek to deliteralize the body, it is not surprising that his / her experience has been deemed worth little more than "a word."

Yet, contrarily, poststructuralism has also located the transsexual on the other side of its literalism binary, reading him / her antithetically as deliteralizing the gendered body. "[W]hat is more *postmodern* than transsexualism?" ask Epstein and Straub (11; emphasis in original). Not only does their question as rhetorical require no answer, they assume that what is postmodern about transsexuality is self evident: a *petitio principi*. We are left to conclude that the surgical constructions of transition (again) promote the transsexual to representative postmodern constructed subject. Likewise for Judith Halberstam, the transsexual is the apogee of postmodern identity, transition -- paradoxically -- illustrating that the sex / gender system is a fiction: "There is no 'other' side, no 'opposite' sex, no natural divide to be spanned by surgery, by disguise, by passing" ("F2M" 212). And for Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, transsexuality creates sex as it should be in our postmodern age, sex free from the body -- "virtual sex": "sex [which] has fled its roots in the consanguinity of nature, refused its imprisonment in the phallocentric orbit of gender" (15). In these deliteralizing readings, the transsexual is full of postmodern liberatory promise, his / her very constructedness encapsulating the inessentiality and unnaturalness of the body. Juxtaposing both sets of readings, it becomes clear that neatly superimposed on the literalizing / deliteralizing binary is another binary, that of the reinscriptive versus the transgressive. The poststructuralist "fear of the literal"[4] (what we might term

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referential panic: the enormous pressure to disown, to abrogate, the referent) encodes all literalizing as hegemonic ("bad") and all deliteralizing as subversive ("good"). It's become a remarkably formulaic way of reading in a body of thought that purports to value multiplicity, difference, and the deconstruction of binaries.

Both of these binaries -- and in particular the way in which they shore up the "current thinking routines of 'theory'"-- come in for critique in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank's recent "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins" (511). This essay argues that structuring contemporary theory is a mechanical antiessentialism, operative especially in discourse on bodies. So foundational is this "reflexive" or "automatic antibiologism," so much are we accustomed to awarding value proportionately according to the "distance of any such account from a biological basis" that "'theory' has become almost simply coextensive with the claim (you can't say it often enough), *it's not natural"* (512, 513, 513; emphasis in original). What has become most routine in theory is the evaluation of all representations on the basis of whether they reveal ("good": antiessentialist) or conceal ("bad": essentialist) their constructedness. And, as all routines are restrictive, this practice limits the possible variety of interpretative frameworks: we are stuck with an "impoverishing reliance on a bipolar analytic framework that can call too adequately be summarized as 'kinda subversive, kinda hegemonic'" (500). The binary of textual effect (subversive / hegemonic) is calcified onto the binary of the subject's relations to referentiality (literalizing / deliteralizing).

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[4] I owe this turn of phrase to Professor Miller.

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Sedgwick and Frank's essay represents an extraordinary moment in poststructuralist theory. Admittedly, the polemic against trends that constitute theory is not new *per se*. Poststructuralist theory has produced focused self-reflexive critiques of its own routines (indeed, this self-reflexive self-subversion is characteristically poststructuralist), and the pervasive antiessentialism on which Sedgwick and Frank fix has been this type of work's most recurrent concern.[5] What is exceptional in Sedgwick and Frank is first, the enchanting and quite essentialist affectivity of their essay (an essay ostensibly on the subject of affect, the essentiality of which manifests itself in talk of the sheer joy of reading Silvan Tomkins's accounts of affect); and second, the essay's specific authorial circumstances. As Sedgwick's own work has been (as the essay acknowledges) significantly "responsible for [the] popularization [of theory's trends]," her critique of these trends marks a folding back of her thinking in on itself, a startling circumscription of its own former achievements (512 n. 14). For both these reasons, the effect of reading "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold" for those of us steeped in the practices of poststructuralist theory is precisely that of the *gestalt* Sedgwick and Frank wish it to be. And this is perhaps especially true for those of us working on the dissertation: for the dissertation, as Sedgwick and Frank remark, is the "rite of passage whose conventions can best dramatize the economy of transmission" that leads precisely to such institutional routinizing of critical practices (512 n.14). The dissertation functions in part as a sign that we recognize and can practice our discipline's "routines."

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If it is within these theory routines that the transsexual has been caught up and rigidly binarized, what conceptual transitions might we make in the attempt to put into practice a non-binarized method of reading the subject? It seems clear that it cannot be adequate to reduce the complex body of work -- sometimes essentialist and biologistic -- that transsexual autobiography represents to these two operative binaries: literal / deliteralizing; subversive / hegemonic. Yet, so thoroughly do these frameworks imbue our current critical methods, it is impossible simply to move "beyond" them. Sedgwick and Frank's essay suggests that, as we need to resist herding our readings into the enclosure of these binaries ("binary homogenization"), we also need to refrain from reading as if they didn't matter, as if they held no sway ("infinitizing trivialization") (512). Perhaps we might begin our conceptual transitions by rupturing the identity between the binaries, opening up a transitional space between them. This task is both required and enabled by transsexual autobiography as body narratives: texts which engage with the feelings of embodiment; representations of somatic materiality. Along the way, we will need to reevaluate the category of essentialism. To the extent that transsexual autobiography cannot be read without our accounting for the subjective experience of being transgendered, reading it in its specificity and difference necessitates our taking at every step what, along with other critics of theory's routines, Sedgwick and Frank term "the risk of essentialism" (513). That is, to the extent that they are written out of experience, the body, sex, feeling, belief in an immanent self, reading transsexual body narratives

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[5] See for instance Teresa de Lauretis, "The Essence of the Triangle or, Taking the Risk of Essentialism Seriously: Feminist Theory in Italy, the US., and Britain"; Diana Fuss, Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference.

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necessitates our depending on these categories that we have come to believe require deconstructing *a priori.* Transsexuality might then be valued for providing the recalcitrance of bodily matter -- what Sedgwick and Frank term the "inertial friction of a biologism" (512) -- that reopens the space between the strictures of binaries and the meaninglessness of infinity, the wedge that drives specificity back into our reading of texts. The transitions of transsexuality are densely layered, unpredictable, so that, indeed, "the changing, the becoming, must be cared for closely." And in the context of reading transsexual autobiography, the anxiety that transitions bring with them might well prove what is most constructive: the very breaking mechanism for slowing our critical trajectory to ensure that we read closely and articulate carefully.

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Chapter One

Judith Butler: Queer Feminism, Transgender, and the Transubstantiation of Sex

> There is little time for grief in the Phenomenology [of Spirit] because renewal is always close at hand. What seems like tragic blindness turns out to be more like the comic myopia of Mr. Magoo whose automobile careening through the neighbor's chicken coop always seems to land on all four wheels. Like such miraculously resilient characters of the Saturday morning cartoon, Hegel's protagonists always reassemble themselves, prepare a new scene, enter the stage armed with a new set of ontological insights -- and fail again. As readers, we have no other narrative option but to join in this bumpy ride . . .
>
> Judith Butler, Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France

i. Introduction: Transgender and the Queer Moment

> Queer is a continuing moment, movement, motive -- recurrent, eddying, troublant. The word "queer" itself means across -- it comes from the Indo-European root *-twerkw*, which also yields the German *quer* (transverse), Latin *torquere* (to twist), English athwart.
>
> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Tendencies

In its earliest formulations, in what are now considered its foundational texts, queer studies can be seen to have been crucially dependent on the figure of transgender. As one of its most visible means of institutionalization, queer represented itself as traversing, and mobilizing as it did so, methodologies (feminism, poststructuralism) and identities (women, heterosexuals) already, at least by comparison, in (institutionalized) place. Seized on as a definitively queer force that "troubled" the identity categories of gender, sex and sexuality -- or rather revealed them to be always-already fictional and precarious as discrete identities -- the trope of crossing was most often impacted with, if not explicitly illustrated by, the transgendered subject's crossing their several boundaries at once: both the boundaries between gender, sex and sexuality, and the boundary that structures each as a binary category.

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Even in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work which has argued most trenchantly for "a certain irreducibility" of sexuality to gender, and thus one might deduce would follow a certain irreducibility of *homo*sexuality to *trans*gender, homophobic constructions are understood to be produced by and productive of culturally normative gender identities and relations (Epistemology of the Closet 16). The implications of this include a thorough enmeshing of homosexual desire with transgender identification. In its larger theoretical claim that women in the nineteenth century functioned to mediate desire between men, circulating as objects of an exchange which effected the sublimation of homosexuality into homosociality, Sedgwick's (and arguably lesbian and gay studies') first book, Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire (1985), suggests that the production of normative heterosexuality depended on a degree of male identification -- and yet importantly, the disavowal of this identification -- with woman as the object of desire. At the beginnings of queer therefore, heterosexuality is shown to be constructed through the sublimation of a cross-gendered identification; and, for this reason, making visible this identification -- transgendered movement -- will become the key queer mechanism for heterosexuality's deconstruction.

Foregrounding the methodological role of transgender more explicitly, Epistemology of the Closet (1990) presents transgender as one good reason for the development of a theory of (homo)sexuality distinct from feminism, a theory this second book of Sedgwick's broke ground by invoking and evoking. Here, Sedgwick understands the critical visibility of transgender -- "the reclamation and relegitimation of a courageous history of lesbian trans-gender role-playing and identification" -- as posing a challenge to lesbianism's incorporation within feminism (and by feminism: for this inclusion in Sedgwick's view foreclosed a specifically antihomophobic critique) (37). By extension then, transgender makes possible the lesbian and gay overlap, the transgendered identification between, gay men and lesbians that forms the grounds for this theory of (homo)sexuality discrete from feminism. And it is this overlap or identification between

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gay men and lesbians, surely, which ushers in the queer moment. Transgender is conceived as one of the lesbian and gay features that exceeds feminism's purview of gender; paradoxically, trans*gender* demands and contributes to the basis for a new theory of *sexuality*.[1] Most recently, in her autobiographical narratives and performance pieces of Tendencies (1993) -- in particular, in the final three essays -- Sedgwick has revealed the personal transgendered identification with gay men lying at and as the heart of her queer project.[2] And the queer *frisson* of Tendencies derives explicitly and consistently from this identification across genders: a mobility "across gender lines, including the desires of men for women and of women for men," a transgendered traversal then, that in its queering (skewing and unraveling) apparently normative heterosexuality, is simultaneously a movement across sexualities (9).[3]

The transgendered subject haunts other foundational texts in lesbian and gay studies. In early work on the intersections of race, gender and sexual identities, Otherness was theorized as constructed through a racist, homophobic and sexist transgendering, and

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[1] "Along with this new historical making-visible of self-defined mannish lesbians came a new salience of the many ways in which male and female homosexual identities had in fact been constructed through and in relation to each other over the last century -- by the variously homophobic discourses of professional expertise [i.e. the transgendered paradigms of sexology's inversion], but also and just as actively by many lesbians and gay men. The irrepressible, relatively class-nonspecific popular culture in which James Dean has been as numinous an icon for lesbians as Garbo or Dietrich has for gay men seems resistant to a purely feminist theorization. *It is in these contexts that calls for a theorized axis of sexuality as distinct from gender have developed"* (37-38; my emphasis).

[2] I hope it apparent from this capsule history of Sedgwick's work that, unlike Judith Butler, I do not read Sedgwick's confession (here in "White Glasses") of her "identification? Dare I, after this half-decade, call it with all a fat *woman's* defiance, my identity? -- as a gay man" so much as contrasting with, as foregrounding the transgendered ambivalence already legible in, her earlier work (Tendencies 256. See Butler, "Against Proper Objects" 24, n. 8).

[3] Tendencies begins with the figure of transgender -- gay men wearing DYKE T-shirts and lesbians wearing FAGGOT T-shirts -- to capture the queer moment.

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this transgendering was also, again, the means to making explicit and challenging this Othering. Kobena Mercer's work (1986, 1989, 1991) on the fetishizing - feminizing white gaze of Robert Mapplethorpe at the black male body; Cherríe Moraga's description (1983) of the hermaphroditic convergence of the chingón and the chingada; Gloria Anzaldúa's memory (1987) of the mita' y mita' figure in the sexual, gender and geographic borderlands: these various cross-gendered figures emerged as both constructions and, in their articulation by these critics, deconstructions, of cultural ideologies which insist on absolute difference in all identity -- gender, race and sexuality. Other early lesbian and gay studies work invested wholeheartedly in the transgendered subject's "trans" a queer politics of transgression of normative gender and sexual identities. For Teresa de Lauretis (1988), Sue-Ellen Case (1989), Jonathan Dollimore (1991) and Marjorie Garber (1992), whether appearing in contemporary lesbian cinematic representations of butch-femme desire, theatrical cross-dressing in early modern England, or popular cultural gender-blending icons, the transgendered subject made visible a queerness that, to paraphrase Garber, threatened a crisis in (gender and sexual) identity categories. Crucial to the idealization of transgender as a transgressive force in this work is the consistent decoding of "trans" as incessant destabilizing movement between sexual and gender identities. In retrospect therefore, transgender *gender* appears as the most crucial sign of queer *sexuality's* aptly skewed point of entry into the academy.

The single text commonly held to have yoked transgender most fully to queer sexuality, credited with establishing transgender as the sign of queer theory, is Judith Butler's Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (1990). As it was subsequently taken up, Gender Trouble transformed transgender into a queer phenomenon, although these readings themselves amount to an intriguing critical phenomenon. For the embodied subject of transgender barely occupies the text of Gender Trouble (a book very much about all subjects' *failure* of embodiment after all). As Butler herself has since pointed out, "there were probably no more than five paragraphs in

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Gender Trouble devoted to drag [yet] readers have often cited the description of drag as if it were the 'example' which explains the meaning of [gender] performativity" ["Critically Queer" (24)]). In 1993, David Bergman claimed that one such passage, which does little more than suggest the subversive potentiality of queer transgendering in its re-citing apparently normative heterosexual gendering, "in a very short time has become one of the touchstones of gay and lesbian theory" (11):

> The replication of heterosexual constructs in non-heterosexual frames brings into relief the utterly constructed status of the so-called original. Thus gay is to straight *not* as copy is to original, but, rather, as copy is to copy. The parodic repetition of "the original," . . . reveals the original to be nothing other than a parody of the *idea* of the natural and the original. Even if heterosexist constructs circulate as the available sites of power/discourse from which to do gender at all, the question remains: What possibilities of recirculation exist? Which possibilities of doing gender repeat and displace through hyperbole, dissonance, internal confusion, and proliferation the very constructs by which they are mobilized? (Gender Trouble 31; emphasis in original)

Even though Butler later challenges the equation of transgender and homosexuality, or more precisely, the construction of transgender as the only sign of a deconstructive homosexuality ("cross-gendered identification is not the exemplary paradigm for thinking about homosexuality, although it may be one" [Critically Queer (25)]), in its reading, Gender Trouble has continued to be credited with and applauded for establishing transgender as a touchstone of lesbian and gay theory. This process has proven crucial to the book itself becoming one of queer theory's most canonical works -- a process I want to pursue discussing here for a moment

In the first essay appearing in the first edition of the first academic journal devoted to lesbian and gay studies, glq: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, itself a canonical text in, and a tool for further institutionalizing, queer studies, Sedgwick comments on and reinforces Gender Trouble's canonical status in queer studies: "Anyone who was at the 1991 Rutgers conference on Gay and Lesbian Studies [yet another canonizing

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mechanism], and heard Gender Trouble appealed to in paper after paper, couldn't help being awed by the productive impact this dense and even imposing work has had on the recent development of queer theory and reading" (1). Surmising that these invocations were not indicative of an uncomplicated loyalty to Gender Trouble, Sedgwick goes on: "Inevitably, as any theory of cultural consumption would suggest, the citation, the *use* of Butler's formulations in the context of queer theory will prove to have been highly active and tendentious" (1). That Gender Trouble was subject to a set of reiterations and recitations proliferating meanings beyond any "original," might be considered particularly apt given its own leanings toward Foucauldian proliferation as the effective means for denaturalizing copies that pretend to originality. It is perhaps this very amenability toward such recitations that is the key reason for Gender Trouble's place at the center of the queer canon. For there's something very campy, and thus very definitively queer, about this tendency toward readings that refused to adhere to the letter of Butler's argument; as in any camp syntax, what is referred to underwent a certain overreading, playful exaggeration, a mischievous adding of emphasis, yet nevertheless remained a discernible referent. In his introduction to his edition of one of the two most recent anthologies on camp, Bergman suggests that Butler is "the person who has done the most to revise the academic standing of camp and to suggest its politically subversive potential," staking that her success in queer studies comes in part from bringing to camp a high theoretical tone, and by the same token we might add, from bringing camp to high theory (11). Pushing further on the imbrication of camp, queer and the argument of Gender Trouble, it might be said that Butler's centrality in queer theory is in part an effect of queer's recuperation of camp, and queer's recuperation *through* camp. The late eighties - early nineties, simultaneous with the beginnings of queer theory, saw the cultural and political reappropriation of camp, and the history of the term "queer" is symptomatic of this. From homophobic epithet designating and reinforcing the other's social abjection, to (now) self-declared maker of community pride, queer was reclaimed precisely according to the

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transformative mechanisms of camp, in which what has been devalued in the original becomes precisely that which is subject to overvaluation in the repetition.

The simultaneity of queer theory with this reevaluation of camp was not by chance, for camp has proven a key strategy for queer theory's institutionalization: a means by which to piggyback into the academy on, appropriating and redefining at the same time, already established methodologies. Between Men, for instance, deployed a distinctive camp style in subjecting canonical nineteenth-century literature to deliberate yet wonderfully subtle overreadings, making apparent its sexual subtexts. In its academic manifestation, camp actually comes to appear as a form of queer deconstruction, not simply inverting the opposition between the original and the copy, the referent and the repetition, but creating, according to Scott Long, a third space, "a stance, detached, calm, and free, from which the opposition as a whole and its attendant terms can be perceived and judged" (79). This inversion of the expected order of terms to elucidate the construction of the original forms, surely, the very pith of Gender Trouble: the subject does not precede but is an effect of the law; heterosexuality does not precede but is an effect of the prohibition on homosexuality; sex does not precede but is an effect of the cultural construction of gender. Butler's argument consistently reverses expected chronology between the two terms in each formulation to bring them into a third space -- that of theory -- where each opposition as a whole can be perceived and judged. The binaries of sexual difference that undergird what Butler terms "the metaphysics of sex" are fragmented and mobilized with a Derridean flourish into the play of sexual différance, and, in this sense, the driving dynamic of Gender Trouble is arguably a camp one.

Although the embodied transgendered subject doesn't occupy Gender Trouble in any substantial present way then, this camp reversal of terms (between heterosexuality and homosexuality, between gender and sex, between "culture" and "nature") conveys the sense that the transgendered subject of drag is always in the margins of Butler's argument, ironically (given Butler's perception of camp-drag's function of displacing the referent),

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the implicit referent. For the transgendered subject has surely been anointed as the *personification* of queer camp -- the third / intermediate term that reveals the constructedness of the binary of sex, of gender, and of the sex / gender system. "Critically Queer"'s reading of Gender Trouble's reception is thus absolutely right. Transgendered subjects, butches and drag queens, *did* come to appear the empirical examples of the theory of gender performativity, their crossing illustrating both the inessentiality of sex and the non-originality of heterosexuality. There are certainly moments in Gender Trouble which enable this understanding. For instance: "*In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself -- as well as its contingency*" (Gender Trouble 137; emphasis in original). In this sentence, transgender's function is unambivalently that of the elucidating example of gender performativity.

For two interconnected reasons, therefore, Butler's work is the place for a dissertation on any aspect of transgender to begin: a) because her theory at key points rests on and itself enables transgendered possibility; and b) because her writings have changed the way in which the network of relations between sex, gender, homosexuality, and heterosexuality are now configured, relations which must be addressed in thinking the transgendered subject. Indeed, as transgender studies makes its entry into the academy in the mid-nineties, that the figure at the center of so many of its first projects is the "gender troubler" -- the transgenderist (the third camp term) whose crossing lays bare and disrupts the binaries that found identities -- is largely attributable to Butler's work. S/he threads through Richard Ekins and Dave King's anthology, Blending Genders: Social Aspects of Cross-dressing and Sex-Changing (1996), which the editors declare the "first reader in a new field of [transgender] studies" (1).[4]

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[4]Other signs of the establishment of transgender studies as a field include: the first transgender studies conference in planning for 1997 by the Transgender Academic Network; and the appearance of transgender in the title of the recently-founded journal "The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Studies Journal."

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This chapter seeks to assess the value of Butler's theory for a project on transsexual subjectivity. I trace the importance of the figure of transgender through Butler's theory of gender performativity. Because transsexuality necessitates a consideration of the materiality of sex and the body, I pay particular attention to what I take to be one of the real achievements of Gender Trouble, the detailed account through its rereading of various psychoanalytic texts in its second chapter of the construction of sex. I go on to examine Butler's reading in Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex" of a transsexual subject, Venus Xtravaganza, to assess not how Butler applies the former theory to this specific body, but rather how she uses the specificity of Venus's body to clarify and in effect revise the key premises of Gender Trouble. My contention is that Butler's reading of the transsexual body reveals some of the problems with her theory, at least in its application to transsexuality. Her writing on Venus also suggests the limited usefulness of queer paradigms for reading transsexual embodiment, the points at which transsexuality diverges from queerness. Finally, I address Butler's most recent formulations in "Against Proper Objects" on the methodological borders of her work -- or rather the refusal of methodological borders. Terming her work "queer feminism," I consider how its ideas about what constitutes a methodological domain in feminist, queer and gender studies has made possible new ones -- such as transgender-transsexual studies to which this dissertation is one contribution. Without doubt, Butler's work has proven enormously important, and in the context of this dissertation anyway, as much for its inevitable limits as for its elasticity.[5]

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[5] Butler is apparently a good deal more troubled by what she understands as the "domestication" of her work than she is by its generative proliferation in multiple contexts. On the domestication of Gender Trouble and on her own domestication as token academic lesbian, see her interview with Kotz, in particular 85-86. Contrast with her explicit calling for her work to be appropriated and "expropriated," "provocations for further contestation," see the endings of Gender Trouble (148-149), Bodies That Matter (241-242), and "Against Proper Objects" (21-22) (citations, Bodies That Matter 242, and

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ii. Queer Gender and Performativity

> To realize the difference of the sexes is to put an end to play
> Jacques Lacan and Wladimir Granoff, "Fetishism: The Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real"

Even though it is articulated only in the last of four sections in the final chapter ("Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions"), that is in less than one-twelfth of the book, it is the account of gender performativity which is most often remembered as the thrust of Gender Trouble. Sedgwick illustrates: "Probably the centerpiece of Butler's recent work has been a series of demonstrations that gender can best be discussed as a form of performativity" ("Queer Performativity" 1).[6] More intriguing than the disproportionate emphasis accorded the final section of Gender Trouble in general remembrance, however, is the way in which *gender* performativity has become so coextensive with *queer* performativity as to render them interchangeable. Sedgwick, again, exemplifies the way in which "gender" has slipped rapidly into "queer." "Queer Performativity" (the title of her essay on James), she writes, is "made necessary" by Butler's work in and since Gender Trouble ("Queer Performativity" 1); and in Tendencies, Sedgwick assigns Butler "and her important book" Gender Trouble a representative function, "stand[ing] in for a lot of the rest of us" working on queer performativity (11). How does this slippage from gender to queer in discussion of performativity come about and how does Gender Trouble come to represent it?

While Gender Trouble argues that *all* gender is performative -- that "man" and woman" are not expressions of prior internal essences but constituted, to paraphrase

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"Against Proper Objects" 21). I discuss Butler's anxieties about methodological domestication at the end of this chapter.

[6] In addition to Gender Trouble, Sedgwick's bibliography cites Butler's "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory."

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Butler, through the repetition of culturally intelligible stylized acts -- Gender Trouble presents the transgendered subject as the concrete example which "brings into relief" this performativity of gender. In retrospect, we can note that, in concretizing gender performativity with transgender, Gender Trouble inadvertently made possible two readings that Butler later returns to refute: 1) that what was meant by gender performativity was gender theatricality; and 2) that all transgender is queer is (syllogistically) subversive. The first assumption, that gender performativity means acting out one's gender as if gender were a theatrical role that could be chosen, led to the belief that Butler's theory of gender was both radically voluntarist and anti-materialist: that its argument was that gender, like a set of clothes in a drag act, could be donned and doffed at will, that gender *is* drag. In this reading, Gender Trouble was both embraced and critiqued.[7] In fact, Butler's notion of performativity is derived not from a Goffman-esque understanding of identity as role, but from Austinian speech-act theory, crucially informed by Derrida's deconstruction of speech act theory.[8] In order to clarify this speech-act sense of performativity, in Bodies That Matter Butler emphasizes gender's citationality, and to some extent, the later term, citationality, comes to displace the former, performativity. Like a law that requires citing to be effective, sex comes into effect through our citing it, and, as with a law, through our

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[7] For a critique, see Di Stefano who reads Gender Trouble as a "theoretical turn [. . .] against gender"; for an embrace, see Halberstam, "F2M: The Making of Female Masculinity." Halberstam's essay cites Butler only once, but it is clear that this reading of Gender Trouble's performativity undergirds its argument. See my discussion in chapter 5. Even before Gender Trouble, however, Butler had refuted any conceptualization of gender as something that could be chosen at will: see "Variations on Sex and Gender: Beauvoir, Wittig and Foucault."

[8] Not cited in Gender Trouble but implicit throughout in its insistence on the cruciality of repetition as destabilizing is Derrida's reading of J. L. Austin and John Searle in Limited Inc. Bodies That Matter wastes little time before citing this text (see p.13). Biddy Martin has also noted the importance of speech act theory, although not of the Derridean deconstruction of it, to both Butler's and Sedgwick's theory of performativity: see her "Sexualities Without Genders and Other Queer Utopias" p.111.

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compulsion to cite it. Butler's refiguring of sex as citational law is designed to derail the understanding of gender as "free" theatricality and clarify how gender is compelled through symbolic prohibitions. The shift in terms in the books' titles, from *"Gender* Trouble" to the "Discursive Limits of *Sex"* runs as parallel attempt to account for gender's materiality, its non-superficiality, and at the same time to foreground the "limits" of the "trouble" subjects can effect to its constitutive prohibitions.

It is, however, the second assumption drawn from Gender Trouble's illustration of gender performativity with transgender that concerns me most -- the assumption that transgender is queer is subversive -- for it is this syllogism which enables Sedgwick to make that slide from gender performativity to queer performativity, and which effectively encodes transgendered subjectivity as archetypically queer and subversive. It should be understood that, although it never makes such an argument, Gender Trouble sets up the conditions for this syllogism of transgender = gender performativity = queer = subversive. We can begin to illustrate the first part of this, the equation of transgender with gender performativity, by examining Butler's reading of Beauvoir's "[o]ne is not born a woman, but rather becomes one." In Butler's reformulation of Beauvoir's famed epigram on the construction of gender nearly half a century later, it is through the suggestion of a possible transgendering that gender appears not simply constructed but radically contingent on the body: "Beauvoir is clear that one 'becomes' a woman, but always under a cultural compulsion to become one. And clearly, the compulsion does not come from 'sex.' *There is nothing in her account that guarantees that the 'one' who becomes a woman is necessarily female*" (8; my emphasis). And again: "Beauvoir's theory implied seemingly radical consequences, ones that she herself did not entertain. For instance, if sex and gender are radically distinct, then it does not follow that to be a given sex is to become a given gender; in other words, *'woman' need not be the cultural construction of the female body, and 'man' need not interpret male bodies*" (112; my emphasis). In both citations, Butler's suggestion of a possible transgendered becoming (that men may not be males and

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women may not be females) not only opens up a conceptual space between gender and sex and leaves sex dispensable to the process of gendering, but suggests that gender is not a teleological narrative of ontology at all, with the sexed body (female) as recognizable beginning and gender identity (woman) as clear-cut ending. In Butler's account, transgender demotes gender from narrative to performative. That is, gender appears not as end of narrative becoming but performative moments all along a process: repetitious, recursive, disordered, incessant, above all, unpredictable. "It is, for [Butler's version of] Beauvoir, never possible finally to become a woman, as if there were a *telos* that governs the process of acculturation and construction. Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (33).[9]

How does transgender = gender performativity acquire the additional equivalencies of queer and subversion? In "Critically Queer," Butler underscores the non-identity of transgender and homosexuality, stating that "not only are a vast number of drag performers straight, but it would be a mistake to think that homosexuality is best explained through the performativity that is drag" (25). That she must do so, however, is precisely because Gender Trouble consistently produces an implicit equivalence between transgender and homosexuality, so that transgender appears as the sign of homosexuality, homosexuality's definitive *gender* style; in one claim key to this imbrication between transgender and homosexuality, "parodic and subversive convergences" are said to "*characterize* gay and lesbian cultures" (Gender Trouble 66; my emphasis). Transgender is encoded as homosexual gender difference, a kind of archetypal queer gender. This harnessing of transgender as queer, *which is the queering of homosexuality through transgender*, is the symptom of queer studies that this dissertation will go on to challenge.

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[9] For Butler's genealogy of Beauvoir's understanding of becoming to Sartre and Hegel, see Butler, "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's Second Sex."

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Where "straight" gender occults its own performativity according to a metaphysics of substance, queer transgender reveals ("brings into relief") the performativity of all gender. Transgender "dramatizes" the process of signification by which all gendered embodiment "create[s] the effect of the natural" or real; drag's imitative workings parallel the imitative workings that structure straight genders, for all "gender is a kind of persistent impersonation that passes as the real" (x). The metaphysics of substance undergirds the naturalization of sex and of heterosexuality. What Butler terms the "heterosexual matrix," building in particular on Monique Wittig's analyses of the straight mind's naturalization of a dimorphous gender system, sustains heterosexuality as natural and naturalizes gender as sex. The naturalizing mechanism works both ways, shoring up the apparent naturalness of both sex-gender and heterosexual desire. The claim to "be" a man or a woman is made possible by the binary and oppositional positioning of these terms within heterosexuality. Sex, gender and desire are unified through the representation of heterosexuality as primary and foundational. Female, femininity and woman appear as stable and conjoined terms through their opposition with male, masculinity and man. Gender, in other words, appears as *identity*. What stabilizes the association and keeps the two sets discrete and antithetical is the apparent naturalness of heterosexual desire.

Queer transgender's function can be summarized as twofold: to parallel the process by which heterosexuality reproduces (and reproduces itself through) binarized gender identities; and at the same time to contrast with heterosexuality's naturalization of this process. For whereas the constructedness of straight gender is obscured by the veil of naturalization, queer transgender reveals, indeed, explicitly performs, its constructedness. In other words, queer transgender serves as heterosexual gender's subversive foil. In the scheme of Gender Trouble then, heterosexual gender is assigned as ground, queer transgender as figure, dramatizing or metaphorizing the workings of heterosexuality's construction. Even in "Critically Queer," in the same paragraph that apparently seeks to disentangle homosexuality and transgender, Butler writes that drag "exposes or

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allegorizes the process by which heterosexualized genders form themselves" (25; my emphasis). Queer transgender is allegory to heterosexual gender's referentiality or literality.

Biddy Martin has described her anxiety in response to Butler's and Sedgwick's work over this tendency of "antifoundationalist celebrations of queerness" to represent queer sexualities as "figural, performative, playful, and fun" ("Sexualities Without Genders and Other Queer Utopias" 104). Martin's anxiety specifically concerns the way in which feminism, gender and by extension, the female body, are stabilized in this dynamic, projected by queerness as "fixity, constraint, or subjection . . . a fixed ground" ("Sexualities Without Genders and Other Queer Utopias" 104). While agreeing with Martin that the category of woman is often subject to a degree of *a priori* stabilization in the very writings that call for its destabilization and proliferation, my concerns, for the following reasons, are particularly with the effective appropriation of transgender by queer. In the first instance, transgendered subjectivity is not inevitably queer. That is, by no means are all transgendered subjects homosexual. Queer transgender illustrates a certain collapsing of gender back into sexuality that is a tendency of queer studies, what is, as Martin suggests, the queering of gender through sexuality (and I would add of sexuality through gender). And more crucially in the context of a discussion of how gender and sexual subjects have been taken up in theoretical paradigms, by no means are transgendered subjects necessarily queer even in the sense that queer has come to signify in queer studies, that is, not as homosexual *stricto sensu* but as a figure for the performative, subversive, signifier displacing referent. Butler's reading of Venus Xtravaganza in Bodies That Matter stands as an attempt to demonstrate just this: the way in which not every gender-crossing is queerly subversive. Yet it should be pointed out again that the fact that she later returns to the association between transgender, queer and subversion in order to disentangle them, is due precisely to their prior entanglement in Gender Trouble.

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In the second instance, queer's arrogation of transgender abandons to non-transgendered subjects (according to this binary schema, straight subjects), the ground that transgender would appear to *only* figure; this "ground" is the apparent naturalness of sex. If transgender figures gender performativity, non-transgender or straight gender is assigned (to work within Butler's own framework of speech-act theory) the category of the constative. Although within this framework this assignment is indicative of the devaluation of straight gender, and conversely queer's alignment of itself with transgender gender performativity represents queer's sense of its own "higher purpose," in fact there are transgendered trajectories, in particular *transsexual* trajectories, that seek very pointedly to be non-performative, to be constative, quite simply, to *be*. What gets dropped from transgender in its queer deployment to signify subversive gender performativity is the matter that often most concerns the transsexual: the *narrative* of becoming a real man or a real woman (as opposed to the performative of effecting one), in brief and simple the materiality of the sexed body. In the context of the transsexual trajectory, Beauvoir's epigram can be read quite differently as describing, not a generic notion of gender's radical performativity, but the specific narrative of (in this case) the male-to-female transsexual's struggle toward sexed embodiment. One is not born a woman, but *nevertheless* may become one, given substantial medical intervention, personal tenacity, economic security, social support, and so on. In its representation of sex as a figurative effect of straight gender's constative performance, Gender Trouble cannot account for the transsexual desire for sexed embodiment as *telos*. Yet it also prompts readings of transsexual subjects whose bodily trajectories might exceed the framework of the theory of gender performativity and highlight its limitations.

If Gender Trouble enables the syllogism transgender = gender performativity = queer = subversive, it stabilizes this syllogism through suggesting as constant its antithesis: non-transgender = gender constativity = straight = naturalizing. The binary opposition between these syllogisms proliferates a number of mutually sustaining binary oppositions

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between Gender Trouble's conceptual categories: queer versus straight; subversive versus naturalizing; performativity versus constativity; gender versus sex. The first term in each opposition is ascribed a degree of generativity that puts in question the primacy of the second. The value of this intervention lies in our recognition that it is the second term customarily awarded primacy and autonomy from the first.

Because it constitutes the focal point of the transsexual trajectory, however, it is the matter of sex that is of most interest to me, not simply in its conceptually associative opposition to transgendered subjects in Gender Trouble but as a conceptual category in itself. Transgender certainly allows Butler to displace an expressivist model of gender where gender is the cultural expression or interpretation of sex (consolidated as bedrock) with a performative model where sex can "be shown to have been gender all along" (8). But Gender Trouble's most thorough accounting for sex as discursive effect appears in the discussion of melancholia in the second chapter, "Prohibition, Psychoanalysis, and the Production of the Heterosexual Matrix." In her chapter, the transgendered subject is not marshaled to exemplify the theory. Yet, as we shall see, the figure of transgender certainly haunts the analyses, and the particular conceptualization of sex as "gender all along" certainly has significant implications for any theory of transgendered subjectivity.

iii. Heterosexual Melancholia and the Encrypting of Sex

> To recast the referent as the signified . . .
> Judith Butler, "Contingent Foundations"

Butler has suggested that it was the tendency to skip over this chapter that led to the conventional (mis)reading of Gender Trouble as about drag and promoting a "free play" model of gender (Kotz 89). On two occasions she has stated that this tendency is enabled by the book's structure, by too great a thematic break between the discussion of drag and the discussion of melancholia: "The problem is that I didn't bring forward the psychoanalytic material into the discussion of performativity well enough" (Kotz 89);

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"[W]hat I failed to do is to refer the theatricality of drag back to the psychoanalytic discussions that preceded it, for psychoanalysis insists that the opacity of the unconscious sets limits to the exteriorization of the psyche" ("Critically Queer" 24). Even without Butler's underscoring its importance, it is difficult not to conclude that, in its thorough accounting for the construction of sex via a thorough accounting of the construction of heterosexuality, this second chapter represents the primary achievement of Gender Trouble. While the construction of gender and sexuality is often asserted in poststructuralist theory, this chapter details how the process of construction takes place through the categories of culture, the psyche and body, setting up a complex and brilliant exchange between their domains and, by extension, structuralist and psychoanalytic theory. The analyses stem from these difficult questions: If sex is "gender all along," not a prior ontological substance that gender interprets but rather gender in masquerade, how is it that gender comes to pass so effectively as sex? How does sex appear as biological bedrock, and gender as its *a posteriori* cultural interpretation?

The deft interlocking of theoretical paradigms, namely, Lévi-Strauss, Lacan (and to a lesser extent, Rivière) and Freud gives to Butler's answering of these questions a comprehensive and authoritative feel. Her beginning premise, undergirding the work of Lévi-Strauss, Lacan and Freud -- and of course Foucault -- is the productivity of cultural prohibitions. Where psychoanalysis and structuralism both posit incest as the prohibition that produces heterosexuality, Butler argues that the incest taboo is preceded by the taboo on homosexuality, for it is this which inaugurates the positive Oedipus Complex, that is, the incestuous desires in the first place. The child's compliance with the taboo on homosexuality ensures that his / her object-cathexis is directed toward the opposite-sexed parent. In a move designed to refute the primacy of heterosexuality over homosexuality, Butler asks: What then is the productive effect on heterosexuality of the prohibition of homosexuality? What happens to the once-desired, now-outlawed homosexual love object? Where within the subject does this object-cathexis go?

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Via Lacan, Butler asserts that the lost object is incorporated through a melancholic strategy of masquerade crucial to the production of sexual difference. In "The Meaning of the Phallus," women appear to be the phallus through a masquerade effected by a melancholic incorporation. Incorporated are the "attributes of the object/Other that is lost," and significantly for Butler, Lacan exemplifies the lost object with a female homosexual cathexis (Gender Trouble 48). The lost object, in particular "the signification of the body in the mold of the Other who has been refused," is incorporated as a mask via "melancholic identification" (50). Lacan's account enables Butler to locate "the process of gender incorporation within the wider orbit of melancholy" and to suggest that the unresolved homosexual cathexes outlawed by the taboo on homosexuality effect the production of heterosexually-invested genders (50): symbolic sexual difference. From Lacan, Rivière's famous refusal of the distinction between the masquerade of femininity and "genuine womanliness" (and Stephen Heath's elaboration of this assertion) allows Butler to consider the mask not as concealing an interior authentic gender essence but as instead that which masquerades as this essence; the mask itself constitutes gender (Rivière 38; Gender Trouble 53).

So far in Butler's chapter, the argument has stayed within the bounds of the construction of gender. Butler begins to account for the construction of sex, that is how sex is "gender all along," by turning to Freud's writings on melancholia and incorporation ("Mourning and Melancholia" and The Ego and the Id, particularly its chapter, "The Ego and the Super-Ego (Ego Ideal)", and by layering over these two other sets of psychoanalytic texts: Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's work on mourning, melancholia and the processes of introjection and incorporation; and Roy Schafer's descriptions of psychic internalization and the psychoanalytic language of internalization. My questions here -- first, what happens to the matter of sex in Gender Trouble, and second, what are its implications for the subject of transsexuality -- can be addressed by our careful retracing and elaboration of Butler's steps through these texts.

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In his 1917 "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud's concern is to distinguish between these two psychic states. To summarize Freud's key distinctions: Mourning is a normal reaction of grief for the death of a loved object, finite because it is eventually resolved, and always has resolution as its goal. Melancholia, on the other hand, does not require the object to have died in order to take hold. The object might simply have been lost (through love, say), yet this object-loss remains opaque to consciousness. Unlike the subject in mourning, the melancholic does not know for what he grieves. Moreover, the aim of melancholia is not to resolve the loss but to preserve it or encrypt it. The melancholic preserves his object-loss by incorporating the object as an identification, regressing to an oral phase where object-cathexis and identification are confused. In The Ego and the Id (1923), Freud discards the opposition between mourning and melancholia, suggesting that identification with lost loves which had been distinct to melancholia in the earlier essay should now be reconceived as part of the process of mourning. He depathologizes melancholia, arguing that its dynamic of substituting an object-cathexis for an identification is central to the formation of the ego. In fact, "it may be the sole condition under which the id can give up its objects" (24).[10] In particular, the dynamics of substitution and incorporation should be understood to produce normative, that is non-pathological, gendering; they function to resolve the object-cathexes of the Oedipus Complex and to consolidate gender positioning. Significantly, Freud's example of how identification through incorporation functions to consolidate gender is one of a moment of

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[10] "At this point we must widen our range a little. We succeeded in explaining the painful disorder of melancholia [in 1917] by supposing that (in those suffering from it -- Strachey's note) an object which was lost has been set up again inside the ego -- that is, that an object-cathexis has been replaced by an identification. At that time, however, we did not appreciate the full significance of this process and did not know how common and how typical it is. Since then we have come to understand that this kind of substitution has a great share in determining the form taken by the ego and that it makes an essential contribution towards building up what is called its 'character'" (The Ego and the Id 23).

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transgendered identification: "Analysis very often shows that a little girl, after she has had to relinquish her father as a love-object, will bring her masculinity into prominence and identify herself with her father (that is, with the object which has been lost), instead of with the mother" (28).

Freud's generalization of the dynamics of melancholia, his understanding of their role in gendering (through transgendering), allows Butler to select melancholia as the response to the taboo on homosexuality in generating normative (that is heterosexual) gender positions. Heterosexuality is ensured by the cultural prohibition on homosexuality, but the once-loved homosexual object must be processed. Because of the cultural prohibition on homosexuality, because of the cultural unnameability of homosexuality, the lost homosexual love object (always already lost in the sense that it is forbidden) cannot be mourned, that is, articulated or named. The taboo on homosexuality effects a denial of its desired status so grief over the loss is instead turned back in on itself in an unarticulated and unconscious melancholia. At this point, Butler enlists Abraham and Torok's description of mourning and melancholia as characterized by antithetical dynamics of internalization; where mourning introjects the lost object, melancholia incorporates it. Introjection, Abraham and Torok argue, clearly developing Freud's 1917 understanding of mourning as a consciousness of loss, works on a recognition or consciousness of the absence of the object. The void left by the loss of the object is not so much "filled" by articulation of the loss, that is, language, as it makes possible language, that is, the expression of loss. The original loss (the loss of the breast) is resolved through the child's cry. The loss of the real object is thus displaced into language or metaphorized; the mouth emptied of the breast makes possible the mouth filled with words.[11] Melancholia, on the

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[11] "First the empty mouth, then the absence of objects become words, and finally experiences with words themselves are converted into other words. Thus the original oral void will have found a remedy for all its wants through their conversion in linguistic intercourse with the speaking community. To introject a wish, a grief, or a situation is to

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other hand, sets in motion a fantasy of incorporation. As a means of denying the loss, the subject imagines or fantasizes taking in the object. When the loss cannot be acknowledged and articulated via mourning, the subject imagines literally "swallowing" the object, a melancholic fantasy of literalization. As a refusal to displace loss into language, incorporation, Abraham and Torok argue, is fundamentally antimetaphoric. In this sense, incorporation is a magical resolution of loss; the loss is actually not resolved at all, remaining unacknowledged and unspoken. As prohibited desire which thus cannot be mourned, Butler uses Abraham and Torok to suggest, the lost homosexual cathexis is incorporated (rather than introjected) as prohibited identification.

But if this identification is incorporated, where exactly is it incorporated? "If the identifications sustained through melancholy are 'incorporated,' then the question remains: Where is this incorporated space? If it is not literally within the body, perhaps it is *on* the body as its surface signification such that the body must itself be understood *as* an incorporated space" (Gender Trouble 67; emphasis in original). Having established that melancholia is one psychic effect of the prohibition on homosexuality in the production of heterosexual identity, this is Butler's most engaging proposal. Melancholia for the lost homosexual love-object literalizes sex on the (heterosexual) body. Through Freud and Abraham and Torok, the incorporation which does the work of melancholia appears as an antimetaphorical activity "precisely because it maintains the loss as radically unnamable. In other words, incorporation is not only a failure to name or avow the loss, but erodes the conditions of metaphorical signification itself" (Gender Trouble 68). Incorporation enacts a literalization of the loss. "As an antimetaphorical activity, incorporation *literalizes* the loss *on* or *in* the body and so appears as the facticity of the body, the means

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dispose of it through language in a communion of empty mouths. Thus food absorption, in the literal sense, becomes introjection in the figurative sense" (Abraham and Torok 6).

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by which the body comes to bear 'sex' as its literal truth" (Gender Trouble 68; emphasis in original).

This interchangeability between "on" and "in" ("*on* or *in*") in the previous citation, between, in other words, the surface of the body and its interiority, is pivotal to Butler's description of sexing as a fantasy of incorporation, and to her figuring of the body *as* a psychically-"incorporated space." In Abraham and Torok, the literalizing dynamic of incorporation is crucially a *fantasy* of literalization. For nothing is ever literally taken in this process of incorporation. Rather, as a means of denying its absence, the subject fantasizes "swallowing" his loss. Corporeal interiority, in this case the notion that the body has a sex, is thus indexical of the literalizing fantasy of heterosexual melancholia, its incorporative response to the prohibition of homosexuality. It is only via this fantasy of literalization that the body comes "to bear a sex" as literal truth, that gender gets inscribed on the body as sex and sex appears as the literal embodiment of gender:

> The conflation of desire with the real -- that is, the belief that it is the parts of the body, the 'literal" penis, the "literal" vagina, which cause pleasure and desire -- is precisely the kind of literalizing fantasy characteristic of the syndrome of melancholic heterosexuality. The disavowed homosexuality at the base of melancholic heterosexuality reemerges as the self-evident anatomical facticity of sex, where "sex" designates the blurred unity of anatomy, "natural identity, " and "natural desire." The loss is denied and incorporated, and the genealogy of that transmutation fully forgotten and repressed. The sexed surface of the body thus emerges as the necessary sign of a natural(ized) identity and desire. The loss of homosexuality is refused and the love sustained or encrypted in the parts of the body itself, literalized in the ostensible anatomical facticity of sex. Here we see the general strategy of literalization as a form of forgetfulness, which, in the case of a literalized sexual anatomy, "forgets" the imaginary and, with it, an imaginable homosexuality. (Gender Trouble 71)

The denied homosexual love is thus incorporated as the "surface" of the body that yet masquerades as interior literal sex. Heterosexuals who believe that their penises and vaginas are the "cause" of their pleasure or desire, literalize them and "forget" an/other

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body: both the (once-loved) homosexual body, the body of the other, and their own imaginary or phantasmatic body (for there is an implicit binding of the homosexual to the imaginary).

Because she grounds it on a misrecognition, a mistaking of the signifier of gender for the referent of sex, of the metaphorical for the literal, Butler's description of heterosexual sexing through melancholia inevitably raises mind-boggling questions about what (non-erroneous) recognition might entail. What imaginary body (parts or surfaces) does the heterosexual male who literalizes his penis forget? Is the forgotten imaginary necessarily other than what masquerades as the real? Does this body correspond to a gendered one? Are the imaginary and the phantasmatic already gendered? Later in Gender Trouble, in "The Body Politics of Julia Kristeva," Butler critiques Kristeva's premise of a pre-Symbolic body, one situated in the murky maternal space of the semiotic before the paternal law. Butler reverses Kristeva's temporality, positioning the semiotic or the imaginary as an effect of the Symbolic, the (zone of) prohibition again productive of (the zone of) the prediscursive Kristeva conceives as primary. As this later section of Gender Trouble suggests that no imaginary body can signify outside of gender then, it would follow that the imaginary body is already gendered -- a notion which has crucial implications for the theory of transsexual embodiment I outline in chapter 3. Indeed, Butler asserts as much in figuring the imaginary or fantasized body as "an altered bodily ego . . . within the gendered rules of the imaginary" (Gender Trouble 71). In literalizing his penis, then, might the straight man be said to forget an imaginary or fantasized vagina? Does he also forget to literalize (invest sex in) body parts which he might be said to already "have" (more than he can be said to "have" a vagina) -- feet for instance? And how are *these* parts gendered in the imaginary? What exactly *are* the "gendered rules" of the imaginary? The question of the precise relations between actual heterosexual subjects and the theory of heterosexual melancholia is prompted by, though not addressed in, Butler's description.

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Butler's harnessing psychoanalytic discussions of melancholia and incorporation to the processes of gendering has two interdependent effects significant for this project on transsexuality: 1) it refigures sex from material corporeality into phantasized surface; and 2) it reinscribes the opposition between queer and heterosexual already at work in Gender Trouble, sustaining it by once again enlisting the transgender as queer.

First, Butler's deliteralization of sex depends upon her conceiving the body as the psychic projection of a surface. This conceptualization derives from a rather eclectic reading of Freud's description of the bodily ego in The Ego and the Id, Butler's citation from which I here restore to its original context:

> A person's own body, and above all its surface, is a place from which both external and internal perceptions may spring. It is *seen* like any other object, but to the *touch*, it yields two kinds of sensations, one of which may be equivalent to an internal perception. Psycho-physiology has fully discussed the manner in which a person's own body attains its special position among other objects in the world of perception. Pain, too, seems to play a part in the process, and the way in which we gain new knowledge of our organs during painful illnesses is perhaps a model of the way by which in general we arrive at the idea of our body.
>
> The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface. (The Ego and the Id 19-20; emphasis in original)

In the apparent periphery of a footnote, Gender Trouble cites Freud's assertion, "the ego is first and foremost a bodily ego." But then, in a substitution crucially significant to her conceptualization of the body as the psychic projection of a surface, Butler replaces the referent "it" in the subsequent part of the cited sentence, *which in Freud clearly refers back to the ego-as-bodily-ego*, with a (square bracketed, demoted -- in my citation of Butler's note -- to parenthetical) "body": "Freud continues the above sentence: '*(the body)* is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface'" (Gender Trouble 163 n.43; my emphasis). Butler's reading of Freud's assertion figures the body as interchangeable with the ego, not only a surface entity but itself the psychic projection of a surface. Yet that Freud's concern at this point in his essay is to articulate the bodily

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origins of the ego, the conception of the ego as product of the body not the body as product of the ego, is underscored by the explanatory footnote that appeared first in the 1927 English translation of this text immediately following the above passage: "I.e. the ego is ultimately derived from bodily sensations, chiefly from those springing from the surface of the body. It may thus be regarded as a mental projection of the surface of the body . . . " (The Ego and the Id 20 n.16). Butler's reading inverts Freud's representation of the body as productive of the psyche and, through that square-bracketed substitution, images the body as a psychic effect, commensurable with the psychic projection of the body. Whereas Freud's original assertion maintains a distinction between the body's real surface and the body image as a mental projection of this surface (a distinction between corporeal referent and psychic signification of this body), Butler's appropriation collapses bodily surface into the psychic projection of the body, collapses corporeal materiality into imaginary projection, and therefore lets slip any notion of the body as a discernible referential category.

Her later use in Bodies That Matter of this same passage in The Ego and the Id repeats and indeed heightens this reading, even though she there (again in the periphery of a footnote) addresses Freud's 1927 footnote: "*Although Freud is offering an account of the development of the ego, and claiming that the ego is derived from the projected surfaces of the body*, he is inadvertently establishing the conditions for the articulation of body as morphology" (258 n.4; italics mine). The modifying subordination in her syntax ("although") to which her summary of the manifest meaning of Freud's note is confined, makes clear that she recognizes that what she desires the footnote to articulate is not deliberate but "inadvertent." Yet in spite of this recognition, Butler continues to read against the manifest sense of Freud's note -- Freud's description of the ego as derived from the body -- in order to emphasize the antithesis: the body as morphology, a Lacanian

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conceptualization of the body as illusory psychic projection (Freud "prefiguring" Lacan's mirror stage [58]).[12]

Butler's inversion of Freud's formulation of the relations between psyche and body in Gender Trouble is arguably influenced by Roy Schafer's reading of Freud's bodily ego to illustrate the illusory status of the distinctions the subject makes (and the language of psychoanalysis sustains) between what is interior and what is exterior to the body. Butler enlists Schafer's critique of internalization (in addition to Abraham and Torok's analyses) to argue that incorporation is fantasy. Schafer proposes that, in its language of internalization, psychoanalysis literalizes the always-imaginary projections on the part of the subject between what is inside and outside. For Schafer, Freud's description of the bodily ego exemplifies the original way in which the subject deludes itself into believing in the facticity of corporeal interiority. The bodily ego constitutes a perception or rather a construction of the body espoused (falsely) by the subject, not a product of the body at all but rather a misreading of it; for via the bodily ego the subject assumes wrongly that the self can be conceived as occupying a body, a materiality in space.[13] My contention is that it is precisely this point that Freud's 1927 footnote seeks to emphasize. Freud's bodily

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[12] While Lacan's imago certainly derives from Freud's concept of the ego, its debt is not so much to the ego of The Ego and the Id as to Freud's second model of the ego in "On Narcissism: An Introduction": the ego as distinctly non-biological and crucially split ("Lacan's Mirror Phase." Talk given by Bice Benvenuto, Centre for Freudian Psychoanalysis and Research, London, October 21, 1995. See also Grosz, Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction 28-31).

[13] "The child seems to organize its earliest subjective experience around bodily sensations with their varying pleasure-pain properties. This early subjective experience is the 'bodily ego' that, according to Freud (1923a [The Ego and the Id]), is the first ego. Thus, from its very beginnings, the organization of experience implies physical referents such as are later subjectively defined as being inside and outside" (A New Language for Psychoanalysis 171). The "physical referents" -- the "bodily sensations" which Freud posits as generating the ego -- are in Schafer's scheme granted only retroactively and subjectively

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ego is designed not to dematerialize the body into phantasmatic effect but to materialize the psyche, to argue its corporeal dependence. In chapter 3 of this dissertation, I argue that sustaining the body as referential category is crucial for mapping out a theory of transsexual embodiment. To that end, I draw on the work of psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu, who has challenged the structuralist psychoanalytic flattening out of interiority and exteriority into signification. Anzieu's concept of the "skin ego" returns the ego to its bodily origins in Freud and suggests that corporeal referentiality needs to be addressed in our thinking subjectivity, for "one of the fundamental tenets of psychoanalysis [is] that every psychical phenomenon develops in constant reference to bodily experience" (Skin Ego 84). My chapter 3 examines the senses in which transsexuality develops "in constant reference to bodily experience."

Martin has remarked on the tendency in queer studies (symptomized in her essay by Butler and Sedgwick) for "surfaces [to] take priority over interiors and depths and even rule conventional approaches to them [i.e. interiors and depths] as inevitably disciplinary and constraining" ("Sexualities Without Genders and Other Queer Utopias" 106). Butler's conceptualization of sex as a heterosexual melancholic fantasy of literalization, of sex as the phantasmatic encrypting of gender in the body, implicitly designates corporeal interiority as "disciplinary and constraining," and conversely, privileges surface as that which breaks up interiority and reveals its status as fantasy. This prioritization of surface is emphatically occularcentric, as is Gender Trouble's concomitant investment in the transgendered subject of the power to reveal sex as "gender all along" (i.e. interiority as incorporated fantasy). Gender Trouble's theoretical economy of gender relies heavily on a notion of the body as that which can be seen, as surface. This is possibly most marked in its deployment of the transgendered subject to illustrate gender performativity: girls who look like boys and boys who look like girls. In this sense then, in its dependence on the visible, on body-as-surface, the theory of gender performativity does in fact work itself out in a definitively theatrical arena. Any claim to a sense of sexed interiority, any feeling of

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being sexed or gendered (whether "differently" or not), along with other ontological claims, is designated phantasmatic, symptomatic of heterosexual melancholia. Yet, to return to that passage in The Ego and the Id, Freud underlines that the bodily ego derives not so much from the perception of the body (an "external perception"), that is from what can be seen, but from the *bodily sensations* that stem from its touching -- touching here in both an active and passive sense -- (an "internal perception"): "[A person's body] is *seen* like any other object, but to the *touch*, it yields two kinds of sensations, one of which may be equivalent to an internal perception" (19). The value of Anzieu's "skin ego" is its accounting for the productivity of the experience of the somatic in the formation of subjectivity.

The transsexual doesn't necessarily *look* differently gendered but by definition *feels* differently gendered from her or his birth-assigned sex. In both its medical and its autobiographical versions, the transsexual narrative depends upon an initial crediting of this feeling as generative ground. It demands some recognition of the category of corporeal interiority (internal bodily sensations) and of its distinctiveness from that which can be seen (external surface): the difference between gender identity and sex that serves as the logic of transsexuality. This distinction is rigorously refused by Gender Trouble. In its one mention, Gender Trouble uses transsexuality to exemplify not the constitutive significance of somatic feeling but the phantasmatic status of sex: the notion that pleasure exceeds material body parts. The transsexual's often declared capacity to experience his or her body as differently sexed from its materiality certainly supports Freud's notion of a bodily ego. But, because the subject often speaks of the imaginary body as more real or more sensible, this phenomenon illustrates the materiality of the bodily ego rather than the phantasmatic status of the sexed body. That the transsexual's trajectory centers on reconfiguring the body reveals that it is the ability to feel the bodily ego in conjunction and conformity with the material body parts that matters in a transsexual context; and that sex is perceived as something that must be changed underlines its very un-phantasmatic status.

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Butler's deliteralization of sex, her displacement of sex from material interiority into phantasized surface, is enabled by the production of a binary between queer and heterosexual. Heterosexuality is engendered via the literalizing strategies of melancholia, strategies which queer through its transgendered performativity brings into relief. Heterosexuality operates by attempting to literalize sex *in* the body; queer transgender reveals this depth as surface. It is not that heterosexuality is natural and queer denaturalizing; rather, heterosexuality is naturali*zing*, concealing the masquerade of the natural which queer makes manifest. Even so, heterosexuality and queer are represented as, respectively, restrictive interiority and playful surface. Whereas gay and lesbian cultures are *characterized* by camp, parodic subversive -- that is, transgendered -- performances which deliteralize the apparently real of sex, heterosexuality is *characterized* by a literalizing of the apparently real (Gender Trouble 66, 71). This attribution of character effects a certain hypostatization of queer and heterosexual, simultaneously impacting queer more thoroughly with transgender. In effect, Butler subjects heterosexuality to a degree of grounding in order to read queer *through* transgender as refiguring this ground. In operation is a generic antithesis, the queer performative coinciding with the comic staging of the impossibility of identity, heterosexual literalization with the melancholic attempt to sustain it as absolute ground. As Butler herself implicitly acknowledges when she considers how transgendered subjects also reliteralize the gender norms in her essay on *Paris is Burning*, this pivotal antithesis of Gender Trouble is too neat.[14] If in Gender Trouble the transsexual is not distinguished

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[14] The stabilization of heterosexuality as ground appears symptomatic of much of queer studies. As Sedgwick's anal desires in "A Poem is Being Written" exemplify, heterosexual practices are not *a priori* distinguishable from let alone antithetical to homosexual practices. Sedgwick's targeting her antihomophobic inquiry at a notion of the homosocial rather than heterosexuality successfully avoids a totalization of heterosexuality. Arguing against lesbian feminist normalizations of heterosexuality in particular, Lynne Segal's Straight Sex: The Politics of Pleasure represents a fascinating recent attempt to highlight

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from the queer transgendered subject, in Bodies That Matter the transsexual is specifically elected as the subject who most succinctly illustrates the limitations of the queerness of transgender.

iv. Venus is Burning: The Transubstantiation of the Transsexual

> "I don't feel that there's anything mannish about me except what I might have between me down there. I guess that's why I want my sex change, to make myself complete."
> Venus Xtravaganza, *Paris is Burning*.

Because it was released in the spring of 1991 on the heels of the publication of Gender Trouble, Jennie Livingston's film *Paris is Burning* often got taken up in discussions of queer identities in conjunction with Butler's book, as if the subjects of the drag ball illustrated -- again, the lure of the visual example in transgendered contexts -- Butler's theory of gender performativity. Both texts in their transgendered themes captured what seemed definitive of the queer moment, and for this reason were subject to a certain yoking together in feminist-queer studies -- in our readings, course syllabi, conferences and so on. Thus Butler's chapter in Bodies That Matter (1993) on *Paris is Burning*, "Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion," in examining the ambivalent effects of transgender in *Paris is Burning*, serves by association as a return to the subject of transgender in Gender Trouble to mark out *its* ambivalent effects. In this sense, "Gender is Burning" functions to complicate those binary syllogisms of Gender Trouble. The essay's thesis is that crossing identifications in the film both denaturalize and renaturalize identity norms: "*Paris is Burning* documents neither an efficacious insurrection nor a painful resubordination, but an unstable coexistence of both" (Bodies 137).

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the non-normativity of heterosexual practices, their potential (for straight feminists) for putting in question gender hierarchies: "Straight sex . . . can be no less 'perverse' than its 'queer' alternatives" (318).

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While *Paris is Burning* in general documents the ambivalent significance of performative crossings in Butler's essay, Venus Xtravaganza serves as the specific lever to articulate this ambivalence: "Venus, and *Paris is Burning* more generally, calls into question whether parodying the dominant norms is enough to displace them; indeed, whether the denaturalization of gender cannot be the very vehicle for a reconsolidation of hegemonic norms" (125). For Butler, it is the particular configuration of Venus's body, gender presentation, desires and fate that best exemplifies that transgressive crossings can simultaneously reinscribe symbolic norms. The film's representation of this Latina transsexual circumscribes the subversive possibilities of parodic repetitions. Yet although its argument about ambivalence pivots on the material ambivalence of the transsexual body, Butler's essay finally encodes transsexuality as metaphor in a way that sublimates into theoretical allegory the specific materiality of Venus's sex and of her death as a light-skinned Latina transsexual.

The revelation of Venus's murder in the second part of *Paris is Burning* (filmed in 1989 two years after the first encounter with Venus) is indisputably the moment which most cuts through any sense of the performativity, the fictionality of identities the film provides elsewhere, particularly in the ball scenes. That Venus is killed for her transsexuality, for inhabiting a body which, as that of a pre-operative male-to-female transsexual, is not coherently female, is strongly supported by the film's narrative. Angie Xtravaganza, the mother of Venus's house, to whom the film turns to provide an account of the occurrence, firmly fixes Venus's death in the context of a transsexual narrative: "That's part of life. That's part of being a transsexual in New York City." The implication is that Venus is murdered in her hotel bedroom on being "read" by her client, killed for having a body in excess of the femaleness he imagined he was paying for, killed then as a transsexual. Butler isolates Venus's death as the most prominent instance in the film in which the symbolic precludes its resignification: "This is killing that is performed by the symbolic that would eradicate those phenomena that require an opening up of the

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possibilities for the resignification of sex" (131). Yet while Butler's isolation of this moment and this citation suggest that what matters (to the client, to the film and to the critic) is Venus's transsexuality, and the particular configuration of her sexed body as a male-to-female, Butler's reading of Venus's killing situates Venus's body along a binary, queer man / woman of color, in the split between which Venus's Latina-passing-white transsexual body falls.

Butler attributes Venus's death first to "homophobic violence," staking that it is Venus's "failure to pass completely [that renders her] clearly vulnerable" to this violence (129-130). By "failure to pass completely," Butler clearly intends Venus's penis; yet the presence of the penis on Venus's body renders her neither a homosexual man (a literalization of gender surely symptomatic of the heterosexual melancholia Gender Trouble critiqued), nor her death an effect of homophobia. Venus presents herself unambivalently as a transsexual woman, not as a gay man or drag queen. Although the only "genetic girl" is behind the camera, it does not follow that all the bodies in *Paris is Burning* are male. Rather the film presents a spectrum of bodies and desires, heterosexual and homosexual, in-drag, transsexual and genetic male, with the subjects frequently articulating the distinctions between these categories in a careful self-positioning. Stating that there's nothing "mannish" about her except what she has "down there," Venus describes looking forward to sex reassignment surgery to make her "complete": in other words, a complete woman. Her identification not as a gay man or a drag queen but as an incomplete (pre-operative transsexual) woman highlights the impossibility of dividing up all identities along the binary homosexual / heterosexual. If it applies to Venus at all, her desire, to be a complete woman for a man, is heterosexual, and it is more this desire in combination with her transsex which kills her: not as a homosexual man then, but as a transsexual woman whose desire is heterosexual -- or as *the failure to be* (an ontological failure) a biological woman.

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It is equally inadequate therefore to read Venus's death as equivalent to that of a woman of color, as Butler does in the second instance: "If Venus wants to become a woman, and cannot overcome being a Latina, then Venus is treated by the symbolic in precisely the ways in which women of color are treated" (131). Without disputing that women (of color or white) can be treated identically to Venus, and while underlining that it is crucial that Venus's passing be acknowledged as double-leveled -- a race and sex crossing -- again it is not for *being* a woman of color but for failing to be one that Venus is murdered; it is the crossing, the trans movement. Her death is indexical of an order that cannot contain crossings, a body in transition off the map of three binary axes -- sex (male or female), sexuality (heterosexual or homosexual) and race (of color or white): a light-skinned Latina transsexual body under construction as heterosexual and female. At work in Venus's murder is not fear of the same or the other but fear of bodily crossing, of the movement in between sameness and difference: not homo- but trans-phobia, where trans here signifies the multi--leveled status of her crossing. This interstitial space is not foregrounded in Butler's reading of Venus's death.

If, for Butler, Venus's death represents the triumph of the symbolic, "Gender is Burning" discovers the symbolic asserting its norms through Venus even before this moment, in particular, in her expressed desires to become a "complete woman," to marry and attain financial security, the second two of course crucially dependent on the first: a Latina transsexual's desires for sexed realness and domestic comfort. It is to set the realization of these desires in motion that Venus is turning tricks to earn enough for her lower surgery, sex work being a not uncommon, indeed often the only means poor / working-class male-to-females can afford to change sex. For Butler, these desires reveal the extent to which Venus even before her murder is subject to "hegemonic constraint":

> Clearly, the denaturalization of sex, in its multiple senses, does not imply a liberation from hegemonic constraint: when Venus speaks of her

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> desire to become a whole woman, to find a man and have a house in the suburbs with a washing machine, we may well question whether the denaturalization of gender and sexuality that she performs, and performs well, culminates in a reworking of the normative framework of heterosexuality. (133)

Venus's fantasy as a Latina transsexual of becoming "real" (both achieving coherent sexed embodiment and middle-class security) and her corporeal progress in realizing this fantasy marks her out, for Butler, from the drag ball performers who "do" realness and who "resist transsexuality" (136). The presupposition is twofold here: first, that inherent to *doing* realness is an agency resistant to and transformative of hegemonic constraint which the desire to *be* real lacks; and following this, that the transsexual's crossing signifies a failure to be subversive and transgressive of hegemonic constraint where it *ought* to be. Hegemony constrains Venus through the "normative framework of heterosexuality." If resisting transsexuality produces a denaturalizing agency, it is because in Butler's scheme transsexuality is understood, by definition, to be constrained by heterosexuality. By extension, to fail to resist transsexuality fully (as Venus does in hoping for a sex change) is to reliteralize sex (to be rather than perform it) according to the workings of heterosexual melancholia. While Venus's murder symptomizes in part the triumph of the heterosexual matrix, in her desires, Venus is duped by this same heterosexual ideology into believing that a vagina will make her a woman. The heterosexual matrix is therefore already asserting its hegemony in Venus's transsexuality even before her death.

From this scheme, it might appear that the binary of heterosexual = literalizing / queer = performative is still in operation in Bodies That Matter, with transsexuality standing in for the first term. The transgendered subject, here exemplified in the transsexual, would accordingly appear simply to have been switched from one side of the binary to the other since Gender Trouble. Yet Butler's essay works not to reinforce but to demonstrate the ambivalence of this binary, to delimit (not negate) the queer performativity of transgender. It is the literal ambivalence of Venus's transsexual body that allows for this new theoretical ambivalence. Venus's death represents the triumph of

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hegemonic norms only as it simultaneously illustrates Venus denaturalizing these norms: it is a "killing performed by the symbolic that would eradicate those phenomena that require an opening up of the possibilities for the resignification of sex." Venus's body, with penis intact, is such a phenomenon that would resignify sex. Even in her death, because of her transsexual incoherence between penis and passing-as-a-woman, Venus holds out for Butler the promise of queer subversion, precisely as her transsexual trajectory is incomplete. In her desire to complete this trajectory (to acquire a vagina), however, Venus would cancel out this potential and succumb to the embrace of hegemonic naturalization. In other words, what awards Venus the status of potential resignifier of the symbolic in Butler's scheme is the fact that Venus doesn't get to complete her trajectory and realize her desires, because she still has a penis at her death. What matters for Butler is the oscillation between the literality of Venus's body and the figurative marks of her gender. Conversely, Venus's desire to close down this tension (her desire for realness) curtails her capacity to resignify the symbolic. That Butler figures Venus as subversive for the same reason that Butler claims she is killed, and considers indicative of hegemonic constraint the desires that, if realized might have kept Venus at least from this instance of violence, is strikingly ironic. Butler's essay locates transgressive value in that which makes the subject's real life most unsafe.

Butler's essay itself is structured on an ambivalence toward transsexuality in its relation to the literal, caught (twice over), both between reading transsexuality literally and metaphorically, and between reading the transsexual as literalizing and deliteralizing. That Butler assigns Venus the function of ambivalence in her effect on the literal is encapsulated in the essay's reliance on the theme of transubstantiation, a term that is conjoined to transsexuality twice in the essay, that indeed stands in for transsexuality: first, in reference to Venus; and second, in reference to Jennie Livingston's camera. First then, Butler writes that Venus's transsexual fantasy of realness is one of transubstantiation: "Now Venus, Venus Xtravaganza, she seeks a certain transubstantiation of gender in order to

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find an imaginary man who will designate a class and race privilege that promises a permanent shelter from racism, homophobia, and poverty" (130). Venus's desire is here said to represent a transubstantiation of gender in that her transsexuality is an attempt to depart from literal materiality of her sexed and raced body (and as her class is intricated with these corporeal materialities, thus also a move away from her social materiality) precisely according to a strategy which reliteralizes sex: the acquisition of a vagina to make her a "complete woman." The term transubstantiation sustains exactly such antinomy: it conveys both literalization and deliteralization, is both performative and constative. In the Eucharistic sense of transubstantiation, that the bread and wine stand for Christ's body and blood is simultaneously a metaphorization of the materials and a literalization of the Godhead. The exchange of speech during the Eucharist between the priest ("The body of Christ") and the recipient ("Amen") contracts both into agreeing that the materials *are* literally this body. Thus, to make a connection to my discussion of melancholia and mourning in section iii, the Eucharistic transubstantiation functions as an incorporation of the lost object (Christ) which is *also* an introjection, for the object is taken in and literalized yet at the same time the articulation of its representation ("the body of Christ") ensures its resymbolization. If Venus's transsexuality "transubstantiates" in Butler's account then, it is because transsexuality is perceived (ambivalently) as seeking out a heterosexual melancholic literalization of sex (the vagina) precisely through a queer resignification (for the quest for the vagina is the penis's deliteralization). The antithesis structuring Gender Trouble is rendered ambivalent through transsexuality, specifically through the representation of transsexuality as transubstantiation.[15]

Butler's essay goes on to displace its discussion of transsexuality and transubstantiation from the literal transsexual body of Venus to the metaphorical body of

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[15] The queer / poststructuralist investment in figures of "transgression" might be read as a similar appropriation of Catholic rhetoric.

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Jennie Livingston. Butler takes up bell hooks's criticism that *Paris is Burning* is the product of a white gaze that yet occults the situatedness of this gaze, that the film is a white scripting of black bodies into a play(ground) of Otherness for white pleasure. For hooks, Livingston's exclusion of her own white body from the cinematic frame misrepresents the fact that the film is a white perspective on blackness, and is thereby symptomatic of the dominant cultural production of whiteness as disembodied.[16] Apparently driven by the wish to read the film as more ambivalent than hooks does (that is both reinscriptive and subversive), Butler seeks an exception to (a moment that subverts) hooks's premise of the disembodiment of the white author. Butler suggests that Livingston's body -- or at least its allegorical delegate -- might be discovered in the scene in which the other transsexual protagonist, Octavia St. Laurent, poses for a swimsuit shoot: "The one instance where Livingston's body might be said to appear allegorically on camera is when Octavia St. Laurent is posing for the camera, as a moving model would for a photographer. We hear a voice tell her that she's terrific, and it is unclear whether it is a man shooting as a proxy for Livingston or Livingston herself" (134-135). In my experience of this scene, the body that's shooting (and the voice that's shown originating from it) is quite *clearly* that of a white male photographer, whose photographic camera appears in the cinematic frame while Livingston's cinematic camera and her directorial body continue to remain clearly outside the frame. Thus Livingston remains omniscient

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[16] "Jennie Livingston approaches her subject matter as an outsider looking in. Since her presence as white woman / lesbian filmmaker is 'absent' from *Paris is Burning* it is easy for viewers to imagine that they are watching an ethnographic film documenting the life of black gay 'natives' and not recognize that they are watching a work shaped and formed by a perspective and standpoint specific to Livingston. By cinematically masking this reality (we hear her ask questions but never see her), Livingston does not oppose the way hegemonic whiteness 'represents' blackness, but rather assumes an imperial overseeing position that is in no way progressive or counter-hegemonic" (Black Looks: Race and Representation 151).

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and unsituated. For Butler, however, the photographer's camera metaphorically embodies Livingston's own desire through the feminization and eroticization of Octavia's transsexual body:

> What is suggested by this sudden intrusion of the camera into the film is something of the camera's desire, the desire that motivates the camera, in which a lesbian phallically organized by the use of the camera (elevated to the status of disembodied gaze, holding out the promise of erotic recognition) eroticizes a black male-to-female transsexual -- presumably preoperative -- who "works" perceptually as a woman. (135)

If the camera as subject of the gaze is the phallus, then not only is the photographic camera's appearance within the cinematic frame the allegorical instantiation of Livingston's body, in its eroticization of the male-to-female transsexual as model perfect, the photographic camera metaphorically phallicizes Livingston's body. For in representing the male-to-female transsexual as woman as object of desire, Livingston "assumes the power of 'having the phallus.'" (135). The camera's feminization-eroticization of the male-to-female transsexual circulates the phallus from transsexual to lesbian, a circulation which amounts to a "transsexualization of lesbian desire": "What would it mean to say that Octavia is Jennie Livingston's kind of girl? Is the category or, indeed, 'the position' of white lesbian disrupted by such a claim? If this is the production of the black transsexual for the exoticizing white gaze, is it not also the transsexualization of lesbian desire?" (135). Livingston's desire for the transsexual is apparently also her identification with the transsexual; or rather the moment enacts a (s)exchange of identities, with the "real girl" acquiring a phallus (becoming transsexualized) as she represents the transsexual as a "real girl." Extending her metaphorization of transsexuality, Butler designates the camera (photographic symbolizing cinematic) the tool of this (s)exchange, the "surgical instrument and operation through which the transubstantiation occurs" which produces Octavia as woman, which "transplants" the phallus from Octavia's body to Livingston's lesbian body.

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Transsexuality and transubstantiation are thus brought together for a second time in Butler's essay now in a metaphorical context and, as in Butler's discussion of Venus's fantasy, transsexuality is implicitly defined as, rendered equivalent to, transubstantiation. How is the double dynamic of literalization and deliteralization played out in this second moment of transsexualization as transubstantiation? I suggest that Butler's reading here again depends on the literal sexed ambivalence of the pre-operative male-to-female transsexual body (the woman with a penis). Yet Butler's metaphor of transsexualization, its application to the lesbian body, in effect displaces the materiality of transsexuality, and thus the materiality of sex, to the level of figurative. First, in figuring the phallus as circulated from Octavia to Livingston, the metaphor of transsexualization pivots on, and actually originates in, Octavia's penis. We know that Octavia, like Venus, is indeed pre-operative for she also speaks of looking forward to the event surgery which will maker her a "complete" woman. However, as in the process of circulation this penis glides into the phallus (Livingston's camera is said to accord her the phallus, not the penis), this penis is clearly subject in its translation to Lacanian sublimation itself. The metaphor of transsexualization depends upon this crucial substitution of fleshly part by symbolic signifier, a confusion between phallus and penis which certainly does not take place in the film. For while Octavia (like Venus) may yet have a penis, in no way can she be said to "have the phallus": that is, in no way is she accorded or does she assume the position of delegate of the symbolic order. Conversely, while (presumably) Livingston has no penis, her capacity to represent Octavia, Venus and the rest of the cinematic subjects as embodied others via her authority as disembodied overseer, as hooks's essay argues so convincingly, situates her precisely in this position of the symbolic's delegate -- the one who appears to have the phallus In the context of this film by a white lesbian about black and Latino/a gay men, drag queens, and transsexuals, the penis and phallus might be said not only to remain discrete but oppositional. Worlds apart from her subjects in her whiteness, her middle-classness, her educatedness and her "real" femaleness, Livingston's

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position behind the camera is that of an authority with absolute powers of representation.[17]

Moreover, Livingston appears to wield this phallic power most notably in her representation of the transsexuals, Octavia and Venus, in particular in her representation of their fantasies. The section in the film in which Octavia and Venus are cataloguing their desiderata stands as the most explicitly edited and authored moments in the film. Their sentences, most of which begin "I want," are rapidly intercut with each other's and their visual images likewise interwoven. The technique suggests the identity of their fantasies -- a generic transsexual fantasy -- and that the transsexual might be conceived according to what she *lacks*; "I want" reveals all that the subject desires, that is, all that she lacks. At the same time, in its location of these scenes, the cinematic apparatus occults its own framing / authoring function. Both Octavia and Venus are filmed reclining on beds in bedrooms, (the viewer is led to believe the subjects' own); Octavia is even dressed for bed. The setting allows the audience to assume an intimacy with the subjects, to forget the extent to which these moments are mediated through Livingston's white female gaze -- exactly the dynamic of occultation that provides fodder for hooks's critique. Elsewhere in the film, it becomes evident how Livingston's camera mediates what of their lives the subjects reveal. Before her death, for instance, Venus informs Livingston that she no longer works the streets, a claim that her death, of course, proves drastically untrue.[18] To

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[17] These powers of representation extend beyond the cinematic. That Livingston knowingly and intentionally entered the drag ball world of Harlem as an authority is evident from the legal cautions she took before filming, including requiring all the participants in the film to sign a release. Two years after the film's success, all but two of the participants filed legal suits against Livingston, staking a claim in her profits. Their signatures on the release ensured the dismissal of their suits. For a discussion of the significance of this case to the circumscribed agency of the ball participants beyond the realm of the ball, see Harper.

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summarize then: in having the power to represent the other and conceal this power, Livingston not only "has the phallus," this having enables her to represent the transsexual other -- Octavia and Venus -- as crucially lacking: not so much in spite, as because, of their penises. Along with race and class, the crucial structuring difference between Livingston on the one hand and Venus and Octavia on the other is sexed coherence or realness: the difference between the non-transgendered and the embodied transgendered subject.

If phallus and penis are antithetical in *Paris is Burning*, Livingston's "phallicization" in no way reveals her embodiment -- even allegorically -- as Butler claims. As her position behind it renders her unrepresented, a disembodied voice popping questions only, the camera is Livingston's means to disembodiment, not to her embodiment. Thus hooks's critique of the filmmaker's bodily erasure still holds. Indeed, Butler's allegorization of Livingston's body in the very vehicle for her disembodiment only places further out of reach the filmmaker's literal corporeality, the notion that Livingston has a "body that matters." And although rendering the camera a lesbian phallus might well disrupt Livingston's identity as a lesbian, it does nothing to disrupt its transcendent whiteness: the reason why hooks has problems with its overseeing position in the first place. Indeed, Butler's wish to curtail hooks's critique of Livingston's disembodiment seems oddly motivated, that is until she reveals an identification with Livingston, both "white Jewish lesbian[s] from Yale" (133). This exceptional autobiographical moment for Butler suggests that perhaps something quite personal is perceived to be at stake in her discovering a moment that can serve as an exception to the disembodied gaze of the auteur representing transgendered subjects.

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[18] The question of whether Venus would have continued to work the streets to save for her surgery if Livingston had contracted the film's subjects as actors is ultimately unanswerable.

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Most significantly, the essay's metaphorical shifting of transsexuality from Venus's body to Livingston's camera displaces transsexuality to a context which has nothing to do with the materiality of the body. In the context of a discussion of a film during the making of which one of the protagonists is killed for her transsexuality, for the literal configuration of her sexed body, this sublimation appears more prominent, and in my experience anyway, proves the most disturbing moment in Butler's oeuvre. For the critic's metaphorization of the transsexual body transcends the literality of transsexuality in precisely a way in which Venus cannot -- Venus who is killed for her literal embodiment of sexual difference. Even in the film, we might notice that the literality of Venus's transsexual body and the facticity of her death are already subject to a glossing over. As hooks points out, the film glides over the reality of Venus's death, the moment is rapidly overridden by the spectacle of the ball, and now that she can no longer function in this service of this spectacle, Venus is abandoned. Indeed, it might be said that not only does the filmic narrative fail to mourn Venus, it markedly includes no scenes of others' bereavement for Venus. We simply have Angie Xtravaganza's terse account of what happened to Venus overlaying footage of Venus filmed on the Christopher Street piers while she was still alive, this montage itself threatening to deny the reality, the finality of Venus's death. In metaphorizing transsexuality, Butler repeats something of this deliteralization of the subject, her body and her death. The substance of the transsexual body is sublimated in the move from the literal to the figurative. In the critical failure to "mourn" her death, Venus's body (surely the lost object of *Paris is Burning*), the most prominent representation we have in this film of the pain and anguish of embodying the experience of being differently sexed, is encrypted in Livingston's camera. And what is not kept in view is the intractable materiality of that body in its present state and its peculiar sex.

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v. Conclusion.

Queer Feminism and Critical Impropriety: Transgender as Transitional Object?

> **The institution of the "proper object" takes place, as usual, through a mundane sort of violence.**
> **Judith Butler, "Against Proper Objects"**

In her most recent work, Butler demonstrates how the founding of lesbian and gay studies as a methodology distinct from feminism has involved a privileging of subjects and categories to the exclusion of others. "Against Proper Objects" critiques the way in which lesbian and gay studies has arrogated sexuality as its "proper object" of study, defining itself through and against feminism by assigning gender as feminism's object of study. This rigid distribution not only restricts lesbian and gay studies in its objects but projects onto feminism a restriction of *its* objects, in effect imputing to feminist analysis a fixity, a homogeneity and a limitation of its scope. In staking out its different domain, and in representing itself as performing tasks that feminism cannot, lesbian and gay studies has simplified, fictionalized, indeed, "caricatured" feminism (4). What comes to appear quite critically improper in Butler's essay is this very investment in theoretical property: both the assurance with which that attribution of the object to the other is made (in effect a restriction of the other to the object), and the claims staked in the name of this attribution and restriction -- namely, lesbian and gay studies' claims to "include and supersede" feminism (2).

Butler's essay implies that it might never be possible to claim methodological distinctness without bringing into play a degree of aggression, that every theory that grounds itself by allocating "proper objects" will be prone to this kind of critical impropriety. Undoubtedly, my attempts to wrest the transsexual from the queer inscription of transgender -- and in particular, my criticisms of Butler's writing on Venus -- are not free of aggression. From the point of view of this project, what subtends the difference in such readings is quite primal (theoretical, political and admittedly personal):

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concerns about territory, belonging, creating homes; indeed, the extent to which identity is formed through our investment in external "objects" -- a fundamental tenet of psychoanalysis, that definition depends on defining and "owning" objects. The question is perhaps quite simple: Where (best) does the transsexual belong? In seeking to carve out a space for transgender-transsexual studies distinct from queer studies, inevitably terrain must be mapped out and borders drawn up (a fact which doesn't render them uncrossable). Representations, subjects and bodies (such as Venus) serve as the all-important flags which mark the territory claimed. It is additionally inevitable that the establishment of methodological grounds involves the attempt early on to circumscribe neighboring methodologies and approaches, the emphasizing of what they do *not* as opposed to what they and we *do*.

Interestingly, "Against Proper Objects" conjures transsexuality in order to complicate articulations of methodological difference (although Butler's language of "domestication" suggests not my frontier-scale struggles but tiffs in the kitchen). Butler presents transsexuality as a category which, because of its "important dissonance" with homosexuality (tantalizingly, but importantly for my dissertation, she doesn't say what this is), falls outside the domain of lesbian and gay studies (11). Insofar as lesbian and gay studies delimits its proper object to sexuality and "refuses the domain of gender, it disqualifies itself from the analysis of transgendered sexuality altogether" (11). Transsexuality and transgender are invoked as illustrations of the exclusions that lesbian and gay studies has performed in fixing its proper object as sexuality. Transsexuality and transgender number among the categories of "sexual minorities" Butler rightly understands Gayle Rubin insisting in 1983 made necessary a "radical theory of the politics of sexuality." These categories, Butler believes, get sidelined, ironically in lesbian and gay studies' appropriation of Rubin's essay as a foundational text. As I outlined at the beginning of this chapter, my sense of the role of transgender in lesbian and gay studies is quite different: that is, the figure of transgender has rather proven crucial to the

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installation of lesbian and gay studies -- its installation *as* queer. Even work purporting to focus exclusively on sexuality and not gender -- Sedgwick's for instance -- implicitly engages this transgendered figure and, correlatively, the axis of gender.[19] Although it strongly suggests that "an analysis of sexual relations apart from an analysis of gender relations is [not] possible," Butler's essay does not address how lesbian and gay studies might *already* be engaged in gender analyses, if largely unconsciously (9). Indeed, toward the end of her interview by Butler in the same "More Gender Trouble" issue of differences in which "Against Proper Objects" appears, Gayle Rubin provocatively hints that Butler's critique of lesbian and gay studies' exclusion of gender might amount to a tilting at windmills:

> As for this great methodological divide you are talking about, between feminism and gay / lesbian studies, I do not think I would accept that distribution of interests, activities, objects and methods. . . . I cannot imagine a gay and lesbian studies that is not interested in gender as well as sexuality . . . . But I am not persuaded that there is widespread acceptance of this division of intellectual labor between feminism, on the one hand, and gay and lesbian studies on the other. (88)

That s/he has received considerably less critical attention than the cross-dresser or drag artist(e), that s/he has not been subject to the same deliberate and concentrated queer recuperation, and indeed, as is demonstrated in Butler's own work on Venus, that s/he is more likely to be deployed to signal the *unqueer* possibilities of cross-gender identifications, suggests, that, above all transgendered subjects, the transsexual is more of the limit case for queer studies: the object that exceeds its purview. Yet my sense is that the reasons for transsexuality's exceeding queer lie not so much in queer's refusal of the category of gender (and thus transgender) as Butler argues, as queer's poststructuralist

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[19] In her other mention of transgender and transsexuality, Butler writes of Sedgwick's antihomophobic critique that "[b]y separating the notion of gender from sexuality, [it] narrows the notion of sexual minorities offered by Rubin, distancing queer studies from the consideration of transgendered persons, transgendered sexualities, transvestism, cross-dressing, and cross-gendered definition" (24 n.8).

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problems with literality and referentiality in themselves that the category of transsexuality makes manifest -- particular in relation to the sexed body. Butler's metaphorical displacement of the literality of Venus's sex can serve to exemplify this.

Indeed, for Butler, it must remain "an open question whether 'queer' can achieve these same goals of inclusiveness" imagined by Rubin's radical theory of sexual politics, whether queer studies can incorporate all of the "sexual minorities" among which transgender and transsexuality might be categorized (11). For Butler, the concern is queer's *capacity* to include, a question about queer's elasticity, about how far the term will stretch. What is not a concern, is whether queer *should* even attempt to expand; expansion, inclusion, incorporation are automatically invested with value. One wonders to what extent this queer inclusiveness is an inclusiveness *for* queer rather than for the trans subject: the mechanism by which queer can sustain its very queerness -- prolong the queerness of the moment -- by periodically adding subjects who appear ever queerer precisely by virtue of their marginality in relation to queer. For does this strategy of inclusiveness not ensure the conference on queer of the very open-endedness, the mobility, and -- in the language of "Against Proper Objects" -- the very means by which to "rift" methodological "grounds" that queer has come to symbolize? If, as Butler writes, "normalizing the queer would be, after all, its sad finish," this project of expansion serves to enable queer to resist this very normalization (what Butler fears will be "the institutional domestication of queer thinking") that would herald its end (21). Yet if we conceive of "finish" and "end" here not as a limitation in time but a limitation in institutional space, this limited reach is inevitable and arguably necessary for the beginnings of other methodologies.

What Butler does not consider is to what extent -- and on what occasions -- transgendered and transsexual subjects and methodologies might not *wish* for inclusion under the queer banner. "Against Proper Objects" assesses inclusion and the resistance to inclusion solely from the perspective of queer; it does not imagine possible resistance

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stemming from the putatively excluded "sexual minorities." Our discussions should address not only, or perhaps, not primarily, queer's elasticity, but what is gained and lost for non-lesbian and gay subjects and methodologies in joining the queer corporation. In the case of transsexuality, there are substantive features that its trajectory often seeks out which queer has selected as its purpose to renounce: that is, not only reconciliation between sexed materiality and gendered identification, but assimilation, belonging in the body and in the world -- precisely the kinds of "home" that Butler's essay holds at bay in its critical troping of "domestication." In other words, there is much about transsexuality that must remain irreconcilable to queer -- the specificity of transsexual experience: the importance of the flesh to self; the difference between sex and gender identity; the desire to pass as "real-ly-gendered" in the world without trouble.

Since Gender Trouble, "domestication" has figured as something of a specter in Butler's work. Domestication appears to represent the assigning of subjects and methodologies to specific categorical homes, the notion that there is an institutional place to which they belong. For the Butler of 1990, what was at stake was the domestication of gender, and concomitantly the domestication of feminism through gender's domestication beyond sexuality. Gender Trouble sought "to facilitate a political convergence of feminism, gay and lesbian perspectives on gender, and poststructuralist theory" to produce a "complexity of gender[,] . . . an interdisciplinary and postdisciplinary set of discourses in order to resist the *domestication* of gender studies or women[s'] studies within the academy and to radicalize the notion of feminist critique" (xiii; my emphasis). As a means of resisting gender / women's studies' domestication, Gender Trouble marshaled lesbian and gay sexuality and, as I suggested above, lesbian and gay genders (queer gender) -- in effect troubling or queering gender. In analyzing the way in which the sex / gender system is constructed through the naturalization of heterosexuality and vice versa, Gender Trouble performed its work in an interstitial space *between* feminism and lesbian and gay studies, producing a new methodological genre, that of queer feminism. In this sense,

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Gender Trouble constituted an attempt to queer feminism. Yet although Butler's work might be said to have always conceived of domestication -- what we might term object-constancy to push further on the psychoanalytic metaphor -- as unhealthy, it is interesting to note that, in 1994, it is no longer *feminist* but *queer* studies that she perceives to be under threat of domestication: it suggests the changing values of the currencies of these methodologies, the ways in which queer and gender studies have circumscribed feminism, whether by design or inadvertently. In "Against Proper Objects," it is (trans)gender that returns as the supplement to trouble the domestication of (homo)sexuality, gender that "troubles" queer. This shift in Butler's theoretical "object-cathexis" is a sure a sign of queer's institutionalization (Oedipalization? with feminism as M[Other]?) if ever there was one.

To resist queer's incorporation of trans identities and trans studies is not to refuse the value of institutional alliances and coalitions (in the form of shared conferences, journals, courses and so on). But an alliance, unlike a corporation, suggests a provisional or strategic union between parties whose different interests ought not to be -- indeed, cannot totally be -- merged, sublimated for the "good of the whole." In closing, it needs emphasizing that it is precisely queer's investment in the figure of transgender in its own institutionalization, and above all the methodological and categorical crossings of Butler's, that have made it possible to name a transgender studies and to begin articulating the transsexual as a theoretical subject. It can be said that, in its very origins and its early attempts at self-definition, transgender-transsexual studies is allied with queer.

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Chapter Two

"Some Primitive Thing Conceived in a Turbulent Age of Transition":

The Well of Loneliness, the Invert, and the "Invention" of Transsexuality

> "Do you think that I *could* be a man, supposing I thought very hard -- or prayed, Father?"
>
> Stephen Gordon in The Well of Loneliness

> I have read The Well of Loneliness with great interest because -- apart from its fine qualities as a novel by a writer of accomplished art -- it possesses a notable psychological and sociological significance. So far as I know, it is the first English novel which presents, in a completely faithful and uncompromising form, one particular aspect of sexual life as it exists among us to-day.
>
> Havelock Ellis, "Commentary," The Well of Loneliness

> The dulness [sic] of the book is such that any indecency may lurk there -- one simply can't keep one's eyes on the page.
>
> Virginia Woolf, Diary

i. Introduction

Since the publication of Radclyffe Hall's The Well of Loneliness in 1928, its critics have agreed on one thing: the "one particular aspect of sexual life" Havelock Ellis's commentary to the first edition praises the novel for representing so realistically is lesbianism. While the ways of naming this purported subject of The Well have of course changed over the past seventy years, becoming less censored and censoring as the unspeakable of female homosexuality has been rendered speakable, their referent has remained consistent. Even when Sir Chartres Biron, the magistrate presiding at the trial of The Well in November 1928, condemned the novel's representation of female homosexuality without ever naming it, his invective -- "these horrible practices," "these two people living in filthy sin," "acts of the most horrible, unnatural and disgusting obscenity" -- failed to conceal (as was surely not his intention anyway) that the subject of the trial was lesbianism (Baker 243). As is well known, Biron's pronouncement of the novel obscene led to its being banned in the United Kingdom until its low-key

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republication in 1949. More importantly, it set in motion The Well's history of being read as a novel about lesbianism. For if Britain had pretended in the nineteenth century that lesbianism did not exist, it could hardly continue to do so after The Well's trial officially and publicly branded the text: "As a 'Modern Mother' protested in a letter to Time and Tide, far from protecting those whose minds were 'open to immoral influences,' the ban on The Well had created such a ballyhoo that no young girl or boy could now 'remain ignorant of certain facts which ordinarily would never have come to their notice'" (Baker 246).

The association of lesbianism with The Well has only intensified during the history of its reading. A case of the novel's increasing "lesbianization," The Well has gone from being a novel about lesbianism, to a lesbian novel, to the most well known lesbian novel, to "*the* lesbian novel," as Jane Rule claimed in 1975 in the heyday of lesbian feminism (50).[1] Much feminist and lesbian-feminist criticism over the past twenty years has centered on disputing Rule's canonization of The Well. The debate has been framed in terms of lesbian representativity: whether The Well offers an authentic depiction of lesbian identity and desire, whether its style is representative of lesbian aesthetics. What remains unquestioned, the constant in the novel's critical history is that, however one rates its treatment, lesbianism is *the* subject matter of The Well. This assumption is made even by critics who refute The Well's status as paradigmatic lesbian novel, although their work demonstrates how the novel resists easy reconciliation to a lesbian framework. The Well's depiction of lesbian love as tragic and impossible; its envisioning of lesbian relations through the frame of "heterosexual roles"; the unwavering male-identification of its protagonist, Stephen Gordon; and the ideological thread responsible for this entire scheme

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[1] Rebecca O'Rourke also sees the novel's lesbianization as an ongoing effect of the trial: "The publicity surrounding The Well of Loneliness ensures its place within the cultural map as *the* novel about lesbian life: the one novel everyone has heard about. Whenever knowledge about lesbianism is wanted, for whatever reasons, it will be to The Well of Loneliness that people turn" (115).

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-- its uncritical investment in the discourse of nineteenth-century sexology -- have made the task of configuring the text's place in the lesbian literary canon difficult to say the least. These features have been read as making The Well a "bad" representation of lesbianism, but, even by critics who find The Well a "problematic" lesbian text, have never been marshaled to argue that the novel is not lesbian, is fundamentally not about lesbianism.

Nor has the critical work that recuperates The Well disputed its status as a lesbian text. In this body of work, the novel's commitment to sexology and the resulting details of Stephen and her plot are instead historicized and rationalized. In the sexological figure of the invert, we find the only or the most visible or the most politicized modes for expressing lesbian identity and sexuality available to Stephen Gordon and / or Radclyffe Hall. The Well, it is argued, is true to its moment of production. The masculinity of Stephen, its inscription in her behavior, her desire and on her body, and the particular cast of her relationships with women -- their heterosexual pattern and their ultimate unworkability -- have been duly noted by both sets of opinion on The Well; and they have either provided the grounds for the novel's exclusion from the lesbian canon, or have been explained through a recontextualizing of the text in its historical discourse. No reading of the novel has suggested that perhaps the "one particular aspect of sexual life" that Hall sets out to depict in the figure of Stephen Gordon is not lesbianism. This is the task of this chapter.

In the commentary to the first edition, Ellis circles but does not name this sexual subject of The Well; that is, beyond noting that the novel depicts a contemporary facet of sexuality as it is embodied in "certain people -- who while different from their fellow human beings, are sometimes of the highest character and finest aptitudes," and the relation of these certain people to "the often hostile society in which they move" (n.p.) The oblique quality of his prefatory note might well stem from a wariness about openly naming sexual subjects, a consciousness of the dangers of courting censorship when

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sexuality is detailed. Ellis's own work, Sexual Inversion, had been prosecuted and found obscene in the Bedborough trial of 1898 under the same obscenity law that censored Hall's novel thirty years later.[2] The text of The Well does explicitly identify its sexual subject -- the invert -- and Hall uses this term and this term only to name Stephen. While many critics of The Well have traced Hall's debt in her understanding of sexual inversion to the work of sexologists such as Krafft-Ebing and of course Ellis himself and his banned work, the figure of the invert and the discourse of sexual inversion have been subject to a cursory reading. We have too readily slotted the invert into the history of homosexuality, even while acknowledging that it sits there uneasily, uncomfortably. We have been too quick to reduce sexual inversion to the "medicalization of homosexuality," to understand it as a historically-contingent way of describing homosexuality before Freud and psychoanalysis, a fin-de-siècle fiction of a heterocentric medical establishment. In the writings reclaiming lesbian and gay history, the masculinized female inverts and the feminized male inverts who crowd the sexological textbooks and find their fictionalized representative in The Well are really homosexuals, and their sexual inversion, their transgendering, is taken to be the fantastic product of a discursive moment in which gender roles are rigidly binarized. If women's sexuality is conceived of as naturally, corporeally, passive, and men's as symmetrically active, then the only way to think women-loving women is to represent the lesbian as a transgendered woman. The "man trapped in a female body" is understood to stand for the lesbian.[3] Hence, so this lesbian and gay narrative goes in its efforts to make

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[2] The 1857 Obscene Publications Act (O'Rourke 93). At the Bedborough trial Ellis was required to promise not to publish his books about sex in England: see Baker 203.

[3] See, for example, George Chauncey: "The Victorian assertion of male sexual aggressiveness and denial of female sexual interest established the logical framework for the earliest medical inquiry into sexual deviance, and determined the manner in which researchers defined it. The major current in Victorian sexual ideology declared that women were passionless and asexual, the passive objects of male sexual desire. . . . Such an assessment of women's sexuality necessarily had fundamental implications for the

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historicist sense of The Well, Stephen Gordon's (most often read as unfortunate) masculinity and male-identification are the products of the patriarchal and heterocentric sexologists' mind.

The pieces in the puzzle are forced together in spite of a sense that they don't quite fit. The "medicalization of homosexuality" interpretation prevails even though it is clear from reading the sexologists' case studies -- and even though this is often acknowledged -- that, as George Chauncey notes, sexual inversion "did not denote the same conceptual phenomenon as homosexuality" but "referred to a broad range of deviant gender behavior, of which homosexual desire was only a logical but indistinct aspect" (116). The "same-sex" desire of the invert has nevertheless dominated the work uncovering this identity, including Chauncey's own. The inverts' sexual inversion -- their cross gender-identification and behavior, sometimes their cross-gender living and their expressed desire to become or have been born the "other sex" -- has been glossed over in the reclaiming of sexology in the terms of lesbian and gay history.

Rereading the sexologists' cases, the autobiographical narratives told or sent to them, this chapter argues that "same-sex" desire is strikingly less definitive of the invert's identity than the feeling of being differently gendered. Particularly when the inverted subjects get to tell their stories themselves, the transgendering of the speaker seems less like a symptom or an effect of the sexologists' conceptualization of homosexuality than fundamental to the identity of sexual inversion, much more so than the attributed "same-sex" desire. Given the degree of cross-gendered identification, behavior, appearance and living in the figure of the invert, it is questionable to what extent his / her sexual desire can correctly be termed "same-sex." My contention with lesbian and gay history is that the

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medical conceptualization of lesbian relations. . . . In the Victorian system, therefore, a complete inversion or reversal of a woman's sexual character was required for her to act as a lesbian; she had literally to become man-like in her sexual desire. That this logic governed early thinking about lesbianism is suggested by the descriptions of lesbians provided by early sexologists" (117-118).

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figure of the invert is not substitutable with or equivalent to the homosexual, modern or historical. Rather the invert's story overlaps with another history, that of transsexuality.

Foundational of the difference between the two narratives of homosexuality and transsexuality is the separation sexologists made between same-sex object-choice or homosexuality on the one hand, and sexual inversion or gender identity on the other, a separation increasingly performed by Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis, and articulated most clearly in Freud. In Freud's writings, sexual inversion loses its power as evocative of an embodied condition, precisely as Freud defines himself against sexology. At Hall's time of writing The Well, the sexology which informed her thinking about Stephen's identity was already in the process of distinguishing homosexuality and sexual inversion, homosexuality being only one symptom of the condition of inversion. While the discourse of sexology had not yet named this subject as such, the invert was contemporaneous with the emergence of the transsexual in medical writings -- the subject who not only expressed the feeling of being or wanting to be the other sex, but who sought, sometimes through surgical means, to become such, even before the medical "construction" of the transsexual as a subject, even before the term transsexual had entered into discourse. To read sexual inversion and subsequently The Well simply as a historically contingent representation of homosexuality, as primarily about homosexuality -- or about homosexuality at all -- is to excise this other emergent subject, the transsexual.

While sexology is considered in lesbian and gay history a skewed and severely outdated way of explaining lesbian and gay subjectivity, it overlaps considerably and seriously with contemporary medical discussions of transsexuality. Current theories (psychiatric and medical) of transsexuality trace the origins of the transsexual back to the pages of the sexologists and the sexual invert. It is possible to see the transsexual as having found his / her way into the sexologists' studies, and to find evidence that s/he managed to access medical technology to enable a sexual transition of some sort before psychiatry had even articulated a transsexual identity or condition. Sexual inversion gets

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formally taken up again in the medico-psychological work on transsexuality from the 1940s. In contradistinction to its reading by lesbian and gay critics, I argue that nineteenth-century sexology and its discourse of sexual inversion was enabling and productive, marking the emergence of the transsexual of the twentieth century. Such a contention demands a new reading of The Well be performed. Far from following the last twenty years of criticism and repudiating or explaining as historically contingent Stephen Gordon's desire to be a man, her terrible discomfort and pain around her female body, her idealization of heterosexuality, and her final ceding of her "lesbian" love relation to a heterosexual man, I elucidate their centrality in the novel, their key function in the representation of Stephen's identity and the novel's plot. These "problematics" of The Well, I argue, make absolute sense -- indeed, appear considerably less "problematic" -- in a trans context.

Reading The Well as a transsexual text also makes sense of its troublesome place in the lesbian canon, the difficulties it has been seen to pose in the formation of this. No wonder lesbian critics have represented The Well as a "bad" lesbian novel if lesbianism is not its intersecting identity after all; its critical history appears to have been a case of trying doggedly to fit a square peg into a round hole. Furthermore, reading The Well as a transsexual novel, provides the beginnings of an explanation for its critical history's remarkable relation to that of Orlando. Both published in the autumn of 1928, Hall's novel was quickly tried and banned, Virginia Woolf's was critically acclaimed and became a bestseller. The question has been asked often enough (it has never received a convincing answer): How did Orlando, which thematizes sex change and moments of same-sex desire, which appears with a photograph of and dedication to Vita Sackville-West, an out sapphist, escape the obscenity law at exactly the moment it was being invoked against The Well? Adam Parkes suggests that the answer lies in the novels' aesthetic treatment of lesbianism: "Whereas Woolf's fictional biography, like [Compton] Mackenzie's satire [Extraordinary Women which was also published in 1928 before The Well], sets out to

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make readers laugh, The Well of Loneliness pleads the cause of sexual inversion by taking up an aggressively polemical stance" (434). The will to censor and exclude The Well and simultaneously to celebrate Orlando at their time of publication foreshadows the contrasting history of these two novels in feminist and lesbian feminist criticism. As Bonnie Zimmerman points out, feminist literary criticism has tended to canonize Orlando as the lesbian novel over The Well, its picaresque romance excluding the less celebratory depictions of lesbian life The Well has been taken to represent. Again, the critical history of the two novels is explained through their apparently contrasting aesthetics: a difference in treatment of the same (lesbian) subject.

The reason for the different fates of the two novels, both in 1928 and in their subsequent critical history, is more fundamental than aesthetics, residing not so much in their contrasting treatment of the same subject than in the fact that they represent radically different subjects. In spite of the sex change in Orlando, the text is less about (trans)sex than gender play: light-hearted, playful and fundamentally not about the body, about painful wrong embodiment, about a medical condition. As Caroll Smith-Rosenberg writes: "[T]hroughout Orlando, clothes, not genitals or personality, symbolize gender change. The body remains amorphous, Orlando's character beyond gender. . . . Tying gender to dress rather than dress to gender, Woolf inverts Krafft-Ebing's dark vision of the 'Mannish Lesbian.' Her joyous androgyne ridicules his decadent hermaphrodite" (276). Woolf's inversion of the invert constitutes a fundamental refusal to even engage it. Her subject matter is instead the historico-cultural construction of gender (and thus takes up a critical distance from its contemporaneous sexological and psychoanalytic discourses which configure gender identity in psycho-sexological terms), not the subjective experience of sexual embodiment. The Well, on the other hand, takes the figure of the invert quite seriously, quite literally -- some have found slavishly -- with the effect of authenticating the embodied condition of inversion as it was described by sexology at that moment. Esther Newton remarks that "Unlike Orlando, Stephen is trapped in history; she

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cannot declare gender an irrelevant game" ("The Mythic Mannish Lesbian" 20). If trapped in history, that is, trapped in the sexology of her moment, Stephen (like sexology's transgendered subjects) is trapped in her body; for sexology, as it emerged as a pre-psychoanalytic discourse, stands as a moment when gender and sexuality are thought together through the body. The invert's inversion is congenital, embodied, as well as deeply felt in the psyche. Sexology operated as a science before the advent of psychoanalysis. Even though there was some actual historical overlap between early sexology and the beginnings of psychoanalysis (and, indeed, current writings on transsexuality are profoundly sexological), the premises of sexology are fundamentally those of nineteenth-century medical science: that gender identity disorders are congenital. Conceptually speaking, early sexology predates psychoanalysis's understanding of the play of the unconscious and fantasy, psychoanalysis's insistence on the power of family relations to shape the psyche and gendered identity. Sexology is all about being "trapped in the wrong body."

If The Well is the first transsexual fiction, the first representation of the figure of what psychiatrists now call gender identity disorder -- a transsexual man, a "man trapped in a woman's body" (and the images of imprisonment in the body in the novel are many and powerful) -- then its troubled critical history and Orlando's contrasting one from 1928 to the present also beg a new reading. That the transsexual story has proven deeply disturbing and more troublesome, less reconcilable to various sets of expectations about gender and sexuality, is hardly surprising. Woolf's representation of gender as flexible has itself proven flexible, more adaptable, and promises to continue to do so given the stage of contemporary gender theory. In contrast to Hall's novel, Woolf's comic, playful exploration of gender is highly amenable to the queer performativity of gender which aligns itself generically, as I suggested in chapter 1, with comedy, the parodic. Indeed such a queer reading of the two novels has already been performed. Parkes makes the predictable argument that Orlando anticipates Judith Butler's critique of the truth of

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gender which Hall posits: "Where Hall points to the "facts, Woolf exploits the theatrical properties of sexual identity to create a whole world of performance that renders the rhetoric of sincerity ever more doubtful" (437). Queer criticism looks set to continue the critical tradition in which these two novels have been cast as antagonists, Orlando valorized for its parodic play of gender, The Well's literalness serving as Orlando's dumb foil. Hall's text is fundamentally irreconcilable to queer theory's conceptualization of gender performativity, yet herein lies its value. Precisely because of the novel's investment in sexology's figure of the invert, The Well might be re-located to a foundational site in the transsexual / transgender canon as we begin to formulate this: an early and easily the most well known representation of transgender experience. And like other transsexual / transgender texts, The Well may be read to intervene in the queer inscription of (trans)gender as performative.

ii. The Lesbian in The Well: Feminist Criticism and the Lesbian Literary Canon

> " I knew it was a lesbian novel and banned for 'obscenity.' Lesbian, yes, obscene -- no -- I did not like the insistence that Stephen was a man in all but body. I loathed it."
>
> "I didn't quite know whether Radclyffe Hall was male or female."
> Lesbian readers cited in O'Rourke

The critical history of The Well has established itself on a paradox. As Alison Hennegan, O'Rourke and Rule have remarked, The Well has been established as the "bible" of lesbianism (Hennegan viii; O'Rourke 116; Rule p61).[4] Simultaneously, there has been a universal but as yet unanalyzed recognition that reading Stephen Gordon as a lesbian (both reading *her* as a lesbian and reading her, the critic as a lesbian) requires much

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[4] The argument has been made -- but exceptionally -- that lesbianism is not the dominant theme of The Well. Claudia Stillman Franks contends that The Well is about a woman coming to writing.

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work. Stephen's masculine identification, her transgendering, demands extensive explanation in order to be rendered intelligible in a lesbian plot. Much more than the novel's classism or nationalism, the transgendered theme has functioned as the consistent sticking point for (lesbian-) feminist critical work. This section of my chapter offers a simple tripartite typology of the major ways in which Stephen's transgendering has been accounted for in lesbian and feminist criticism. In early lesbian-feminist criticism, Stephen's masculinity provides the grounds for the repudiation of The Well as a lesbian novel. In later attempts to recuperate the text as lesbian, Stephen's masculinity is rationalized as representative of the sexological imaging of the invert and The Well is understood as a historically-rooted representation of lesbianism. More recently, poststructuralist feminist criticism has invested in discovering political play in the novel's debt to sexology and the discourse of inversion. The Well has been read as a lesbian subversion or inversion of this transgendered representation of lesbianism, Stephen / Hall reclaimed as heroic subjects, appropriating and undermining sexology rather than uncritically embracing it. What has been key to all readings of The Well is understanding the relationship between text and sexology, the figure of the invert and the modern lesbian: Is the dynamic of literary text to discursive context one of reactionary reinscription, historically accurate reproduction, or subversive appropriation?[5]

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[5] One might attempt this same typology -- in order to access how the relations between novel, sexology and modern lesbianism / feminism have been figured -- by looking at the novel's recent publication history. The Corgi paperback version of the 1960s appears to mark a shift in assumptions about how sexology plays into the novel. With Corgi, the novel simultaneously lost Ellis's prefatory note and acquired the subtitle, "The Classic Novel of Lesbian Love," as though the occlusion of sexology is a proportionate gain for lesbianism. In 1982, the British feminist press, Virago, reissued the novel again without Ellis's preface, yet with an introduction by Alison Hennegan which contextualizes Stephen's masculinity in terms of sexology. The feminist commentary re-authorizes but significantly contains the sexological sources in an explanatory frame.

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On the wave of lesbian feminism in which lesbianism was popularly figured as the practice of feminist theory, critics in the early eighties understandably found Stephen and Hall's feminism as lesbians wanting. Lillian Faderman's Surpassing the Love of Men (1981) criticizes the novel for failing to provide a critique of the heterosexism and misogyny of the cultural invalidation of love between women, for falling into "the congenitalist trap" and embracing medical theories of lesbianism as an embodied condition. Faderman deplores that the novel "reinforced the notion that some women would not marry not because the institution was unjust, that they sought independence, not because they believed it would make them whole people, that they loved other women not because such love was natural -- but instead because they were born into the wrong body" (322-323). In Faderman's reading, Hall's investment in the sexological account of the embodiedness of the cross-gender identity of the invert precludes a cultural critique of the ideology of compulsory heterosexuality.

The task of analyzing the institutionalization of homophobia and sexism became central to the project of lesbian feminism and the conceptualization of lesbian identity. This "politicization" of lesbianism -- the yoking of lesbianism with feminism -- informed critical thinking about what constituted a lesbian novel. Also writing in 1981, Catharine Stimpson implicitly draws on Adrienne Rich's 1980 essay, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," in figuring lesbianism as a form of feminist resistance to heterosexuality and patriarchy. As the woman-identified woman formed the canon of lesbianism, Stimpson's essay suggests, the role of the lesbian literary canon is to reproduce this. Translating Rich's theory into literary criticism, Stimpson grounds authentic lesbian fiction firmly in feminist, woman-identified terrain, and names the defiant or "zero degree deviancy" lesbian writer representative feminist.[6] Lesbian writers have responded to the

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[6] Rich on lesbianism as feminist resistance: "Lesbian existence comprises both the breaking of a taboo and the rejection of a compulsory way of life [heterosexuality]. It is also a direct or indirect attack on male right of access to women. But it is more than

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cultural imaging of lesbianism as deviant by developing two novelistic paradigms, only the second of which offers the appropriately feminist "zero degree deviancy." The first reproduces the lesbian as outcast, internalizing the stigmatization of lesbianism; Stimpson classifies this "the dying fall, a narrative of damnation," for in it the lesbian is condemned to suffer a fate of isolation and unhappiness. Stimpson's second authentic lesbian paradigm puts up a feminist resistance to this narrative of deviation. The narrative of "enabling e[s]cape" overturns that of damnation in representing the lesbian as undermining her social stigmatization (98). Stimpson's formulation of the lesbian canon into this dichotomized scheme -- that is, acceptance of deviance equals "bad" lesbian, feminist critique of deviance equals "good" lesbian -- positions The Well as inauthentic or "bad" lesbian. Because The Well takes literally the discourse of sexology --- the scripting of homosexuality as biological deviation -- Stimpson includes it in the first category. Yet Stimpson's location of The Well on the wrong side of her divide, her repudiation of The Well for its reproduction of sexological transgenderism or what lesbian-feminism infamously dubbed "heterosexual role-playing," inadvertently points to how the novel might not be about a lesbian subject at all: "Hall represents the lesbian as scandal and the lesbian as a woman-who-is man, who proves 'her' masculinity through taking a feminine woman-who-is-woman as 'her' lover" (100). Stimpson's distancing quotation marks around the female pronoun, which the novel itself uses in unproblematized form underlines -- again inadvertently -- how Stephen is not, in terms of her identification at least, uncomplicatedly a woman. Because it falters over Stephen's transgendering, her male identification, Stimpson's reading of The Well is the one to which I circle back most in this chapter. (Ironically so: the alliance between a transsexual and a lesbian feminist reading,

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these, although we may first begin to perceive it as a form of naysaying to patriarchy, an act of resistance" (52).

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both suggesting but for very different projects that perhaps The Well is not about lesbians or a woman subject at all, is an odd one indeed.)

Although originally published nine years later (and recently reprinted in The Apparitional Lesbian), Terry Castle's essay on the plot of lesbian fiction closely echoes Stimpson's attempt to produce the lesbian canon out of texts which subvert the conventional cultural plot of lesbianism. Castle seeks to establish a lesbian canon in terms of the "lesbian counterplot": lesbian "erotic counterplotting" takes place when women form a homosexual attachment in a way that short-circuits the conventional homosocial plot. The homosocial plot destines women to circulate for men to ensure that men do not appear to function erotically for each other. Castle posits such "erotic counterplotting" as "characteristic of lesbian in novels in general" (Apparitional Lesbian 74); the erotic counterplot becomes her criterion for valorizing novels as lesbian. Yet, like Stimpson, Castle offers a dichotomized scheme which demarcates the "good" or "real" lesbian (counter)plots from the "bad" (master)plots. Her narrative categories are "euphoric" and "dysphoric": lesbian counterplots are euphoric in offering a lesbian utopian comedy in which male relations and hetero-relations have no space. The texts which reassert the homosocial masterplot and vanquish the lesbian counterplot are dysphoric, presumably because their narratives overshadow this lesbian euphoria.[7] The antithesis also functions generically. Whereas the euphoric paradigm takes up a parodic or satiric relation to canonical Canonical (as opposed to lesbian canonical) novels and dominant plots, deploying fantastic or imaginative aesthetics (among other texts, Castle cites Orlando as exemplary), the dysphoric novel is realistic. Given Castle's criteria, it is surprising that The Well does not fall into the dysphoric category. The novel's painstaking (and often painful) realism and in particular its plot closure, in which Stephen gives up Mary to

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[7]Castle borrows -- and lesbianizes -- the dysphoric / euphoric plot paradigm from Nancy K. Miller's The Heroine's Text.

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Martin Hallam and ends up single and suffering in a way that surely reasserts the homosocial or heterosexual plot, would seem to place The Well firmly in the dysphoric camp. Confining her remarks on The Well to a footnote, Castle states, however, that "Hall's manic depressive extravaganza" does not fit either category of lesbian fiction, euphoric or dysphoric, that it is not really "a novel in the ordinary sense" (Apparitional Lesbian 86). Instead, The Well functions as "a lesbian Odyssey" (Apparitional Lesbian 86): a quest for the lesbian self. It appears to become difficult in a post-lesbian-feminist context to either unambiguously condemn The Well or rescue it. Simultaneously, ambivalently, it is the bible of lesbianism and the worst press lesbianism has received; as Rule writes, "either a bible or a horror story for any lesbian" (50). Nevertheless, although, unlike Stimpson, Castle does not suggest that The Well is not "really" lesbian, her establishing euphoric counterplots as definitive of the lesbian canon has the similar effect of keeping Hall's novel outside of this canon.

While lesbian-feminist criticism reads The Well's commitment to sexology and the concomitant transgendering of Stephen's identity as marking the novel out from the more clearly feminist, woman-identified oppositional narratives forming the lesbian-feminist fictional canon, other feminist critics suggest these same features are precisely what render The Well lesbian. These later critics claim not to read The Well from the vantage point of late twentieth-century sexual politics but to recontextualize the novel in its moment of production. Stephen's masculine gender identification is a historically-accurate symptom of her sexual identity as an invert; her inversion, the contemporaneous conceptualization of homosexuality. In recuperating Stephen and the female invert as lesbian, these critics explain her masculinity and her identification with men by figuring them as politically strategic, products of the discourse of sexology without which a sexual relationship between women would have remained invisible. Smith-Rosenberg argues that Hall and her protagonist are among the second generation of New Women who in the 1920s and 1930s appropriated the discourse of inversion and the intermediate sex in order to

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sexualize the lesbian desire occulted under the guise of "romantic friendships" of the first generation of New Women. Representing The Well's adoption of the language of inversion as a kind of strategic necessity, at the same time Smith-Rosenberg questions the efficacy of this mode of sexualization. The repercussions, exemplified particularly in the plot of The Well, involved increasing the isolation of the lesbian and exacerbating her cultural stigmatization as she became more "different," more "other."

In an essay that began in collaborative work with Smith-Rosenberg, Newton makes a similar constructionist argument about the "mannish lesbian"'s taking on of masculinity. She claims that the lesbian played the transgendered role of female invert because it coded as sexual her desire for women at a moment when only men were understood as capable of actively expressing sexual desire. Masculinity functioned as the index to sexual desire; without it, relationships between women would appear as non-erotic friendships. Thus Stephen's transgendered identity ensures her sexualization as a lesbian. Reading her as "a lesbian in male body drag (a butch), Newton's recuperation of The Well champions Stephen as historical precursor of the butch dyke stigmatized by lesbian feminism in the seventies and early eighties (23). That the butch was one of the most prominent subjects of the sex debates at the time of Newton's writing (1984) suggests that the critic's recuperation of the invert is not historicist in any uncomplicated way because informed by her own moment. Newton implies that previous lesbian criticism had excluded The Well from the lesbian canon (continuing the work of stigmatizing Stephen) because of her masculinity: "As the Bowery bum represents all that is most feared and despised about drunkenness, the mannish lesbian, of whom Stephen Gordon is the most famous prototype, has symbolized the stigma of lesbianism and so continues to move a broad range of lesbians" (10). In both Smith-Rosenberg and Newton, Hall and Stephen are recuperated as lesbians only at the cost of subsuming their transgenderism -- their cross-dressing, their male-identification -- into lesbian identity.

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(Trans)gender is rewritten as a historically contingent marker or subset of (female homo)sexuality.

A Foucauldian historicist approach to The Well is taken by Sonia Ruehl, Jean Radford and Gillian Whitlock. While, like Smith-Rosenberg and Newton, these critics read the novel and Stephen's transgendered subjectivity as constructed by the contemporaneous sexological discourse of inversion, they also desire to see the novel exceed its sexological framework and resist the discursive power that engenders it. Both Ruehl and Radford draw on Michel Foucault's notion of the reverse discourse made possible by sexology to explain as dialectic and dynamic the relationship of The Well to inversion.[8] Ruehl argues that the novel reverses the discourse of sexology by beginning the transformation of Ellis's category of the invert into politicized homosexual subject. Hall manipulates the sexological subject in order to refigure homosexuality from sin to innate condition, shifting the appropriate context of reception for homosexuality from condemnatory religious to sympathetic medical. Furthermore, Hall's personal investment in the science of sexology paves the way for lesbian feminism's emphasis on politicizing the personal. Ruehl perceives Foucault's reverse discourse most clearly played out in Hall's personalizing of an institutionalized discourse: "Hall claimed that right to speak about inversion on the grounds that she herself was an invert, not an expert" (27).

Radford similarly draws on reverse discourse to articulate the presence of conflicting explanations for homosexuality in The Well. While Hall uses the frame of Ellis's sexual inversion, "much of the narrative discourse exceeds and escapes that frame" (105). The excess or reverse discourse consists in the novel's reproduction of Oedipal

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[8] Foucault argues famously that sexology "also made possible the formation of a 'reverse' discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturality' be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified" (The History of Sexuality Vol. 1, An Introduction 101).

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triangles: its borrowing from Freudian psychoanalysis to articulate homosexuality not as a product of the body but of family dynamics and the psyche. The novel evidences "the co-existence of contradictory discourses about homosexuality" not contained by the discourse of inversion (106). Moreover, Hall combines these discourses of homosexuality with the conventions of heterosexual romance to construct the beginnings of a homosexual politics.

Following Ruehl, Whitlock asserts that Hall's novel did not simply affirm Ellis' theories about homosexuality but "transformed them into a quite different discourse that generates quite different effects" (560). This "different discourse" again foreshadows lesbian feminist criticism, the "different effects" including The Well's concern with the specific configuration of problematics that confronts the twentieth-century lesbian writer: language, literature and sexuality. Above all, it is in her thematization of "gender bifurcation" which, according to Whitlock, characterizes "the lesbian literary tradition," that Hall can be considered a precursor of lesbian greats -- Gertrude Stein, Virginia Woolf, Djuna Barnes and Monique Wittig (573). Where Stillman Franks reads The Well as a novel about a woman coming to writing, Whitlock reads it specifically as a lesbian *Künstlerroman.* Yet even in this argument, Whitlock acknowledges the limitations of the text's potential as lesbian novel. The problem is that "both Radclyffe Hall and her inscribed author, Stephen Gordon, try to put new wine into old bottles" (573). The dependence on the sexological figure of the invert and the reliance on the conventions of heterosexual / heterosexist romance are outdated, and thus the depiction of lesbian desire is not as playful and appealing -- as modern -- as say the contemporaneous Orlando. Nevertheless, in spite of concluding that the novel fails to be effectively transformative, Whitlock believes in the importance of crediting Hall for her lesbian-feminist intention: "We do Hall an injustice if we ignore the extent to which her novel attempts to use realist fiction and to find a language in which to say 'I, a women-loving woman, exist"(579).

Whitlock's finding in the novel this syntax of woman-loving woman-identification encapsulates the bizarre contortions the critic whose project is to reclaim The Well as

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lesbian (and as a lesbian) must perform -- an extreme example of how the desire to figure the novel as more than the sum of its discursive parts, as exceeding the sexological and heterosexual romantic conventions that hold it together, cannot fail to blot out or refigure as strategic and provisional The Well's transgendered subject. The novel can be recuperated as an oppositional lesbian text only if it can be seen as inverting or subverting the discursive conventions that clearly and profoundly structure it -- centrally, the sexological material on sexual inversion, and to a lesser extent, the heterosexual romance (these are of course not unrelated). This critical inversion of inversion in effect neutralizes it, if it does not cancel it out altogether. Ruehl and Radford clearly wish to read Hall as not taking Ellis or the other sexologists literally, as borrowing terms and types from sexology lesbian tongue-in-cheek, with her own more feminist, agenda in mind. This is profoundly anachronistic: an effect of the critics' wishful retroactive thinking. Hall espoused the tenets of inversion -- indeed, was something of a devotee -- thoroughly and unwaveringly both in her own life and in The Well.[9] And while Hall's request that Ellis write the prefatory commentary to The Well might certainly be interpreted as a move to authorize via a medical expert the identity of her fictional invert, it proves more difficult to explain why Hall made Stephen so thoroughly inverted in the novel: why Stephen is portrayed as embodying the condition of inversion to such a profound extent with Hall allowing the reader no ironic or parodic distance. Ultimately, the critical thread with which my reading is most aligned is the early lesbian feminist work on the novel precisely because it foregrounds and reads as incompatible with lesbianism the transgendered

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[9] "Despite the slender research on which these theories [of inversion] were based (Ellis cited only six lesbian case-histories in Sexual Inversion), John [Radclyffe Hall] swallowed them wholesale. She *wanted* to believe them. . . . The 'invert' neatly defined her own case, providing a 'scientific' explanation both for her divided, tormented nature and the unhappy circumstances for her upbringing" (Baker 217; emphasis in original).

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subject of The Well. The value of this critical work lies in its not sublimating the transgendered material in the novel to the lesbian desire of the critic.

If the dominant lesbian and gay critique of sexology is that it places under an objectifying medicalizing gaze -- and thus denies -- homosexual subjectivity, the popular project of locating "reverse discourse" among inverted subjects stems surely from the wish to posit lesbian and gay subjectivity at its very moment of "construction."[10] In the project of making sense of sexology from within lesbian and gay history, the transgendered character of the inverted subject is misrepresented as a false construction on the part of the observing sexologist, who is then thought to fail to see the real "homosexual" subject before him. This is the lesbian and gay consensus even though, in their written autobiographies or their interviews cited in the sexological texts, many of the sexologists' inverted subjects articulate their identity in terms of cross-gender identification, even when they expressly articulate their desire to be the "other sex." Ironically, the lesbian and gay reading of sexology as constructionist denies the invert the (transgendered) subjectivity and agency that lesbian and gay critics claim sexology withholds from homosexual subjects. Whereas the lesbian and gay version of sexology accepts the homosexuality of the subject on some base level as transhistorical and real, the inversion or transgendering of the subject is read as constructed by the sexologist, the effect of his discursive moment. At work is a clear valorization: the homosexuality or same-sex love is posited as authentic, while the transgendering or transsexing of the speaker is rendered the invalid and transitory construction of the sexologist.

If the sexological figure of the invert proves irreducible to the homosexual, clearly The Well's relation to sexology, and its situation in lesbian and feminist criticism which

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10 For an example of the currency of "reverse discourse," in lesbian and gay work reading (slightly later) sexological and medical work, see Jennifer Terry, "Theorizing Deviant Historiography."

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has staked itself on this relation and the conventional understanding of sexology, must be re-examined.

iii. Teresa de Lauretis's "Perverse Desire" and the Queering of The Well: Stephen Gordon as Lesbian Fetish

In my introduction to this chapter, I claimed that The Well's investment in the painful embodiment of inversion as a condition, does not make it compatible with queer theories of gender. I want now to turn to a recent reading of the novel by Teresa de Lauretis that attempts to make it so. Although de Lauretis contends that her emphasis on "lesbian" in The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire reflects a distance from "queer," her reading of The Well is symptomatically queer ("Habit Changes" 297). The figure of the butch lesbian, which, according to de Lauretis following Newton, finds its precursor in Stephen Gordon, offers de Lauretis the tools -- the particular configuration of body, gendered identification and desire -- for producing a queer theory of lesbian fetishism. Characterizing de Lauretis's theory as queer is her attempt to sexualize lesbian desire via crossing gender identifications. The theoretical effect is one of "loosening" gender from the sexed materiality of the body. Gender is remobilized in the realm of the imaginary, fantasy, the performative. Inversion, the "lesbian"'s embodiment of masculinity, is a structuring trope of de Lauretis's new theory of lesbian sexuality; it enables her in to queer her own feminism.[11] As I suggested in chapter 1, this gesture or rescripting trans-ness *for* homosexuality is characteristic of queer

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[11] De Lauretis was writing on lesbian representation as early as 1988: see her essay on lesbian film, "Sexual Indifference and Lesbian Representation." In 1991, she made a public move to queer in editing the special issue of differences on queer theory. With The Practice of Love, de Lauretis is at her most "out" as author; the book repeatedly hints at (but never spells out) the autobiographical nature of its own exploration of "perverse desire."

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theory. Queer writes itself on this trans identification, metaphorizing transgender as performative and displacing it from bodies.

While the first to consider Stephen's masculinity in terms of psychoanalytic masquerade, to figure it as a fetishistic disavowal of the female body, de Lauretis's recuperation of The Well shares common ground with previous readings on the novel in its emphasis on fetishism. At least in work that lesbianizes The Well, the critical tendency has been to read Stephen's masculinity as standing for something else: a symbolic marker of lesbian sexuality, or of the defiant politicization of homosexuality. Stephen's transgendering has functioned consistently as a fetish in (lesbian-) feminist criticism: a metonymical substitute; a signifier which simultaneously conceals and reveals its signified. In reading through a paradigm of fetishism, De Lauretis's essay continues and enunciates this critical history rather than breaking from it.

De Lauretis pivots her interpretation on one scene from the novel, a description of Stephen looking at her body in the mirror. De Lauretis calls this "the scene at the mirror"; as my critique progresses, the ways in which Lacan underwrites her reading become clearer (209). Here is the scene:

> That night [Stephen] stared at herself in the glass; and even as she did so she hated her body with its muscular shoulders, its small compact breasts, and its slender flanks of an athlete. All her life she must drag this body of hers like a monstrous fetter imposed on her spirit. This strangely ardent yet sterile body that must worship yet never be worshipped in return by the creature of its adoration. She longed to maim it, for it made her feel cruel; it was so white, so strong and so self-sufficient; yet withal so poor and unhappy a thing that her eyes filled with tears and her hate turned to pity. She began to grieve over it, touching her breasts with pitiful fingers, stroking her shoulders, letting her hands slip along her straight thighs -- Oh, poor and most desolate body!
>
> Then, she, for whom Puddle was actually praying at that moment, must now pray also, but blindly; finding few words that seemed worthy of prayer, few words that seemed to encompass her meaning -- for she did not know the meaning of herself. But she loved, and loving groped of the God who had fashioned her, even unto this bitter loving. (Hall 187-188; quoted in de Lauretis 210)

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De Lauretis makes two substantive claims about this mirror scene: the first, that it is a masturbatory moment; the second, that Stephen longs to see reflected in the mirror a more feminine body image, that what she wants for herself is what she desires in her lover, Angela Crossby -- femininity. De Lauretis supports these two interpretative claims and argues the connections between them through a close reading of the passage; she analyzes properties of the language and the typography to allow her to read the first paragraph through the second. The masturbatory content of the first paragraph -- this moment with Stephen in front of the mirror -- can be derived from the second paragraph: "The typographical division that separates the last sentence of the first paragraph, describing the movement of Stephen's hands and fingers on her own body, from the second and last sentence of the second paragraph cannot disguise the intensely erotic significance of the scene" (210). Even though "at face value, the paragraph division corresponds to the ideological division between body and mind" (the first paragraph representing body, the second, mind), "a few words belie the (overt) sublimation and the (covert) negation of the sexual that the second paragraph would accomplish" (210). In spite of the apparent change of scene and tone, these words suggest a subliminal sexual continuity between first and second paragraphs. The connections between the two paragraphs are wrought with the "Then" opening the second paragraph and the "this" which closes it. Both referents

> temporally [link] the movement of the hands in the preceding paragraph to the final words of the second, "even unto this bitter loving," where the shifter "this" relocates the act of loving in a present moment that can refer only to the culmination or conclusion of the scene interrupted by the paragraph break; that is, the scene of Stephen in front of the mirror, "touching her breasts with pitiful fingers, stroking her shoulders, letting her hands slip along her straight thighs (and if we might fantasize along with the text, watching in the mirror her own hands move downward on her body) even unto this bitter loving." No wonder the next paragraph must rush in to deny both her and us the vision of such an intolerable act. (211; parentheses de Lauretis's)

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For de Lauretis, "this bitter loving" refers not to Stephen's painful and, at this stage in the novel, increasingly unsuccessful affair with Angela, but to the present moment in front of the mirror which becomes a scene of (bitter) self-stimulation.

What renders the moment of masturbation "bitter, what "frustrates [Stephen's] narcissistic desire" is that Stephen's "'places' [and de Lauretis intends this as the "locales" of body image]. . . are virtually foreclosed or repudiated, the effect of an even greater and more final repression" (213, 211). Stephen's sublimation of a feminine body image into the masculine precludes the novel articulating "an autonomous female homosexuality" (211). These repudiated corporeal "places" consist in a "feminine body"; paradoxically, Stephen desires in the other (the femme's body) what she longs for in herself. De Lauretis's argument in effect conceives of the scene as a Lacanian mirror stage. Stephen sees in the mirror "the image of a phallic body" -- an integral body, the *gestalt.* This "phallic self-sufficiency," this foreclosure of the feminine as the object of desire, makes Stephen's body impossible to love both for herself and the other -- the (self-) loving bitter -- ("this strangely ardent yet sterile body that must worship yet never be worshipped in return") and also engenders her desire to maim her body (213):

> Thus, if she hates her naked body, it is because that body is so masculine, "so strong and so self-sufficient," so phallic. The body she desires, not only in Angela but also autoerotically for herself, the body she can make love to and mourns for, is a feminine, female body. Paradoxical as it may seem, the "mythic mannish lesbian" (in Esther Newton's wonderful phrase) wishes to have a feminine body, the kind of female body she desires in Angela, later in Mary -- a femme's body. (213)

Via Stephen's paradoxical repudiation of what she desires, The Well outlines a theory of lesbian fetishism. It "inscribes the lesbian body within a fantasy of dispossession" that might "be usefully read as a fantasy of castration" (201). The fantasy of castration is fetishistic for its simultaneous maintenance of contradictory positions contained in the notion of disavowal: the psychic defense characteristic of the fetishist ("I know but"); what Freud terms "the double attitude of fetishists" ("Fetishism" 218): "The lesbian

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subject neither refuses nor accepts castration, but rather disavows it" (Practice of Love 204).[12] Stephen takes up the position of the fetishist, the site of perverse desire that Freud closed off to women as de Lauretis points out, and which it is de Lauretis's agenda to reopen to women in order to articulate the difference in and of lesbian desire. At the same time, Stephen's phallic self-sufficiency itself functions as a lesbian fetish, one which disavows (paradoxically refuses and at the same time reveals) her longing for the lost female body in the other and in herself. The lost object to which this fetish refers and simultaneously denies, as in Freud's scene of fetishism, is the mother's body. Stephen longs for her mother's body as her mother longs for a daughter in Stephen: "in this case the relation of castration to the narcissistic wound in the daughter appears to be based on another maternal fantasy, namely, the mother's narcissistic wish for a feminine body (in the daughter as in herself)" (241).

The fetish operates as a signifier of desire. Even though the fetish is "shaped" differently in each case, the lost referent of the fetish remains consistent -- the mother's body: "The terms of difference and the signifiers of desire vary from text to text and from lesbian subject to lesbian subject, but they always refer to one fantasmatic instance -- the doubling of the originally lost object (the female body), and the displacement of the latter

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[12] Elizabeth Grosz usefully situates disavowal as intermediate between foreclosure and repudiation on the one hand, and repression and negation on the other: "Like repression and negation, [disavowal] involves the psychic registration of an impulse . . . but like foreclosure or repudiation, it refuses the contents of a perception or piece of reality" ("Lesbian Fetishism?" 108). Freud suggests that the fetish is produced in this oscillation between perceptions: "It is not true that the child emerges from his experience of seeing the female parts with an unchanged belief in the woman having a phallus. He retains this belief but he also gives it up; during the conflict between the deadweight of the unwelcome perception and the force of the opposite wish, a compromise is constructed such as is only possible in the realm of unconscious modes of thought -- by the primary processes. In the world of psychical reality the woman still has a penis in spite of all, but this penis is no longer the same as it once was. Something else has taken its place, so to speak, and now absorbs all the interest which formerly belonged to the penis" ("Fetishism" 216).

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onto the signification of desire itself" (250). Masculinity functions as the most common lesbian signifier in a woman because it performatively sexualizes the love between women, what might otherwise be read as simply two women together, not two lesbians. Masculinity is the lure of lesbian desire, signifying lesbian difference (this premise thus resembles the historicist readings of Smith-Rosenberg and Newton). Reading Stephen's masculinity as fetish / fetishistic referring to a lost but longed for femininity is foundational to de Lauretis's sexualization of lesbian subjectivity and theory.

Having unpacked de Lauretis's reading and worked to clarify her argument, I want now to open up my problems with it. It should be noted first that de Lauretis is heavily caught up in the dynamic of fetishism that she appears to be only describing: of seeing and of not seeing; of displacing the real of this passage with the illusory. Perhaps because the real of this moment of Stephen before the mirror is the most painful to accept, it is simpler to disavow: to displace its manifest meaning into what is not represented. In order to "see" this passage first as masturbatory, and second as the sublimation of a desire for a feminine lovable body, de Lauretis fails to see the anguish of Stephen's embodiment: her hatred for her body and her desire to maim it. De Lauretis's failure to see is crystallized in her reading of the typography in the passage. In order to read the second paragraph as continuing and elaborating the first, de Lauretis must leave out that exclamation -- "Oh, poor and most desolate body!" Excising this all important *cri de coeur* for sympathy to the reader in which the narrative voice enters into Stephen's thought process, de Lauretis excises the un-pleasure from the scene. In order to read it smoothly as a moment of masturbatory pleasure, she blocks out the subject's alienation and removal from her body, its abjection.[13] De Lauretis glosses over the unelidable alienation of the moment.

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[13]Although de Lauretis follows Newton in much of her reading, she is far from Newton here whose interpretation of this scene resembles mine: "In one of Hall's most moving passages Stephen expresses this hatred [for herself] as alienation from her body" (20).

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While de Lauretis is correct in isolating this mirror scene as crucial for revealing the nature of Stephen's desire, her failure to read this as a moment of body dysphoria results in her grossly mis-recognizing the body Stephen wants. Far from being a representation of narcissistic self-loving (even if bitter), the passage portrays a corporeal alienation powerful enough to produce in the subject the desire to maim her own body. Whereas de Lauretis asserts that Stephen loathes her masculinity and longs for "feminine body" for herself, I argue that what is transparent here is Stephen's loathing of her female body. Stephen's body is already gender ambivalent. She has sought to masculinize it through "Sandow-ing" (lifting weights) and fencing, the effects of which can be seen (by Stephen and the reader) in the mirror -- "its muscular shoulders . . . its slender flanks of an athlete"; yet it remains a female body -- "its small compact breasts." Her desire to maim her body stems from her perception not of its phallic self-sufficiency but of its ambivalence, its phallic-insufficiency, its masculinized markers which pitifully fail to cover and conceal -- might one say correct? -- a female morphology. She hates and pities it for its ambivalence as a transgendered body, its strength and yet -- it is this all important "yet" that de Lauretis does not address -- its unhappiness, its insufficiency. The thrice repetition of "yet" in the short passage heavily underscores the fundamental transgendered ambivalence of the scene.

Stephen's bodily pain is a product not of her desire for a feminine body for herself but -- to be literal, as I will argue that the novel strives as much as possible to be -- of her failure to be male; I term it such advisedly for the text conceives of Stephen's condition as a failure, as lack. The lost body to which this scene and the entire novel refer is not female but male. The mother in The Well does not long for a daughter but a son; it is Stephen's failure to have been male that Stephen, her parents and the narrative mourn. Lady Anna remembers looking at the hills around Malvern "great with the child who should have been her son" (93). Hennegan has noted that the imperative "must" is repeated like "a maddening stylistic tic" throughout the novel (x). I would suggest that the tragic element

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in the novel stems from another syntax, not what is imperative but the conditional perfect: the impossible, the failed imperative, a nostalgia for what ought to have been but did not become. When describing the relation of Stephen to maleness, the novel is dotted with those "should have beens": she should have been Anna's son; she envies Martin Hallam's life as a man, the life that should have been hers; she is unable to fight in the war that should have been hers to fight. This syntax is of the painfully impossible, the failure to be "right" in the present; and the Gordons' naming Stephen in spite of her failure to be a boy is the one defiant moment in the text of the refusal to recognize and submit to the "should have been," one that forgets the discrepancy between what should have been and what is. The syntax is of profound, inconsolable regret. This irretrievable male body underlies the mirror scene as it does the entire novel; and if, like de Lauretis, we want to think pyschoanalytically about how this body sublimates parental identifications, the body is not the mother's but the father's: the father that Stephen dares resemble but inadequately, insufficiently -- "a blemished, unworthy, maimed reproduction" (11). It is ironically the maimed state of this maleness -- its insufficiency and inadequacy -- that produces in Stephen the desire to maim it further.

De Lauretis's fetishism of this passage is further evident in the two ways in which her reading decontextualizes it and uses contemporary theoretical paradigms (queer-feminist-psychoanalytic) to hold at bay and not take into account these contexts. She radically isolates this scene from the novel, not making sense of its function in the context of the narrative; and she radically isolates the novel from its historical moment, that is, The Well's immersion in sexology's particular configuration of the gendered body. The mirror scene appears toward the end of Stephen's love affair with Angela Crossby, when Stephen becomes conscious that Angela is two-timing her with Roger Antrim. Although de Lauretis briefly remarks on the novelistic context of the scene, she fails to take into account its significance in assessing the meaning of the scene itself, all the while acknowledging that her reading of the scene "works against the grain of the novel's

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explicit message" and "is likely to appear far fetched" (209). The narrative frame in which the mirror scene appears is absolutely key to accessing its meaning: Stephen's feelings of failing to be a man. The narrative describes how Stephen feels herself "no match for Roger [who is] . . calm, self-assured, insolent and triumphant" (184). In competing with Roger, Stephen uses what she has most of -- money -- to try to buy Angela's love with expensive gifts. Stephen returns home to Morton to enact the scene before the mirror at the end of one day of such desperate shopping. The passage takes its meaning from the surrounding narrative context when Stephen feels herself inadequate next to Roger's self-assurance and confidence, impotent in the face of Roger's hold on Angela's love, Roger whose "right to be perfectly natural" she has always envied (44). Significantly, Angela has already given Stephen her failure to be a real man as the reason for the problems in their relationship. She dares to suggest that the relationship might well have worked should Stephen have been a man (again that conditional perfect syntax of regret for what might have been): Angela "could not, she dared not explain. 'If you were a man --' She stopped abruptly, and burst into uncontrollable weeping" (177). To make full sense of the mirror scene, it is crucial to consider how these narrative threads weave their way into the meaning of the mirror passage.

What is most contentious in de Lauretis's fetishistic reading is the way in which it decontextualizes The Well from its sexological moment, reading back through Freud (whose work, while certainly available to her, Hall ignored in favor of the sexologists), and a queer-feminist Lacanian Freud at that. De Lauretis acknowledges her ahistorical perspective: "It is only retroactively, from a moment in Western history when the symbolic is being altered by the production of . . . feminist, gay, and anti racist-discourse . . . that it is possible to see the trace of a perverse desire in the ideologically conservative novel of Radclyffe Hall and to follow that trace through the ambiguities of Freud's work" (xviii). Transposing inversion to perversion, de Lauretis's chapter liberates Stephen from her "ideologically conservative" novel, liberates her from history, and elevates her to a place

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alongside Cherríe Moraga's Chicana lesbian butch of 1980s East Los Angeles: a subject a historical and cultural universe away. The effect of this "beaming up" of Stephen to the present North American moment is to flatten out, via the "transformer" of psychoanalytic fetishism, her inversion into modern lesbianism. In insisting on and returning to the discursive moment of The Well in this chapter, I suggest that Stephen's desire to be a man, and her sense of her painful wrong embodiment intersect more powerfully -- both thematically and historically -- with the narrative of contemporary female-to-male transsexuality than with that of the lesbian, butch or otherwise. Such mirror scenes as the above passage from The Well are paradigmatic of transsexual narratives; the desire to reshape or "maim" the flesh reveals the fundamental gendered split that typifies the transsexual subject. What one sees in the mirror, the reflection of the real body, simply does not match up with the projected body image: the sex on either side is fundamentally different, the "trans" journey functioning as the attempt to bring about their best reconciliation. Transsexual mirror scenes appear to reverse (invert?) the dynamic of the Lacanian mirror stage, for the reflected body represents not the integral and ideal body -- the *gestalt* -- as it does in Lacan / de Lauretis, but the "maimed" body that falsifies the subject's (more real) internalized body image.

If fetishism is a psychic defense against the reality of corporeal differences, then what exactly is at stake in de Lauretis's fetishistic reading of The Well? Just as the real sexual difference of the mother's body is disavowed in Freud's scene of fetishism by the fetishizing little boy, de Lauretis's fetishistic reading of The Well disavows the sexed difference of the body The Well conceives as the root of Stephen's problem. The scene becomes de Lauretis's own critical mirror scene, Stephen representing her lesbian *gestalt.* De Lauretis's redeployment of fetishism is characteristic of poststructuralist queer feminist theory which uses fetishism to theorize gender as unstable and complex, the product of the imaginary and symbolic that renders unintelligible or simply irrelevant the materially sexed body. Fetishism enables de Lauretis to construe Stephen's inversion as a sign of lesbian

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desire and desirability, to figure her masculinity as a masquerade which at once disavows and reveals a yearning for the real (female) body. Gender gets to be played out in the realm of the masquerade, the performative, the signifier. The phallus (ever inseparable from its material referent, the penis, as Jane Gallop and Kaja Silverman have argued, in spite of Lacan's assertion of its "transcendental" status) is effectively dethroned by the flexi-gendered lesbian fetish.

The reclaiming of fetishism has become a key mechanism for challenging the psychoanalytic Father's phallus and theory of gender with a more playful and mobile fetish and a more fluid (queerer) conceptualization of gender. The location of the lesbian body as a fetish has become a queer feminist trope for the following reasons.[14] First, thinking lesbianism through the dynamic of fetishism has provided a "perverse" way of making space for female sexual subjectivity in a masculinist system; psychoanalysis after all explicitly refused the possibility of female fetishism. Second, to superimpose the lesbian onto the fetishist is to refigure the lesbian as "gender troubling," staking out her female subjectivity as queer in "masculine" territory. Finally, in reclaiming the phallus as fetish for a lesbian subject, the theory has sought to deconstruct sexual difference, shifting it away from the body into the realm of the performative.[15] The phallus as fetish points to infinitely possible signs standing for the sexed body beyond the sexed body; it throws into question the very possibility of ever fixing the body as referent, a sexed body unmediated by language. Parveen Adams, for example, locates her lesbian fetishist-sadomasochist beyond the sexual difference she sees as characterizing, containing and constraining

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[14] See Butler, "The Lesbian Phallus" in Bodies That Matter, Heather Findlay, "Lesbian Fetishism and the Dildo Debates," Elizabeth Grosz, "Lesbian Fetishism?" and Parveen Adams, "Of Female Bondage."

[15]Or promising gender play beyond the sexed body; as de Lauretis writes, "the fetish releases *sexuality* from its embeddedness in *reproduction* ("Habit Changes" 309; emphasis in original).

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heterosexuality. In a parallel move, Grosz writes of fetishism as deconstructive of sexual difference in a symbolic (Lacanian) context. If "Fetishism emerges at the moment when the imaginary tilts into the symbolic," then it stands as a moment in between the maternal imaginary and the paternal symbolic ("Lesbian Fetishism?" 106 n.12). Fetishism takes place, in other words, in an intermediate space, neither imaginary (still) nor symbolic (yet), neither masculine nor feminine.

In short, fetishism allows for the production of the ambivalence or undecidability central to the poststructuralist paradigm of gender. At this point, we stumble across the reason why it has fixed on the trans subject, possibly finding in him / her the phallic woman the little boy-fetishist fantasizes his mother to be. Queer feminist theory has taken the place of the little boy / fetishist, displacing the painful real of sexual embodiment to an unreadable distance. The trans body is conceived as situated precisely in that intermediate space, the neither-nor / both space of the fetishized other in which fantasy, the imaginary and the performative proliferate meanings that cloak the real and the referential. The scene of this theory has developed as homologous to that of fetishism. Freud's fetishistic scene symptomizes a moment in which the real is translated into a sign (the mother's vagina is substituted with the fetishistic illusion that the mother has a penis), when the sexual differences between male and female are transcribed into a fantasy of ambivalent, unclearly sexed bodies. While Freud's scene is an imaginary moment, a fantasy, for the transsexual subject, the body in between is a real (often distressing) material fact.[16]

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[16] In "The Labors of Love. Analyzing Perverse Desire: An Interrogation of Teresa de Lauretis's The Practice of Love" in the current issue of differences as I write this, Grosz suggests that "the most distinctive and contentious of [de Lauretis's] claims [is] her linking of lesbian desire to the structure of fetishism" (282). While Grosz understands de Lauretis's use of fetishism as an attempt "to provide an account of lesbian desire beyond the masculinity complex" and "to disinvest the notion of castration from the amputation of bodily organs," she suggests that it remains "unclear that the fetish is any less phallic in its structure and its implications" (284; 289). Moreover, "if the fetish is just as implicated in masculinity as the phallus, then a theory which displaces the masculinity complex with

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iv. Freud and the Sexologists

De Lauretis's interpretation of Stephen's masculinity as fetishistic derives its theoretical backing from the poststructuralist feminist rereading of the Lacanian-Freudian account of sexual difference (via Jacqueline Rose and Judith Butler). The turn to the Lacanian Freud must be seen as motivated in part by the belief that theorizing desire and its role in shaping gender identity is a particularly important project, and that desire and gender must be fundamentally linked. Lacan is thought to provide a suitably sophisticated account of this, one that considers fetishism -- fears of castration and the psychic defenses against these; having the phallus and being the phallus; lack and desire -- in a symbolic landscape removed from the literality of the material body. As argued most trenchantly by Rose, Lacan's theory de-literalizes sexual difference in a way compatible with poststructuralist cynicism about literality and referentiality in the field of identity.[17]

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fetishism does not leave lesbianism any better off" (289-290). Grosz's crucial question about de Lauretis's new study (and also Butler's work on the lesbian phallus) is: why the "perverse" use of psychoanalysis in the first place to theorize lesbian sexuality? Isn't it time to reassess lesbian theory's dependence on psychoanalytic frameworks, and to stop "prolonging the agony of a dying discourse" (psychoanalysis)? "Psychoanalysis has remained the preferred, though not the exclusive or monopolistic, discourse of sexual pleasure and sexual desire within lesbian theorizing. It is time, I believe, that certain epistemological and political questions be asked: Why do we need psychoanalysis to think lesbian desire? What are the limits of its explanatory power regarding subjectivity and desire, the points beyond which it risks incoherence and contradiction? *And who are the subjects it is unable to fit into its explanatory schema?"* (278; my emphasis).

In her reply, de Lauretis refutes the notion that The Practice of Love attempts to "restore psychoanalysis as good object" ("Habit Changes" 309). It offers instead "a critical reading, an effort to work through critically -- to work with and against -- the concepts and the rhetorical and conceptual ambiguities of Freud, in order to remobilize their potential for resistance" (309). She claims that her study of perverse desire is "premised on a conception of the sexual that is actually closer to Foucault than to Freud," that is, that the sexual subject "is both an effect and a condition of the cultural construction of sexuality" (303).

[17]De Lauretis remarks on the importance of Lacan's symbolic reworking of castration to her theory of lesbian desire: "In the Lacanian framework, symbolic castration is both the

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The Lacanian-Freudian account of gender also appeals to the poststructuralist fondness for non-linear, anti-teleological narratives. According to the reading of Lacan and Freud via poststructuralist feminists, normative (i.e. non-perverse, non-inverted) gender identities are not givens but must be achieved. They are precarious and unstable, the route toward their accomplishment complicated by diversions and setbacks. It is upon the points of failure, digression or interruption in the narrative of normative gendering that poststructuralist work fixes and celebrates (points of crossing gender identifications, of fetishism, for example) because they are seen to figure gender as denaturalized, a state to be accomplished; they elucidate what is termed, post-Gender Trouble, gender performativity. Suggesting the unrelatedness of gender and sexual identity to the materially sexed body, such moments bring into play a notion of sexuality constructed through identifications and disidentifications. This complex notion of sexuality independent of sex is one of the central components in the Freudian legacy to contemporary paradigms of gender and sexuality.

The legatees of this tradition claim that Freud's conceptualization of sexuality most distinguishes his work from that of his precursors and contemporaries, the sexologists. De Lauretis, Radford and Newton argue that Freud's framework for theorizing sexuality effected a radical break with sexology. If sexology "invented" sexual inversion as a means of thinking homosexuality through inverted gender identity, if sexology imbricated sexuality and gender so thoroughly that it assumed that to desire a member of one's "own" sex one must really have characteristics of the "other" sex, Freud brought about the correct separation of sexuality and gender. Freud's account of homosexuality is

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condition of desire and what constitutes the paternal phallus as the "allocator" of positions in desire; castration and the phallus go hand in hand, as it were, one cannot stir without the other. Thus, for those who work with neo-Freudian psychoanalytic discourse, simply to reject the notion of castration or to refuse to rethink its terms is to find ourselves without symbolic means to signify desire, and hence without the means to theorize desire" (Practice of Love 33).

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accordingly valued for not representing the homosexual as inverted, that is, correlatively transgendered.[18]

Freud's distinction between the instincts and the drives made it possible to conceive of sexuality as irreducible to sex: both sex as in reproductive acts and sex as in the properties of the material body. In particular, Freud's notion of the sexual drive is accepted by his critics as recognizing as discrete two facets of sexuality which sexology had conflated: object-choice and sexual aim. By object-choice, Freud intends the gender of the object of desire (i.e., man / woman), so that one can speak of the subject making a heterosexual or a homosexual object-choice; by sexual aim, he intends the form of the desire itself, that is, the sexual acts performed or fantasized. The distinction between object-choice and sexual aim can be seen in fact in the case of fetishism. The little boy sees the mother's sexual difference, fears his own castration, and needs to defend against this. Importantly, fetishism is a defense not solely against castration but against the subject's relinquishing a heterosexual object-choice; it is a psychic defense, in other words against homosexuality.[19] The sexual aim of the fetishist -- his desire for the phallic mother -- ensures the continuing heterosexuality of his object-cathexis. While his sexual aim is perverse, his object-choice remains normative. Object-choice and sexual aim function most clearly as two intersecting but discrete axes, with the latter representing the dominant field of theoretical inquiry in "Fetishism": the specific and intricate nature of the subject's desire beyond the matter of what gender (man / woman) he desires in the other:

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[18]Newton, for instance, writes that, of Krafft-Ebing, Ellis, and Freud, "Freud's analysis was by far the most sophisticated. He rejected the trapped-soul paradigm and distinguished between 'choice of object' and 'sexual characteristics and sexual attitude of the subject" ("Mythic Mannish Lesbian" 18, n.30).

19 "One can now see what the fetish achieves and how it is enabled to persist. It remains a token of triumph over the threat of castration and a safeguard against it; it also saves the fetishist from being a homosexual by endowing women with the attribute which makes them acceptable as sexual objects" ("Fetishism" 216).

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a category then not integrally correlated to gender. Contemporary gender theorists understand this approach as antithetical to the sexologists' inquiry into the field of sexuality (severely limited by its intrication with rigid gender roles).

Freud is widely thought to articulate the separation between object-choice and sexual aim first in his Three Essays on Sexuality of 1905. De Lauretis discovers the crucial moment in this text via reading Arnold I. Davidson's commentary on the Three Essays (the layerings of citation here illustrate the genealogical texture of this discussion):

> And indeed, Davidson demonstrates that, in a "virtually *unargued unanimity*" (47), psychiatric theories of the time assumed that a specific object (i.e., members of the other sex) and a specific aim (i.e., reproductive genital intercourse) were integral or constituent parts of the sexual instinct. Freud, therefore, not only challenged the unanimously accepted view but "decisively replaced the concept of the sexual instinct with that of a sexual drive 'in the first instance independent of its object'" (54). Here is the crucial passage from the Three Essays:
>
> "It has been brought to our notice that we have been in the habit of regarding the connection between the sexual instinct and the sexual object as more intimate that it in fact is. Experience of the cases that are considered abnormal has shown us that in them the sexual instinct and the sexual object are merely soldered together -- a fact which we have been in danger of overlooking in consequence of the uniformity of the normal picture, where the object appears to form part and parcel of the instinct. We are thus warned to loosen the bond that exists in our thought between instinct and object. It seems probable that the sexual instinct is in the first instance independent of its object; nor is its origin likely to be due to its object's attracts."
> (The Practice of Love 17; Three Essays 13-14)

Freud sought to distinguish his theory of sexuality from that of his precursors precisely through critiquing their assumption of the interdependence of object-choice and sexual instinct.

Fifteen years later, in "Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman," we find Freud applying this critique to challenge the still common representation of homosexuality as transgendered or inverted. Again, he envisions this task to involve

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defining and distinguishing between categories of object-choice and instinct previously conflated.

> The mystery of homosexuality is therefore by no means so simple as it is commonly depicted in popular expositions, e.g., a feminine personality which therefore has to love a man, is unhappily attached to a male body; or a masculine personality, irresistibly attracted by women, is unfortunately cemented to a female body. It is instead a question of three series of characteristics, namely --
> Physical sexual characteristics (physical hermaphroditism) -- Mental sexual characteristics (masculine, or feminine, attitude) -- Kind of object choice. (157-158)

"If these findings are taken into account," -- that homosexuality and transgendered subjectivity are not necessarily correlated -- Freud goes on to argue, debunking one conceptualization of homosexuality drawn from sexology, "then, to be sure, the supposition that nature in a freakish mood created a 'third sex' falls to the ground" (158). If we understand Freud's three distinct categories of analysis -- physical sexual characteristics; mental sexual characteristics; kind of object-choice -- as translating roughly into, respectively: sex (the material body); gender (here the subject's gender identification, not the social construction of gender); and sexuality (sexual orientation), then the way in which his project seeks to restructure the theoretical frame of sexology becomes clearer. Freud's differentiation between these three categories serves to unyoke transgender from homosexuality; object-choice (sexual orientation) and mental sexual characteristics (gender identification) are no longer correlated. This distinction is driven home when he argues in the same essay that homosexuals can have non-inverted mental sexual characteristics (i.e. those that are considered as "belonging" to their sex) and, conversely, heterosexuals can manifest psychical hermaphroditism.[20] In addition, Freud's

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[20] "A man with predominantly male characteristics and also masculine in his love-life may still be inverted in respect to his object, loving only men instead of women. A man in whose character feminine attributes evidently predominate, who may, indeed behave in love like a woman, might be expected, from this feminine attitude, to choose a man for his

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formulation of his first term, physical sexual characteristics, as discrete, proposes the unrelatedness of both gendered identification and sexual orientation to the subject's physical sexual characteristics, suggesting that sexual and gender identities neither originate nor are inevitably manifested in the material body. Gender and sexuality are thus denaturalized, made independent of biology. It is on both of these counts -- first, the distinction between gender and sexual identities, and second, their mutual denaturalization -- that Freud marks himself out from the sexologists.

Yet in spite of Freud's claims to such difference -- and claims subsequently made on his behalf by lesbian and gay critics -- material in the same essay evidences how Freud cannot entirely give up the very tenets of sexology his theory explicitly challenges. In his explanation of his female analysand's homosexuality, Freud cites the force of her disappointment with her father for "giving" her mother a child. As a consequence, the girl turns form her father to her mother. In this crucial passage, Freud figures the analysand's exchange of object-choice precisely in terms of transgendering: "After her disappointment, therefore, this girl had entirely repudiated her wish for a child, the love of a man, and womanhood altogether. Now it is evident that at this point the developments open to her were very manifold; what actually happened was the most extreme one possible. *She changed into a man*, and took her mother in place of her father as love object" (145; my emphasis). Of course not a literal transsexing, the girl's transgendering takes place rather in the realms of gender identification and object-cathexis (in this regard, we can see how significant the Freudian-Lacanian emphasis has been crucial to queer feminism in which gender and sexuality are conceived in terms of identification and psychic defenses). The language of conversion Freud uses is precisely what draws the

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love-object; but he may nevertheless be heterosexual, and show no more inversion in respect of his object than an average normal man. The same is true of women; here also mental sexual character and object-choice do not necessarily coincide" (157).

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reader up in this psychoanalytic story where homosexuality is supposed to be inverted and correlated to transgender no longer; it signifies not the break but the continuity between sexological thinking and Freud. While evidently a metaphor for an alleged psychic shift, the phrase, "she changed into a man," in its functioning to explain the "homosexual" object-cathexis (but in what sense now is it homosexual?) re-conflates those categories Freud explicitly differentiated. Homosexing and transgendering are once again integrally related. The girl's desire turns toward her mother and hence causes? is the effect of? -- the exact dynamic is not articulated but the intricacy of the relation is indisputable -- her repudiation of womanhood. Thus in spite of Freud's overt rejection of sexology's entangling, the transgendering of the homosexual subject still haunts his own reading of his case.

Furthermore, even though Freud in theory denaturalizes homosexuality, explicitly refusing a congenital explanation of homosexuality and rejecting the notion of homosexuals as a third or intermediate sex, in his analysis, he does not renounce an interest in the correspondence between psychical and physical hermaphroditism: an interest foundational of sexology. In the case history, the body fails to remain clearly discrete from sexual and gender identity:

> Did this homosexual girl show physical characteristics plainly belonging to the opposite sex, and did the case prove to be one of congenital or acquired (later developed) homosexuality?
>
> I am aware of the importance attaching to the first of these questions. Only one should not exaggerate it and obscure in its favour the fact that sporadic secondary characteristics of the opposite sex are very often present in normal individuals and that well-marked physical characteristics of the opposite sex may be found in persons whose choice of object has undergone no change in the direction of inversion; in other words, that in both sexes the degree of physical hermaphroditism is to a great extent independent of the psychical hermaphroditism. *In modification of this statement it must be added that this independence is more evident in men than women, where bodily and mental traits belonging to the opposite sex are apt to coincide in their incidence.* (140; italics mine)

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The final "modification" of the statement reveals the trace of sexological subject of inversion being carried over into Freud's paradigms for homosexual identity. While Freud fails to examine the significance of this "coincidence" of inverted psychic and physical traits, or why it is "more evident" in homosexual women than in homosexual men, his remarking of its presence re-weaves the transgendered body and the matter of sex back into the apparently solely psychic story of homosexuality. "Psychogenesis" as a whole is a pivotal -- but dramatically more ambivalent than previously noted -- marker in the discursive histories of transgender and homosexuality. In it, Freud articulates his break with sexology and his intent to read homosexuality as independent of gender inversion and the body. At the same time, the essay reveals that this break between sexology and psychoanalysis is not as clean as Freud's poststructuralist commentators have thought. The sexological "remainder" of the transgendered body is conveyed into psychoanalysis's narrative of homosexuality.[21] The tension in the essay encapsulates psychoanalysis's own genealogy: its roots in the sexological work of the nineteenth century; its continuation of sexology's project of sexual psychology and psychopathology, and yet its attempts to break with sexology's definitive premises concerning the bodily origins of identity.[22]

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[21] Suggesting that Freud's break with sexology is enabled by changing social gender roles, David Greenberg notes, that, nevertheless, Freud's distinction between what I would term transgender and homosexuality is not absolute, particularly in the case of his female subjects. Greenberg writes that the derigidifying of gender roles "made it possible for Freud to separate gender identity from sexual object choice . . . made only incompletely in Freud's writings on women" (427). If we were to accept Greenberg's proposition, it might further be argued that Freud's separation between transgender and homosexuality is less successful in his work with women because women's social roles remained more restricted and less variable than those of men.

[22]Henri F. Ellenberger suggests the connections between sexology and psychoanalysis, noting that "In Vienna, men such as Krafft-Ebing . . . had conditioned the public to accept Freud's sexual theories" (815). Ellenberger remarks further that "the origin of psychoanalysis cannot be understood without taking into account several scientific trends of the last decades of the nineteenth-century," among them, "the new science of sexual pathology that was given its decisive impetus by Krafft-Ebing" (537).

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How does Freudian psychoanalysis intersect with The Well of Loneliness? De Lauretis's reading works through the Freudian paradigm of fetishism (via Lacan and Bersani and Dutoit), yet, even while contemporaneous with Freudian psychoanalysis, The Well takes as its subject not Freud's female homosexual but sexology's female invert. The one explicit reference to psychoanalysis in Hall's novel is made ironically: it is unmissable precisely because The Well is so short on irony, particularly in its treatment of Stephen. After the war, Jonathan Brockett (the only camp figure in the novel) writes to Stephen that her unsociability is "unwholesome": "You'll be bagging a shell like a hermit crab or growing hairs on your chin or a wart on your nose, or worse still a complex. You might even take to a few nasty habits towards middlelife -- better read Ferenczi!" (301). Sandor Ferenczi was a disciple of, and in turn an influence on, Freud. In citing him, Brockett reduces the psychoanalytic notion of the complex to an absurd popular myth: like becoming an ugly old witch, he pokes fun at psychoanalysis as much as at Stephen, the complex could be an effect of her social isolation. While there is no mention of Freud in The Well, the one reference to psychoanalytic theory emphatically refuses to take it seriously.[23] What is useful about this sole reference is that it indicates Hall's awareness of psychoanalytic discussions was sufficient enough for her to know of and be able to parody Ferenczi. Given this knowledge, why did she rely on Ellis, Krafft-Ebing, Ulrichs and sexology over Freud and other psychoanalysts to represent her subject, Stephen Gordon? If she is indeed representing lesbianism in The Well, why not turn to the writings of Freud on female homosexuality instead of sexology to ground her subject?

Freud himself acknowledges his debt to sexology. In a footnote to the first of the Three Essays, "The Sexual Aberrations," Freud states that much of his "information" comes from Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis and Hirschfeld among others (1 n.1).

[23]Given the parodic nature of this sole reference to psychoanalysis, Radford's reading of the sexological content of The Well as undermined by a reverse discourse of Freudian psychoanalysis is anachronistic and particularly unconvincing.

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Critics have argued that Hall's use of sexology is politically strategic. Hall derives her homosexual subject from the invert in order to counter the popular representation of homosexuality as a sinful choice with that of homosexuality as an involuntary medical congenital condition. Newton contends that Hall marshals the sexologists' congenital narrative over Freud's psychic one so as to refuse the notion that homosexuality could be "cured": "Hall rejected or ignored Freud, presumably because of the implication, which so many drew from his work, that homosexuality could be 'cured' (21 n.34). If homosexuality finds its origins in the body and not the mind, Newton's logic suggests the assumption of Hall's readers would have been, then it can't be helped and thus the issues of choice and morality are irrelevant. Yet in spite of positioning homosexuality for the most part in the domain of the psyche rather than the body (although as my analysis above is intended to suggest, this positioning was neither consistent nor absolute), Freud overtly and repeatedly critiques any curative approach to homosexuality as cultural stigmatization itself in need of remedying. Both homosexuality and heterosexuality are achieved states, and both represent a "restriction in the choice of object" (Psychogenesis 137). To even attempt a cure for homosexuality would make as much sense as and probably achieve no more success than attempting to cure heterosexuality.[24] The analogy manifests some commitment to critiquing homophobia and suggests that heterosexuality is as constructed as homosexuality. As lesbian and gay rereadings of Freud have shown -- those of Jonathan Dollimore and de Lauretis are exemplary -- Freud's work on homosexuality is certainly amenable to queer recuperation.[25] Newton's theory that Hall turns to the

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[24] "One must remember that normal sexuality also depends upon the restriction in the choice of object; in general, to undertake to convert a fully developed homosexual into a heterosexual is not much more promising than to do the reverse, only that for good practical reasons the latter is never attempted" ("Psychogenesis" 137).

[25] The recent GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies 2.1-2 (1995) special issue on Freud and queer theory, "Pink Freud," is a further indicator of his queer credibility.

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sexologists because they provided a convincing justification for homosexuality where Freud failed cannot therefore be sustained in the face of a thorough reading of Freud.

Hall turns to the sexologists before Freud because the condition she seeks to represent in Stephen Gordon is one that is transgendered rather than homosexual. Female inversion is irreducible to psychoanalytic female homosexuality; it exceeds the official Freudian framework for homosexuality both in gender identification and the body. Hall's interest in The Well is in transgender and its embodiment; "homo"sexuality is represented more as an effect of this condition, not the grounds for Stephen's identity. While Freud's female homosexuals might show the trace of gender inversion -- and even the embodiment of this gender inversion in the instances of "physical hermaphroditism" -- his theory overtly seeks to uncouple homosexuality from transgender identity and the body, and to make object-choice the axis of focus in his discussions of homosexuality. The work of the sexologists, on the other hand, provided Hall with a systematic study of subjects in whom transgendered and transsexual symptoms are primary, both in the subjects' self-narratives and in the sexologists' analyses of these. Sexuality is most frequently accorded a low priority in comparison with transgendered identification by the case subjects themselves. It is to the work of the sexologists that Hall did deploy that I now turn.

v. The Transgendered Subject of Sexology and the Question of Construction

> "About this time I read a book where a girl was represented as saying she had a 'boy's soul in a girl's body.' The applicability of this to myself struck me at once, and I read the sentence to my mother who disgusted me by appearing shocked."
>
> Female invert quoted in Havelock Ellis, "Sexual Inversion"

Freud has functioned as a recuperable figure in the writing of lesbian and gay history and criticism, particularly in the wake of the poststructuralist feminist rereading of his work. In contrast, the writings of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sexologists have been marked out by lesbian and gay critics unambivalently as a discursive site to be

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critiqued. If, in its representation of inversion, sexology reduces homosexual subjectivity to gender deviance, Freud is celebrated for interrogating this very representation, for "freeing" homosexuality from gender inversion. While it has not gone unremarked that the condition of sexual inversion as described by sexologists appears to refer more to gender deviance than homosexual desire -- as George Chauncey points out, "sexual inversion, rather, connoted a total reversal of one's sex role" -- sexology's references to (trans)gender have nevertheless been dismissed as evidence of modern medicine's heterocentric fictionalization of homosexuality (119). Once read in a different subject genealogy, these references to transsexual and transgendered styles, desires and identifications may be seen to play an indispensable role in the history of trans identities and their relation to modern science. If we situate sexology and its inverted subjects in the narrative of transgender and transsexuality, its value as a historical discourse is dramatically altered.

For contemporary sexologists writing about transsexuality and other transgendered conditions, the same sexological texts of the turn of the last century which have been subject to much lesbian and gay cynicism represent important historical resources. They authenticate gender conditions prior to the contemporary moment, suggesting their transhistorical existence. While the medical term "transsexual" was not coined until 1949 when David Cauldwell dubbed his case of a female who wanted to become a man "psychopathia transsexualis," psychiatrists and psychotherapists who have since worked in the field of gender identity disorders return to sexology's case studies of sexual inversion in order to find evidence of transsexual subjects. Writing on female-to-male transsexuality in 1969 in the first collection of medical writings on transsexuality, Ira Pauly turns to the work of German sexologists, Carl Westphal and Magnus Hirschfeld for the first medicalized cases of female "cross-gender behavior and preference for the male role" (59). Although most of these cases present only some degree of cross-gender identification or the expressed desire to change sex on the part of the subject, there are a few cases

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documented by sexology which concern subjects who had already used medical surgery to alter the sexed appearance of their bodies. Pauly cites one case recorded by Hirschfeld in 1922 -- it should be noted that this was well before the medical "invention" of the identity of transsexual -- of a "twenty-five-year-old woman who obtained a bilateral mastectomy because of her desire to achieve a more masculine appearance" as the first report of a female-to-male transsexual (Pauly 59).[26]

Writing in 1983 in the only book-length medicalized study of female-to-male transsexuality to date, Leslie Lothstein cites the earliest known case involving surgery, that of Sophia Hedwig / Herman Karl, born female, whose genitalia underwent surgical masculinization in 1882.[27] He documents an even earlier case which, while it didn't entail surgery, certainly concerned the subject expressing transsexual feelings. In 1864, a female wrote to the German sexologist, Westphal, that "she" had felt like a man since childhood and, as a result, had spent much of "her" life in mental institutions: "Ich . . . möchte gern ein Mann sein" (Lothstein 21-22). In addition, Lothstein refers to Hirschfeld's bi-lateral mastectomy FTM. That this latter case had been cited in Pauly's essay under transsexuality and included by Havelock Ellis as an early example of sexual inversion presents a powerful argument for the historical overlap between the identities of sexual invert and transsexual: the latter appears as the contemporary conceptualization of the

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[26]Pauly's essay of 1969 itself functions as a transitional moment in sexology's conceptualization of differently gendered subjects. Encountering in 1961 what he later acknowledges was his first female-to-male transsexual, Pauly at the time dismisses the subject as paranoid and psychotic, in possession of "a well circumscribed delusional system, involving a denial of the physical reality of her body . . . . a paranoid state" (79). Had he come across the same subject three years later, Pauly admits, he would certainly have diagnosed "her" as a transsexual. Pauly's confession is exceptional in the professional writings on transsexuality in that it reveals an ability to admit the historical and transient status of the medical and psychological paradigms with which sexologists must work.

[27]See also Bullough and Bullough p.255.

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former.[28] The genealogy of sexology from the late nineteenth-century to the contemporary moment, the re-citation and recycling of those early cases and first subjects elucidates the way in which the study of sexual inversion has functioned as a palimpsest for the modern theory of transsexuality.

Contemporary researchers turn not only to sexology to formulate a historical account of transsexuality, they also draw on anecdotal and even fictional accounts. Lothstein describes The Well of Loneliness (Hall's "autobiography") as "the tragedy of a girl with transvestic homosexual instincts being born to parents who desired a son" (20). The Well is situated in a circular relation to sexology, with Hall borrowing from the sexologists for her portrait of Stephen only to have her fictional account drawn on by contemporary sexologists in its turn as a sexological case.

From the vantage point of current work on transsexuality and other transgender conditions, sexological writings dating from the latter part of the nineteenth century on represent a foundational period in the conceptualization of transgendered identities. It is something of this discursive history of sexology, with its emphasis on gender over sexuality, that I wish to reconstruct here.

Ulrichs

Gay critics refer to Karl Heinrich Ulrichs as the first modern thinker to figure same-sex love in terms of cross-gender identification and to initiate the putative medicalization of homosexuality. Writing in Germany in the 1860s, Ulrichs understood his own identity as that of "a feminine soul confined by a masculine body" ("anima muliebris virile corpore inclusa"[Kennedy 106]). Ulrichs's commentators such as Hugh Kennedy

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[28]Ellis narrates the case as one in which a "woman," "from her earliest years, differed from other girls: she liked to dress as a boy, only cared for boys' games, and as she grew up was sexually attracted only to women, with whom she formed a series of tender relationships . . . " (65).

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have taken this formulation and Ulrichs's network of identities -- the "mannling(e)" and "weibling(e)" (the masculine and feminine) "urning" and "urningin" (translated by Kennedy as homosexual male and homosexual female and derived from Plato's Symposium) -- as specifically homosexual. Yet these categories represent an elaborate codification of cross-gender identification. They denote its presence in subjects in varying degrees: the "weibling urning" and the "mannlinge urningin" constitute the most extreme cases not of homosexuality but of transgenderism. Even the masculine homosexual male, the "mannling urning," is inscribed in transgendered terms as possessing "a feminine soul and sex drive" (Kennedy 107). "Same-sex" desire is considerably less complex, an invariable among urning / urningin subjects. Ulrichs's taxonomy centers on transgender.

What is definitively transgendered in all of Ulrichs's urnings is the discrepancy or incongruity between gender identification and sex, or "soul" / psyche and body. The "trans" dynamic resides in the this gap: in the urning's identifying with or feeling "himself" to be a member of the "opposite sex." Most significantly, Ulrichs describes transgendered identification in terms of wrong embodiment, of feeling confined or trapped in the "wrong" body. The implication is that anatomy is a mistake:

> Sunt mihi barba maris, artus, corpusque virile;
> His inclusa quidem: sed maneoque puella.
>
> Have I a masculine beard and manly limbs and body;
> Yes, confined by these: but I am and remain a woman.
> (Ulrichs cited in and translated by Kennedy 106)

The syntax leaves no doubt as to where Ulrichs considers "true identity" to reside: the "sed" ("but") here has the sense of "in the face of" the acknowledgment of real corporeality that precedes it, the "que" ("also" / "and" -- with the "but" in the same phrase, grammatically superfluous, thus purely for emphasis), emphasizing the authenticity of the sustained womanly identification. There is no "double attitude"; this is not the fetishistic syntax of ambivalence -- Octave Mannoni's "I know, but"; the body image is

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unambiguously real to the subject, the material body conversely unreal. The image of a womanly soul or psyche trapped in a male body is to become the famous rhetorical formula for transsexuality, deployed by professionals and transsexuals alike. As in Ulrichs's description, the "true sex" of the transsexual is located not in the duplicitous body but in the feelings or "soul" which contradict(s) the visible, thus justifying the medical alterations to the physical body. The syntax of transsexuality is apparently first professionalized in Ulrichs's urning theory.

Although a lawyer and not a doctor, Ulrichs unintentionally laid the groundwork for the medicalization of sexual inversion; yet he was dismayed to see his theories taken up and pathologized by Richard von Krafft-Ebing. For he argued that the urning condition was congenital but in no sense an illness -- that urnings resulted from an in vitro accident during the course of the sexing of the fetus. Ulrichs narrative of the etiology of inversion is remarkably similar to dominant current medical conjectures about the origins of transsexuality. After emphasizing psychic and social explanations for the condition, these are now returning to explore the possibilities of biological causes: genes and hormones are the major players in this new corporeal staging. The so-called "hormonal wash" theory argues that transsexuality is the effect of an "accident" that occurs when the brain of the fetus is "sexed" via maternal hormones in vitro at three months.[29] The coincidence

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[29] This theory is espoused by Dr. Leah Schaefer, New York sexologist and outgoing head of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association for the study of transsexuality and other gender identity disorders. While admitting that it is at present largely speculation, she is convinced that science will soon discover a physical cause of transsexuality. Indeed, the most recent research into the etiology of transsexuality posits a "transsexual brain": see Jiang-Ning Zhou et al, and my note on this in chapter 3, n.17. Of course, constructionists would find much in the "hormonal-wash" theory fundamentally unacceptable; for starters, the basic premise that the brain even has a sex. Yet recent research unrelated to transsexuality conducted by the Shaywitz team at Yale into has indicated that sex-differentiation does indeed affect the organic functioning of the brain, and that men and women "do think differently." See Marek Kohn.

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between Ulrichs's nineteenth-century theory of inversion to the most contemporary discussion of transsexuality is striking.

Krafft-Ebing

Krafft-Ebing, who had some personal correspondence with Ulrichs, translated the urning theory into a medicalized typology. This typology organized sexual inversion -- Krafft-Ebing termed this the "antipathic sexual instinct," a label which appears to refer more to sexual desire than gender identity -- according to a complex set of levels ranging from those "milder" cases in which only the object-cathexis of the subject was inverted, to cases in which subjects manifested or articulated cross-gender identification, and then those cases which showed signs of embodying cross-sex characteristics:

> In so-called antipathic sexual instinct there are degrees of the phenomenon which quite correspond with the degrees of predisposition of the individuals. Thus, in the milder cases, there is simple hermaphroditism; in more pronounced cases, only homosexual feeling and instinct, but limited to the sexual life; in still more complete cases, the whole psychical personality, and even the bodily sensations, are transformed so as to correspond with the sexual inversion; and in, in complete cases, the physical form is correspondingly altered. (188)

Through this system of reference, Krafft-Ebing's antipathic sexual instinct sought to contain what psychiatrists and psychologists today approach as substantially different conditions: homosexual, transvestitic, fetishistic, gender identity disordered (excluding transsexual), transsexual, and intersexual. A marker of degeneracy, the "instinct" could be acquired or congenital, although even with those acquired cases, Krafft-Ebing expects prior latency and an inherited "tendency" toward the instinct.

It is Dr. Schaefer's sense that explanations for transsexuality are, as a trend, shifting back from the psychic and psychoanalytic to the corporeal.

I am indebted to Dr. Schaefer for her discussions.

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The thread connecting these diverse subjects in Krafft-Ebing's framework is transgender. Yet while the subjects are not reducible to the homosexual as lesbian and gay critics contend, Krafft-Ebing himself confuses transgendering with homosexuality. His theoretical narrative conceives of homosexuality and cross-gender identification as inextricably and correlatively linked: the more homosexual the subject's practices, the more transgendered his / her identity (and possibly the more physically hermaphroditic). Further, he suggests that transgendering and transsexing may result if the subject fails to refrain from practicing homosexuality: the male may undergo a process of "eviration" (psychic and physical demasculinization), the female, "defemination" (195). Transgendering and transsexing are rendered the consequences of homosexuality, as homosexuality, in this determinist chain of degeneration, itself is figured as a possible effect of masturbation. Krafft-Ebing's conflation of homosex and transgender is responsible for his caricatured descriptions which have provided much of the fodder for the lesbian and gay critique of sexology. The following, for example is much cited and ridiculed:

> The female homosexual may chiefly be found in the haunts of boys. She is the rival in their play, preferring the rocking-horse, playing at soldiers, etc., to dolls and other girlish occupations. The toilet is neglected, and rough boyish manners are affected. Love for art finds a substitute in the pursuits of sciences. At times smoking and drinking are cultivated even with passion.
>
> Perfumes and sweetmeats are disdained. The consciousness of being a woman and thus to be deprived of a gay college life, or to be barred out from the military career, produces painful reflections.
>
> The masculine soul, heaving in the female bosom, finds pleasure in the pursuit of manly sports and in manifestations of courage and bravado. There is a strong desire to imitate the male fashion in dressing the hair and in general attire, under favourable circumstances even to don male attire and impose in it. (264)[30]

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[30] For citations of parts of this same passage, see Newton, "Mythic Mannish Lesbian," p.16 and Smith-Rosenberg pp. 269-270.

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More credible and useful than his portraits of archetypal subjects are the case histories in Psychopathia Sexualis. These detailed narratives, which have received considerably less critical attention, serve to distinguish one subject from the next and work toward undoing some of the sexologist's own conflations and generalizations. Often these narratives were sent by the subject to Krafft-Ebing as written texts; he includes them apparently in their entirety (numbering sometimes ten to twelve pages). The autobiographical voices interrupt and disrupt his own; the specificity of the subject's history resist containment in his rigid classificatory scheme. Possibly these accounts represent the first trans(gendered / sexual) autobiographies. Certainly, a careful reading of them makes it considerably more difficult to dismiss the transgendered theme of their inversion as the constructions of the sexologist. Consider Case 129, the Hungarian male physician who, in a powerful imaginary world, inhabits a female body. "He" represents "his" inclination toward femininity from the beginning as natural and "his" attempts to bring "his" gender behavior into alignment with "his" male sex as the masquerade: "I tried to play the boy, -- imitated my companions in everything, and tried to surpass them in wildness" (201). As an adult, "he" can only perform coitus with "his" female lover by imagining a reversed genital morphology, envisioning "himself" to have a vagina penetrated by the penis of "his" partner (indeed, if "his" sexual encounters are wholly with women, in what sense is "he" homosexual?). Even surgery enters into "his" imaginary: "I am sure that I should not have shrunk from the castration-knife, could I thus have attained my desire" ["to be a young lady"] (202). While "his" historical moment makes such surgery unfeasible in reality, "he" nevertheless imagines himself transsexing and experiences his body as female:

> "I feel like a woman in a man's form; and even though I am often sensible of the man's form, yet it is always in a feminine sense. Thus, for example, I feel the penis as clitoris; the urethra a[. . .] vaginal orifice, which always feels a little wet, even when it is actually dry; the scrotum as *labia majora;*

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> in short, I always feel the vulva. And all that means one alone can know who feels or has felt so." (207)

"He" declares: "I wear only the mask of a man, and in everything else feel like a woman" (206). Krafft-Ebing classifies this case as one in which the patient "was originally psycho-sexually abnormal" and might have developed into paranoia but as "his intellectual powers were intact . . . he was thus saved from paranoia" (213; 214). The transgendered force of the autobiographical narratives could certainly be lessened in the sexologist's codification.

Yet most often when Kraft-Ebbing narrates the subjects' stories as biographical case histories, drawing their details from his sessions with them or rewriting their autobiographies in his own words, the specific transgendered / transsexual texture of each story is immediately remarkable. The sexologist frequently uses a naturalizing language which stands out as less rigid, more sympathetic and thus more convincing than the discourse of analytic typology. In Case 162, Krafft-Ebing tells of a female subject "who felt towards other women as a man does; she loathed the idea of sexual intercourse with a man" and "bewailed the fact that she was not born a man, as she hated feminine things and dress generally" (282). Evidently reciting "her" own attempts to make sense of "her" condition -- speaking with "her" voice in a way that appears to validate "her" transgendered identification -- Kraft-Ebbing writes simply at one point, "'Her genitals could not be right'" (282).

Most outstanding as a narrative of female-to-male experience is the case of Count Sandor V. (a.k.a. the Countess Sarolta), Krafft-Ebing's Case 166, the details of which he draws from "the autobiography of this man-woman" and which he diagnoses as "hermaphroditism" (284). Count Sandor V was raised and educated as a boy (apparently "she" was a fine fencer), taking journeys with "her" father as a young man, even visiting a brothel. The count grows up to live full-time as a man (thus I refer to him as such, requesting the reader's patience in bearing with pronoun confusion), marrying twice and taking additional lovers, passing so convincingly that, even when Sandor dressed as a

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woman, "[i]t was even difficult for the experts to realize that they were concerned with a woman, despite the fact of female attire and constant association" (288). The count's story reads most poignantly as a transsexual narrative when Kraft-Ebbing recounts the intensity of his dysphoria over his female body. He felt menstruation "to be a thing repugnant to her masculine consciousness and feeling" and he never allowed himself to be touched sexually (289). He sought to reshape his body into male form, padding the front of his pants with handkerchiefs and gloves to give the impression of male genitalia and, in sexual encounters, employing a home-made prosthetic device to simulate erection ("occasionally she availed herself of a stocking stuffed with oakum as a priapus" (289). In his summary of Krafft-Ebing's cases of females, Lothstein suggests that, "By current standards, most of these women would have been diagnosed as transsexual and a few of them might today have been referred for SRS" (53). The case of the count certainly provides persuasive evidence in support of Lothstein's premise.

If the sole or even primary identity category structuring the modern reader's framework is lesbian, the inverts' transgendered and transsexual desires and experiences do appear as a kind of "false consciousness" effect on the part of unenlightened nineteenth-century lesbians and / or the sexologist. Smith-Rosenberg suggests this much: "Krafft-Ebing's lesbians seemed to desire male privileges and power as ardently as, perhaps more ardently than, they sexually desired women" (271). Transgendered identification is thereby rendered an inauthentic product of authentic object-choice; a troublesome gender identity is explained away through sexuality. Warning against precisely such a reading, Lothstein emphasizes that we need to account for the subjects' self-acceptance and comfort with their transgendered selves: "While it may have seemed compelling to explain these patients' 'male identity and role' disorders as stemming from a stigmatized homosexual condition, it was also clear that, for some of the women, their 'sexual inversion' was ego syntonic and acceptable" (51). The majority of the case histories which make up the bulk of the "antipathic sexual instinct" section of

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Psychopathia Sexualis concern specifically transgendered and -- if we can read as imaginatively as Lothstein does -- transsexual stories in which sexual desire plays a minor role. Inarguably, Krafft-Ebing's *theory* of the "antipathic sexual instinct" confuses the axes of sexuality and gender identification. Unfortunately, lesbian and gay criticism has continued to enact this confusion by reading the case histories as all about the same homosexual subject, channeling them through the sexologist's voice of authority, thereby subsuming (trans)gender identification under the category of (homo)sexuality. The voices of individual subjects captured in these micro-narratives demand from contemporary thinkers in gender studies a closer reading

The auto/biographical narratives do not so much reverse the discourse of Krafft-Ebing's theory as they reveal the way in which the sexological frame is not yet (how could it ever be?) an adequate tool for interpreting the subjects' rich and complex life-stories. This falling short is possibly a consequence of the taxonomy striving to be too inclusive, of Krafft-Ebing's attempt to incorporate diverse identities into a single classificatory scheme under the aegis of "antipathic sexual instinct." In contradistinction to the lesbian and gay critique that sexology focuses excessively on gender, I would suggest that, in Krafft-Ebing, it does not do so enough. In this regard Lothstein remarks,

> In spite of Krafft-Ebing's reports, there was little clinical interest in regarding female gender identity disorders in their own right. *It was clear, however, that these women could not be simply diagnosed as transvestites or fetishists.* Their wishes to become men and their behavioral transvestism reflected *a craving to live out a male life style (which went beyond a purely erotic interest).* (53; my emphasis)

Because Krafft-Ebing's conceptual vehicles were powered too much by the erotic or the sexual, sexology was not yet able to isolate gender identification as a separate and sufficient axis of analysis.

Ellis

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The history of sexology charts the gradual separation of sexuality and gender, their splitting into two separate but intersecting axes that we find in Freudian psychoanalysis at least in his theory if not in *his* case histories. Freud declared sexual inversion and theories of the "third" or "intermediate sex" myths (yet in his interpretations of his female homosexual subjects in the case histories themselves we discover some of the vestiges of these "myths"), and certainly, the invert as a discursive subject -- one recorded in medical and psychological textbooks -- does seem to recede in the twentieth century. As Chauncey notes, from 1900 on, the term homosexuality begins to replace that of sexual inversion. Psychoanalysis describes the development of masculinity and femininity and the way in which conventional narratives of gender may be disrupted and sidetracked through transgendered identification (for example the masculinity complex in a woman might be thought of as a transgendered, even transsexual, condition: the woman who wishes to be a man). But psychoanalysis offers psychic rather than the corporeal explanations of sexology for subjectivity and, most significantly, it does not conceive of the invert as an identity. Sexual inversion becomes a diagnosable medical condition again only in the form of transsexuality and other gender identity disorders in the work of Cauldwell and Harry Benjamin in the forties and fifties. At this moment, gender identity becomes a category of analysis clearly separable from sexuality.

From the point of view of transsexual / transgender criticism, the substitution of the sexual invert with the homosexual in the early twentieth-century signifies not so much a narrative progression as a discursive loss. Transgendered identities are written off as mythic and momentary (refigured from identities or subjects in sexology to identifications in psychoanalysis). The work of Havelock Ellis is significant in that it represents something of an interstitial or transitional point in this translation. Writing his Sexual Inversion in 1910 in England contemporaneously with Freud, Ellis sustains both subjects -- the invert and the homosexual -- and attempts to distinguish between them: "Sexual inversion, as here understood, means sexual instinct turned by inborn constitutional

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abnormality toward persons of the same sex. It is thus a narrower term than homosexuality" (1). This definition captures the way in which Ellis straddles two discourses, intervenes in two moments, the sexological and the psychoanalytic. On the one hand, his distinction between homosexuality and sexual inversion corresponds to Krafft-Ebing's distinction between the acquired and the antipathic sexual instinct: both of the former are apparently constructed, the latter, innate, essential. He retains the sexological essentialized component of inversion. Ellis faults Freud's Three Essays precisely for its omission of the role of the material body in the formation of homosexuality. Freud's critique of sexual inversion fails to consider the embodiment of gender and sexual identities: "While the study of such mechanisms [unconscious dynamic processes] may illuminate the psychology of homosexuality, they leave untouched the fundamental organic factors now accepted by most authorities" (308-309). Having distinguished between homosexuality and inversion, Ellis goes on to use them interchangeably. For, on the other hand, Ellis suggests homosexuality as a more general category -- an umbrella term containing the "narrower term," sexual inversion. In this, he foreshadows Freud's subsuming of inversion under homosexuality.

In practice, Ellis's "Sexual Inversion" gives homosexuality only a cursory discussion; as the title suggests, sexual inversion is his focus. In contradistinction to his sexological precursors and in league with Freud here, Ellis at first denies a necessary correlation between inverted desire and cross-gender behavior and appearance: "It appears to me that the great majority of inverted women possess some masculine or boyish traits, even though only as slight as those which may occasionally be revealed by a normal [heterosexual] woman" (251). In spite of this conceptual distinction, Ellis's "Sexual Inversion in Women" is devoted to outlining precisely the transgendered nature of sexual inversion in women. While this transgendered theme is manifested largely through behavior and / persistent identification, Ellis does cite cases in which the inversion is somatically manifested: cases of "slight" hirsutism of the body and face; more "genuine

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approximations to the masculine type" in which "the muscles tend to be everywhere firm, with a comparative absence of soft connective tissue; so that an inverted women may give an unfeminine impression to the sense of touch" (255). The genitalia, Ellis finds to be uniformly "more or less undeveloped" (256). "In all three of the cases concerning whom I have precise information, among those whose histories are recorded in the present chapter, there is more or less arrested development and infantilism": small vaginas, missing ovaries, and (surprisingly, given the transgendered significance historically attributed to this organ) small clitorises -- "The clitoris is more usually small than larger; women with a large clitoris . . . seem rarely to be of masculine type" (256).

While he takes on board sexology's postulation of the congenitality of sexual inversion, Ellis shows keen insight into the problems that accompany sexology's attempts to systematically codify the condition. He implies the impossibility of sustaining typologies in the face of variations in actual case histories: "The classification of the varieties of homosexuality is a matter of difficulty, and no classification is very fundamental. The early attempts of Krafft-Ebing and others at elaborate classification are no longer acceptable. Even the most elementary groupings become doubtful when we have definitely to fit our cases into them" (82). Thus Ellis does not attempt to "fit" his subjects into a rigorous typology -- "It has seemed best to me to attempt no classification at all" (89). In refraining from arranging or ordering his cases according to a specific scheme and "chasing" each narrative with his own analysis, he allows the case histories to speak more for themselves. In transcribing subjects' own version of their stories -- "the narrative is given in her own words," Ellis introduces the following case history -- and abstaining from commentary on each case, Ellis appears to hand over control of the identity narrative to the teller (235). The transgendered theme of the cases strikes the reader as less the construct of the sexologist -- his imposed analytic framework; a sign of his interpretative dominance -- than the design the narrator "her"self chooses to organize the story of "her" life.

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History XXXIX, the case of "Miss D," is the most trenchant transgendered self-narrative in this regard. "Her" account of "her" childhood is shaped by "her" own sense of "her"self as not female in spite of "her" body. From her first memory, "she" dislocates "her" gender identity from "her" body:

> "Ever since I can remember anything at all, I could never think of myself as a girl and I was in perpetual trouble, with this as the real reason. When I was 5 or 6 years old I began to say to myself that whatever anyone said, If I was not a boy at any rate I was not a girl. This has been my unchanged conviction all though my life.
>
> When I was little, nothing ever made me doubt it, in spite of external appearance. I regarded the conformation of my body as a mysterious accident." (235)

This sense of self structures "D"'s tomboy childhood, even in the face of adult attempts to "correct" it ("I never believed or trusted a grown person in consequence" [236]). An all-female boarding school is deemed the appropriate punishment for "her" gender transgression; an attempt, "her" parents tell her, to "turn ["her"] into a young lady": "My going was finally announced to me as a punishment for being what I was." (237). "She" disidentifies powerfully with the other girls at school, remaining "shy" of them and they of "she" (237). "She" "never cried or fretted, but burnt with anger and went like a trapped rabbit" (237). "She" survives school only by producing and inhabiting a private fantasy world: a complex set of "rescue" genre dreams (the same type associated by Freud with the masculinity complex in women)[31] which figure "her" not as a trapped woman but as a male liberator freeing trapped women: "D." is "always the prince or the pirate, rescuing beauty in distress or killing the unworthy" (239).

In "her" early twenties, "D." becomes conscious of her sexual attraction for women, yet these feelings only serve to highlight "her" sense of a discrepancy between "her" female body and "her" sense of "her" self: "I asked myself what hiatus there could

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[31] See note 37 and compare with my reading of Stephen's rescue fantasy in The Well.

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be between my bodily structure and my feelings . . ." (241). "D." is unable to desire women as a woman, and "her" account makes no mention of actual sexual relations with women. Dysphoria over "her" female body seems to short-circuit any homosexual encounters and provides some explanation for the belatedness of "her" attraction toward women: "There was something that I simply lacked; that I never doubted. Curiously enough, I thought that the ultimate explanation might be that there were men's minds in women's bodies . . . ."; "My relations with other women were entirely pure. My attitude toward my sexual physical feelings was one of reserve and repression, and I think the growing conviction of my radical deficiency somewhere, would have made intimate affection for anyone, with any demonstration in it, a kind of impropriety for which I had no taste" (241). D. can only imagine forming successful relations with women if "she" refigures "her"self as man: "I admired [women] and when I was tired and worried I often thought how easily, if I had been a man, I could have married and settled down with one or the other. I used to think it would be delightful to have a woman to work for and take care of" (242). "Her" sexual fantasies are likewise dependent on "her" envisioning "her" self with a male morphology: "I always imagined myself as a man loving a woman" (242-3). Ultimately, however, the disjuncture between "her" imaginary and "her" material body, between the substance of "her" fantasies and that of "her" physicality, is powerful and painful enough to hinder "her" from actualizing a sexual life beyond these fantasies: "What I felt with my mind and what I felt with my body always seemed at this time apart" (242); "My life was a sham; I was an actor never off the boards. I had to play at being a something I was not from morning til night . . . . " (243). Yet in spite of "her" evident, profound and long-lasting unhappiness, "D." makes clear to Ellis that "she" does not even want to want to be "a normal woman" (243). Even while "she" appreciates the social stigma attached to it, the transgendered urge is clearly fundamental to "D"'s identity.

That Ellis reproduces "D."'s narrative at great length (although not in full) is significant. Ellis discusses his data collection methodology in his "Sexual Inversion in

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Men": many of his histories -- like those of Krafft-Ebing -- appear to have been written by the subjects themselves, either anonymously or with authors known to him. Of the latter, Ellis states that he has often supplemented the original narrative -- in a way that smoothes over the stages of supplementation -- as his relationship with the author (whether in person or in correspondence only) has developed: "Perhaps the largest number [of histories] are concerned with individuals who wrote to me spontaneously in the first place, and whom I have at intervals seen or heard from since, in some cases during a very long period, so that I have slowly been able to fill in their histories, although the narratives, as finally completed, may have the air of being written down at a single sitting" (91). We know neither the extent nor the effect of Ellis's "filling in" these case histories. Because he sutures his "editorial" work or later additions with the original narrative, we cannot be sure of whose story we are reading. Nevertheless, the issue of whose narrative the case histories represent -- and this must include the poignant story of "D" -- remains a crucial one. Narrative control functions as the lever on which turns the difference between the lesbian and gay critique of sexology and my opposition to it here. Lesbian and gay commentators assume that the stories told in the histories are the product of the sexologist's master narrative, attributing to Ellis's subjects no authorial control of their stories. If, on the other hand, the sexologist's text is the vehicle for conveying these autobiographies, their transgendered design appears as primarily self-authored. Our sense of the dynamic between sexological discourse and individual case history, between sexologist and subject, determines the value of these narratives and of their subject matter.

This question -- whose story is this anyway? -- is enmeshed in the theoretical debate about the workings of construction versus individual agency. In the context of transgendered and transsexual subjects, construction is an especially vexed concern. Much is at stake in this question: to what extent the construction of the trans story takes place in the domain of the speaking subject, to what extent in that of the medical establishment that "treats" him / her. Indeed, much is at stake in trans autobiographies:

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the lives they textualize, the very identities of the transgendered and transsexuals themselves (without the story, without the telling, there is no transsexual). Our response -- as pertinent to contemporary autobiographies as it is to Ellis's case histories -- depends upon, and in itself reinforces, our basic conceptualization of trans people's agency. In addressing it, therefore, we should remember that transphobia (whether popular or academic, feminist or lesbian and gay) characteristically envisions transsexuals as not "real men" and "real women," as constructed in some fundamental way that non-transsexual subjects aren't -- not simply ideologically but medically, surgically constructed. Beyond the reaches of the poststructuralist valorization, its *essentialization,* of construction -- construction connotes nothing positive. In a mainstream sense, construction is precisely a means to desubjectivization, to devaluing and discriminating against what's "not natural."

Although Ellis refrains from commentary, it is impossible to read his case histories as transparent, or free of construction; but are they less free than any other edited transgendered or transsexual autobiographical narratives? Indisputably, like individually published transsexual autobiographies of today (but surely in a way no different from all autobiographical accounts), Ellis's case histories achieve their coherent design, only retroactively, in the subject's telling. Each is primarily autobiographically-constructed: the product of the subject's narrativizing of memories as s/he orders the life lived into a coherent tale. The workings of this sense of self- construction are often apparent in the case histories. In Ellis's History XXXVIII, for example, the narrator highlights from "her" childhood those instances which draw their significance and coherence retroactively from the transgender-identified moment of narration:

> "As a child I loved to stay in the fields, refused to wear a sun-bonnet, used to pretend I was a boy, climbed trees and played ball. I liked to play with dolls, but I did not fondle them, or even make them dresses. When my hair was clipped, I was delighted and made everyone call me 'John.' I used to like to wear a man's broad-brimmed hat and make corn-cob pipes. I was very fond of my father and tried to imitate him as much as possible." (230)

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> "One incident I recall happened when I was about 10. A girl cousin and myself had been playing 'house' together. I do not recall what immediately led to it, but we began to address each other as boys and tried to urinate through long tubes of some sort. . . . At the age of 13 I menstruated, a fact that caused me shame and anger. Gradually I grew to feel myself peculiar, why, I cannot explain. I did not seem to myself to be like other girls of my acquaintance." (231)

Here follows the "moment of realization" which engenders the design for the entire narrative; the instance enables the retroactive reading of the events from the life into the transgendered autobiography: "About this time I read a book where a girl was represented as saying she had a 'boy's soul in a girl's body.' The applicability of this to myself struck me at once, and I read the sentence to my mother who disgusted me by appearing shocked'" (232).

That this moment of self-construction is dependent upon the subject encountering another's narrativization of transgender complicates the very status of that "self-"construction. Is the "other" narrative -- the book in which the subject reads of "her" identificatory experience -- also sexological, the moment absolutely self-reflexive: the inverted subject of sexology reproducing "her"self as invert through her knowledge of other inverted narratives in sexology? To what extent in this case is the subject's individual transgendered story informed by sexology's master narrative (is there one?) of transgender? Both senses of construction become re-entangled: the subjective retroactive reconstruction of the life into coherent story -- autobiographical construction; and the discursive construction of the identity, "invert." In their charge that sexology "constructs" homosexual subjects as inverted, however, lesbian and gay critics radically isolate this second type of construction from the first. Reduced solely to its second sense, construction denies agency; it connotes cultural imposition: the subjects are "falsely" constructed, herded involuntarily into the master discourse's categories and desubjectivized. Yet as the above case history illustrates, always already fundamentally bound up in the "cultural" or discursive construction of the invert is the subject's attempt

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to author "her"self, here, to actively deploy and apply to "her"self the identity tropes of female inversion ("a boy's soul in a girl's body"). Whether this trope in the above case is derived directly or indirectly from sexology, we cannot be sure, for neither the narrating subject nor Ellis specifies the nature of the book or outlines any further its content. Yet the speaking subject is by no means passive in relation to the discursive identity: a tabula rasa to be inscribed with the sexologist's text of inversion. "She" makes the connection to the other text, actively borrows the transgendered design for "her" own story (in turn shaping the sexologist's narrative) and in this sense, authors or constructs "her"self through the available intertexts, sexological or otherwise.

Elsewhere, Ellis explicitly raises this question of to what extent and effect his subjects' narratives have been constructed by sexological discourse, that is, informed by other accounts published in previous sexological work. For Ellis, what is at stake in this question is the reliability of the case histories. If his subjects' stories function as reproductions of previously published case histories, then, as case histories, they are fundamentally untrustworthy, inauthentic documents of the experience. Ellis critiques the politics of such a radically constructionist view, arguing that it keeps a suspicious distance from the inverts' narratives by drawing on (and we might add, deriving legitimacy from) a history of prejudicial assumptions of the essential unreliability of the speech of sexual others: "Many years ago we used to be told that inverts are such lying and deceitful degenerates that it was impossible to place reliance on anything they said. It was also usual to say that when they wrote autobiographical accounts of themselves they merely sought to mold them in the fashion of those published by Krafft-Ebing" (89). Ellis does not deny but acknowledges the probability of his subjects' contact with and knowledge of previously published accounts of inversion. Instead of representing this intertextuality as undermining the authenticity of his subjects' stories, however, Ellis argues that the proliferation and circulation of past accounts ensures the uniqueness and reliability of

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present ones. Because the narrators now literally "know the form," their goal has become to distinguish their story from others, to document its points of difference:

> The ancient allegation that inverts have written their own histories on the model, or under the suggestion of those published in Krafft-Ebing's Psychopathia Sexualis can scarcely have much force now that the published histories are so extremely varied and numerous that they cannot possibly produce any uniform impression on the most sensitively receptive mind. As a matter of fact, there is no doubt that inverts have frequently been stimulated to set down the narrative of their own experiences through reading those written by others. ***But the stimulation has, as often as not, lain in the fact that their own experiences have seemed different, not that they have seemed identical.*** The histories that they read only serve as models in the sense that they indicate the points on which information is desired. (90; my emphasis)

Far from reproducing inversion as a single generic narrative, the availability of previous published accounts enables the break-up of any such narrative as it might have been originally written by the expert under his classificatory scheme. The more narratives read and written, the more ways of telling the story of inversion became possible. What is reproduced is an identity, but an identity in all its differences. The sexologist's text -- here Krafft-Ebing's Psychopathia Sexualis but presumably Ellis must foresee the possibility of this happening with his own Sexual Inversion -- functions as a vehicle for the inverts' self-creation (both in the life and the autobiography).

In contrast to those who remain cynical of the authenticity of the inverts' narratives, Ellis finds his subjects' speech to be sufficiently trustworthy and insightful to enable him as expert-listener to refrain from analysis. Because of authority of subjective experience he suggests, the cases can speak for themselves: "I am assured that many of the inverts I have met not only possess a rare power of intellectual self-analysis (stimulated by the constant and inevitable contrast between their own feelings and those of the world around them), but an unsparing sincerity in that self-analysis not so very often attained by normal people" (91).

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The case of Michael Dillon

Even if it allows for "reverse discourse," the theory that sexology constructs lesbian and gay subjects as inverted not only circumscribes the agency of these subjects, it treats their inversion as secondary, the effect of the clinician's way of thinking homosexuality. If the invert as a transgendered subject is the forerunner of the transsexual, we need to allow more room for the positive and productive effects of sexology. The medicalized framework of sexology (most sexologists were also doctors) enabled the emergence of the transsexual as a medicalized subject through its validation of autobiographical narratives. Sexology represents the first encounter between transgendered individuals and modern medicine, an encounter which, as it becomes more extensive in the forties, fifties and sixties, enables increasing numbers of transgendered subjects to become transsexual: to draw on the new techniques in endocrinology and surgery to effect changes to primary and secondary sexual characteristics, to construct transsexual bodies in alignment with their transgendered feelings. The fact that, during these early stages of institutionalized treatment, transgendered identities could be traced to nineteenth-century sexology justified the development of systematic medical techniques for "treating" transsexuality. Evidence of transgendered identity in the history of sexual inversion crucially suggested that gender identity disorders were not historically contingent -- "constructed" -- by a particular mid-twentieth century moment of interest. Sexology fulfilled -- still fulfills -- a necessary historical authorizing function.

Moreover, when contemporary sexologists such as Lothstein and Pauly locate instances of transsexuality and other gender identity disorders prior to the medical "invention" of transsexuality, they substantiate the agency of inverts the lesbian and gay critique of sexology denies. Especially on those occasions when the inverts achieve the means to recontour their bodies before they present to the medical authorities as inverted, the subjects' insight into their condition appears to precede that of the sexologists. Substantial evidence that the transsexual emerged before his / her naming as such by the

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medical establishment, that individuals sought to "change sex" before medicine recognized the phenomenon and officially conceived of a medicalized response poses a serious challenge to the postulation that transsexuality is "invented" or "constructed" by medical discourse. The story of Michael Dillon, the first known case of transsexual to combine hormone treatment with surgery in order to attempt a "change of sex," most succinctly provides such evidence.

Laura Dillon was born female in England to an upper-class family in 1915.[32] Dillon's pre-transition years in Folkestone are made up of details that would not look out of place in the case history of any female invert. According to his biographer, Liz Hodgkinson, Dillon's own unpublished autobiography articulates no specific consciousness in his early childhood of longing to be a man but rather his sense of his gender difference from other women; he remained excruciatingly shy and awkward in their company, at an angle. Even prior to somatic transitioning, Dillon appeared to belong, in the words of Radclyffe Hall on Stephen Gordon, in a "no man's land of sex," and this even in the public eye (271). Under the caption "Man or Woman?," a photograph of Laura Dillon coxing the women's rowing team at Oxford appeared in the Daily Mirror (Hodgkinson 43). Yet although the medical category of transsexuality did not exist to shape his sense of himself, Dillon became convinced of his inner male identity, that he should have been born male, and that his female body was a "mistake." In 1939, ten years before Cauldwell's coining of the term transsexual, aged 24, Dillon convinced a doctor to prescribe testosterone in the form of pills; and in 1942, he managed to obtain a double mastectomy. Dillon's narrative -- the belief that he should have been male -- preceded and

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[32] Dillon was to be "outed" as transsexual -- the first of this type of outing -- by the Sunday Express which discovered a discrepancy between two who's-who-in-the-British-aristocracy books. Burke's Peerage listed Michael under his female identity, Debrett's Peerage and Heritage, under his female. (Hodgkinson 137).

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made possible his medical treatment; the narrative of transsexuality is the product not of the medical authority but of the petitioning subject.

The circumstances of Dillon's lower surgery provide the most substantive critique of the premise that transsexuality was / is invented and authored by doctors. Dillon is now recognized as the first female-to-male transsexual to have undergone phalloplasty -- the construction through plastic surgery of a penis. This procedure was performed by the plastic surgeon famous for his reconstructive work on war-wounded and burn victims, Sir Harold Gillies, whom Dillon met in 1945. Knowing Dillon's gender history but without having a medical designation for it, Gillies officially treated his case as "an acute hypospadias": a condition in which a genetic male subject has incomplete external genitalia (Hodgkinson 66). First outlined in 1916, Gillies's phalloplasty procedure became the predominant phalloplasty technique for treatment of female-to-male transsexuals -- the so called Gillies-Filatov abdominal tube pedical flap -- until the development of the forearm free radial flap in this last decade and the very recent creation of a surgical alternative to phalloplasty, metadoidoplasty (the construction of a micropenis from the clitoris). After performing a relative successful phalloplasty on Dillon, Gillies went on to carry out several phalloplasties for other female-to-male transsexuals.[33] The application of phalloplasty techniques to the treatment of female-to-male transsexuals is thus an immediate effect of a single transsexual subject's self-diagnosis: the direct result of the strength of his desires for a different body, and the persuasiveness of the narrative he produced in order to attain this. Dillon was clearly not constructed by the medical

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[33]Roberta Cowell -- the male-to-female transsexual whom Dillon courted relentlessly and unsuccessfully, and the only woman to see the penis that Dillon apparently never used in a sexual relationship -- reported the scarred but substantial results: "I had never seen anything like it. It was huge, and in a constant state of semi-erection. I said to him then, I don't know about destiny shaping our ends, rough-hew them how we will, as this object was certainly rough-hewn. It looked as if it had been cut out of wood with an axe, as it was so deeply scored" (cited in Hodgkinson 88).

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diagnosis of transsexuality so much as he defined and shaped this diagnosis and the prescribed course of treatment. His initiation marks the historical origins of phalloplasty for FTMs. While his body was constructed by doctors in a literal sense, Dillon was the prime mover of that construction. His case suggests that the relationship between the transsexual subject and the medical establishment is more dialogic than has been allowed. Sexology may be read to foreground the history of that relationship and, to assess the substance of transsexual and transgendered agency.

vi. The Invert in The Well and the Dream of Transferable Flesh

> "The negative sides to the book are just as interesting -- why the need to be so male-dominated -- the relinquishing of Mary for a safe heterosexual relationship? Should it be seen as the first 'invert' novel rather than lesbian? Should we describe it as a lesbian novel at all?"
>
> Reader surveyed by O'Rourke

> "If I could have married [Angela Crossby] and brought her home -- I wanted to bring her home to Morton. If I love her the way a man loves a woman, it's because I can't feel that I am a woman. All my life I've never felt like a woman, and you know it . . . I don't know what I am; no one's ever told me that I'm different and yet I know that I'm different . . ."
>
> Stephen Gordon in The Well

Like Michael Dillon, The Well appeared in England in between the wars. The novel was published only ten years before Dillon began his somatic transition; "Laura" was thirteen in 1928, although Dillon left no record of having read The Well. While there is insufficient coincidence between novel and life-history for the kind of new historicist reading of The Well in which text and contextual event converge in a single date, the overlap -- not only between Dillon's beginnings and The Well's, but between the identities of invert and transsexual -- is significant enough to provide some legitimacy for addressing the question: is there a transsexual in The Well of Loneliness?

The only criticism on The Well to consider the possibility of the novel's intersection with a non-lesbian subject is Newton's -- and indeed, in Newton, this subject

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is the female-to-male transsexual. Exceptionally, Newton's essay acknowledges that "whatever their ideological purposes, Hall and the sexologists were describing something real. Some people, then and now, experience 'gender dysphoria,' a strong feeling that one's assigned gender as a man or a woman does not agree with one's sense of self" ("Mythic Mannish Lesbian" 24). Newton argues that Stephen experiences this feeling of gender dysphoria, although in a way that does not negate or cancel out her lesbian identity: "Many lesbians, like Stephen Gordon, are biological females who grow up speaking parts of the 'wrong' gender language" (24). Although she may be gender dysphoric, Newton argues, Stephen is *not* transsexual on two fundamental counts. First, the category of transsexuality refers "to people who actually have had surgery to alter their bodies"; gender dysphoric represents a "broader" category (24 n.41). Second, as the butch lesbian Newton figures her as, Stephen cannot be transsexual. For Newton, the clear demarcation point between these identities consists in the subjects' relation to homosexuality. While "female-to-male transsexuals appear to share many similarities with lesbian butches," the key or "most impressive difference [between them] is the rejection or acceptance of homosexual identity" (24 n.41). To verify this difference, Newton refers her reader to the case histories of female-to-male transsexuals included in Pauly's 1969 essay (discussed above). In effect then, Newton raises the pertinence of transsexuality to Stephen to repudiate it; she confines her discussion of it to a footnote, cordoning it off from the (lesbian) body of her essay.

Newton's sense that Hall and the sexologists are describing "something real" is not sufficient to stall her reading of gender identity disorder -- and thus its representation in The Well -- as secondary. Her "broader" conception of gender dysphoria conceives of the condition as a social construct: "Gender dysphoria refers to a variety of difficulties in establishing *conventional* (the doctors say 'adequate' or 'normal') gender identification; intense pain and conflict over *masculinity* and *femininity* are not limited to people who request reassignment surgery" (24 n.41; my emphasis). The gender dysphoric subject is

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unable to reconcile him- / herself to the cultural *conventions* of masculinity and femininity, that is, social *gender roles*. Indeed, Newton argues that, without these gender roles, gender dysphoria would not exist: "Obviously, the more narrow and rigid gender categories are, the more easily one can feel 'out of role.' *And, of course, if there were no more gender categories, gender dysphoria would disappear* (as would feminism)" (24; my emphasis). Newton's understanding of gender dysphoria as a cultural effect and the gender dysphoric as those subjects who transgress cultural conventions of masculinity and femininity elides the constitutive elements of sex and the body in the subject's experience of gender dysphoria. It fixes gender as an external cultural force and allows no consideration of how gender "materializes" (in the words of Butler's Bodies That Matter) the body, or why the gender dysphoric subject is convinced of the somatic dimension of his / her condition. It is because transsexuality is indisputably concerned with the matter of sex and the body that Newton applies to Stephen Gordon a notion of gender dysphoria that excludes the transsexual and thus these categories, even though The Well consistently naturalizes Stephen's "gender dysphoria," figuring it not as culturally constructed but innate and embodied.

Newton's definition of transsexuality is too restricted on two counts. First, in the medical narrative, transsexuality not only refers to those subjects who have "actually had surgery to alter their bodies," but to those who are at various stages in their somatic transitions, to those who are pre-transition, to those who take hormones only (the non-surgery-opting transsexual), and to those whose desire is to change sex but who, out of fear of familial or social rejection, lack of financial means or health resources, impediments of age or youth, for example, do not undertake physical transitioning.[34] Second,

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[34]From my conversations with Richard Green and Leah Schaefer among other professionals, it seems that the latter might well make up the largest category of transsexuals.

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Newton's claim that transsexuality depends on a rejection of homosexuality has been discredited for decades. As the narratives of transsexuality have proliferated in the last thirty years, it has become accepted that the so-called "aversion" to homosexuality was misread and misnamed during Benjamin and Cauldwell's earliest attempts to map out the differences between transsexuality and homosexuality and establish transsexuality as a discrete phenomenon. Even as early as 1969, Pauly's cases (and his analysis of them) reveal not so much a rejection of homosexuality per se as an aversion on the part of the female-to-male-transsexuals to their own female morphology, to undertaking sexual relations with women as "women" themselves. Their discomfort is not over homosexuality but over their own birth sex: the bodily dysphoria that motivates their transsexuality. This distinction is most evident in the transsexual's wish to deflect his partner's contact with his own body: the transsexual "avoids potentially pleasurable stimulation, either through masturbation or in [his] homosexual relations, because it confronts [him] with [his] own female anatomy. This is typical of female transsexualism and distinguishes it in some ways from homosexuality" (Pauly 83). Transsexual dysphoria stems not from the female body of the other, but from the body of the subject himself. His anguish concerns sex; sexuality is not foregrounded.[35]

---

[35] The category of homosexuality in the context of transsexuality has become progressively clarified. If the gender identity of the transsexual is affirmed by the contemporary sexologist, a female-to-male transsexual's desire for a woman is no longer termed homosexual, but heterosexual. As the distinction between the categories of transsexuality and homosexuality, between gender and sexuality, has become more evident, it has become possible to name the transsexual whose desire *is* homosexual consistent with his gender identity. Thus the female-to-male transsexual who takes a man as his love-object is now classified as homosexual. British psychiatrist Bryan Tully recently coined the term "transhomosexuality" to categorize such a subject -- the transsexual subject who is homosexual. Thus transsexuality and homosexuality are by no means perceived as even mutually exclusive.

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In configuring Stephen Gordon as transsexual then, it is important to consider how her anguish over her own female body informs her final rejection of a "homosexual" relationship. The ending of the novel when Stephen relinquishes Mary to Martin Hallam confirms that Stephen's sexual desire for women is secondary to her gender identification with men. Stephen cannot sustain her own place in a love relation with Mary because she cannot reconcile her own female body with her (imaginary) investment in heterosexual patterns.

We must ask again why Hall makes Stephen so male-identified, her sexual inversion so excessive and congenital and, above all, naturalized: what subjectivity is the novel really seeking to represent? The argument that Stephen's sexual inversion is a strategic means of representing (politicizing, sexualizing) homosexuality is compromised when it becomes clear that other strategies for representing lesbianism -- less polemic, less likely to rile the censors -- were available to Hall. As Martha Vicinus states writes in her challenge to Newton's formulation of the strategic theory:

> Esther Newton has argued that Radclyffe Hall chose to portray Stephen as a congenital invert, based upon Havelock Ellis's theories, because it was her only alternative to the sexuality of romantic friendships. Actually, by the late 1920s Hall had numerous other alternatives, including [Natalie] Barney's hedonistic lesbianism, [Renée] Vivien's self-created tragedy, Collette's theatrical affair with the marquise, and the many less colorful monogamous couples in Paris's literary world. (445)

Moreover, Hall indicates her familiarity with these alternative models by including some of them in The Well, embodying Natalie Barney, in the figure of Valérie Seymour, for instance. Because Ellis had already separated out homosexuality from sexual inversion, it was not necessary for Hall to represent homosexuality *through* inversion. In Ellis's writings on homosexuality, inversion already stood as a condition apart, much as Stephen stands apart within her "queer" circle in Paris. While the markings of the inversion are inscribed in varying degrees on other bodies -- the "eviration" of Jonathan Brockett with his fluttering white soft hands, Pat whose "ankles were too strong and too heavy for those

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of a female", Jamie who is "loose-limbed, raw-boned and short-sighted"; Wanda, "outraged by her body" -- the novel underscores that Stephen's inversion is by far the most "pronounced" (353, 354, 356). Most significantly, it implies that this further difference -- that of a more "pronounced" and embodied inversion -- is responsible for her sense of not belonging in the homosexual community in Paris.

The citations of sexological work in The Well enable first of all her father, then Stephen, to decode this more "pronounced" embodiment as inversion, and later, Stephen's further gender difference from her queer peers. In the first instance, Sir Philip shifts between making notes in his copy of Ulrichs to staring at a portrait of Stephen with her mother. He turns from written to visual text, as though the former might explain the representation of Stephen's difference -- "that indefinable quality in Stephen that made her look wrong in the clothes she was wearing, as though she and they had no right to each other, but above all no right to Anna" (23). In the case of the second explicit reference to a sexological author, Stephen comes across a book annotated by her father. She unlocks her father's "special book-case" ("as she slipped the key into the lock and turned it, the action seemed curiously automatic") to discover the "key" to her identity in Krafft-Ebing, presumably his Psychopathia Sexualis: "Krafft-Ebing -- she had never heard of that author before. All the same she opened the battered old book, then she looked more closely, for there on its margins were notes in her father's small, scholarly hand and she saw her own name appeared in those notes." (207). The father's annotations decode Stephen as invert, the proper name explaining and explained by the sexological character, just in case Stephen (or perhaps Hall's concern is more with her reader) doesn't get it. The sexological references in the novel show Stephen and her father literally using sexology to name and explicate her identity.

The narrative itself names Stephen an invert before her own self-discovery, when Stephen comes to realize that Angela Crossby is casting her aside for Roger Antrim. The narrative voice congenitalizes Stephen's disposition -- "And now the terrible nerves of the

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invert, those nerves that are always lying in wait, gripped Stephen" -- precisely when her "inadequacy," her "failure" in competition with a man, is in need of such explanation (185). But even prior to and surrounding these overt references to inversion or sexology, throughout the novel, Stephen's inversion is figured as profoundly embodied and natural. Thus the references do not so much construct Stephen's identity as they function as annotations in the margin of a text that's already in place: Stephen's body.

This transgendered text is outlined even before Stephen's birth, drawn up by the Gordons' expectations for a son. Their certainty in the fulfillment of these expectations extend as far as naming "him," in vitro, Stephen. Her parents' desires for a son and her transgendered naming both naturalize Stephen's transgendered beginnings (she can be seen simply as "fulfilling her destiny"), and, simultaneously, ask us to consider to what extent her transgendered subjectivity is nurtured, if not enabled, by parental expectations. Sir Philip goes on to raise Stephen as his son, legitimating, indeed, encouraging, her masculine identification: "You're all the son I've got," he tells her (58). The novel's exploration of this parental investment in the child's transgendering does not invalidate or undermine Stephen's transgendered subjectivity. Rather, it suggests that the trans subject is no more immune from the play of family psychodynamics than any other subject. Pauly's case of "E.R." in which the father's desire for a son is displaced into his encouraging and sustaining his transsexual "daughter"'s male-identification, in fact (contrary to Newton's sense) is remarkably similar to Stephen's situation. For Pauly and Pauly's reader, the family dynamic does not "undo" the transsexuality of the subject or render it any less embodied. Likewise in the novel, the parental desires set up the syntax of transsexuality, the "should have been" which transsexuality would correct in the futural. Stephen's body at birth affirms and naturalizes this syntax. Her inversion is somatically evident, her appearance "in some way a caricature of Sir Philip; a blemished, unworthy, maimed reproduction" (11). Her body is always represented in excess of a female morphology, notably the mother's (in the portrait above, Anna's beauty, "so perfect a

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thing, so completely reassuring," serves to set off Stephen's gendered otherness [23]), and at the same time, lacking ("blemished, unworthy, maimed") in respect of the male's, the father's: (too and, at the same time, not enough) narrow-hipped, strong, tall for its age, broad-shouldered, large-handed, strong-chinned, big-jawed.

In their discussions of Stephen's male-identification as a child (her insistence that she ride astride her horse, her refusal to play with dolls, her dressing up as Nelson, for example), critics have implicitly raised the place of transgender in the novel. As an adult, Stephen will prefer the company of men, and identify exclusively and excessively (and sometimes misogynistically) with "their blunt, open outlook" (74). Throughout, the novel represents this male-identification again in naturalized terms, the product of Stephen's inversion and her feelings of being differently gendered, in alignment with her inverted somatotype:

> "Doesn't Miss Stephen look exactly like a boy? I believe she must be a boy with them shoulders, and them funny gawky legs she's got on her!"
>
> And Stephen would say gravely: "Yes, of course I'm a boy. I'm young Nelson, and I'm saying: 'What is fear?' you know, Collins -- I must be a boy, 'cause I feel exactly like one. . . " (16)

Hall portrays the subject's experience of inversion through Stephen's feelings of being male. The novel suggests, again in a naturalized chain that Stephen acts like a boy because she feels like one because she should have been one. The "acting," as Stephen becomes aware to her frustration, does not constitute "being," functioning rather to highlight her failure to "be." Adam Parkes attempts to read the Nelson passages in The Well as illustrating a Butlerian "theatricality of social roles": instances when the novel inadvertently reveals the fictionality of gender, subverting its larger intent of "positing 'the facts'"(443). The problem with his reading lies in its failure to account for the sway that being and not being exert in the novel's representation of Stephen's male-identification, especially in these moments of "dressing up" as a boy. Stephen realizes that acting Nelson is "only pretending" or "playing" (38); performing masculinity only serves to bring home

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that she is not male: the irreconcilable discrepancy between "being" and "doing." The fact of not being normatively gendered is affirmed precisely through its performance ("being a girl spoilt everything -- even Nelson" [33]). The performance does not defuse but enunciates the power of gender ontology. As in transsexual texts, the subject's desire to be normatively gendered is figured as a fairy tale quest for gendered realness, for being rather than pretending. In transsexual narratives, the fairy tale is typically realized; in The Well, it isn't: "[Stephen] was conscious of feeling all wrong, because she longed to be someone quite real, instead of just Stephen pretending to be Nelson. In a quick fit of anger she would go to the cupboard, and getting out her dolls would begin to torment them. She had always despised the idiotic creatures which, however, arrived with each Christmas and birthday" (17).

Stephen's frustrations at not "being real" often lead to such enraged acting out against the feminine, here symbolized by the dolls which are more "real" in their artificial gendering than Stephen will ever be. As strongly as she identifies with the masculine / father, the feminine / mother constitutes the site of a violent disidentification. This rage against the feminine / mother should be understood as a displacement of Stephen's rage over her female body: the dolls refer obliquely to what she is (female) and isn't (in alignment with the feminine). The feminine is not subject to the fetishistic disavowal de Lauretis suggests, for there is no affirmation or "loving" of the feminine in herself. Precisely because of its connections to the feminine, what Stephen wishes to "torment" or "maim" is her own body, as becomes apparent in the following scene. Here, Stephen's frustrations are directed toward a dress with which her mother has sought to refeminize her; the feminine in this moment is doubled up in the conjunction of dress and mother:

> [Stephen] wrenched off the dress and hurled it from her, longing intensely to rend it, to hurt it, longing to hurt herself in the process, yet filled all the while with that sense of injustice. But this mood changed abruptly to one of self pity; she wanted to sit down and weep over Stephen; on a sudden impulse she wanted to pray over Stephen as though she were someone

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> apart, yet terribly personal in her trouble. Going over to the dress she smoothed it out slowly; it seemed to have acquired an enormous importance; it seemed to have acquired the importance of prayer, the poor, crumpled thing lying crushed and dejected. (72)

Stephen's desire to "rend" or "hurt" the dress symptomizes her desire to rend or hurt this body "in the process." The desire to hurt the dress both reveals and sublimates the desire to maim her body, the dress functioning metonymically for Stephen's female body. Indeed, this dress passage closely foreshadows the scene of Stephen naked before the mirror discussed above, where Stephen's longing to "maim" her body is manifest and not displaced onto an object. It is salutary to read the two passages side by side: in both, the same emotional shift (from rage to pity) occurs, reflecting the dislocation from her body Stephen feels. In both passages, Stephen's pity is aroused for her body / dress as for an other, "as though she were someone apart": "Oh poor and most desolate body"; "the poor crumpled thing lying crushed and dejected." Each passage ends with her experiencing her body as alien, in conflict with her consciousness in the narrative: the split of the transgendered subject. Her experience is that of a bodily agnosia, where the subject misrecognizes her physical corporeality as it falls short of her body image. In the case of the transsexual (and here of the fictional Stephen raging at the feminine), this bodily agnosia is characteristically gendered. The misrecognized body parts (parts of the material body that don't "feel real") and their antithesis, the phantom limbs (parts of a body image that often feels more real to transsexuals than the "real" body) are typically already sexed, whether primarily or secondarily. Thus Stephen experiences not her male-identification but her material body as wrong, insufficient. Her body image, integral and coherent, figures her "real" body as "defrauded," "maimed and insufferable" (163, 217). In the chasm between the gendered morphologies of her body image and her duplicitous "real" body, Stephen's alienation is engendered and transgendered.

The particular configuration of a gendered body image in opposition to the material body apparently shared by transsexuals and inverts presents perhaps the most

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powerful case in the argument for the historical continuity between these two identities.[36] The transsexual story (both the story of individuals and the history of the subject) evidences the victory of body image over material body, for the former shapes the latter. In an age prior to the formalization of transsexual endocrinology and surgery that would heal the rift, the invert could sustain his or her sense of self as gendered otherwise only through an omnipotent transgendered body image, a sense of his / her imaginary body as, antithetically gendered to the material body. Published only ten years before the first female-to-male transsexual phalloplasty, The Well contains a fantastic prefiguring of the healing possibilities of surgery. This can be found, appropriately, in the one dream in the novel. That it is the sole dream, and an incredibly phantasmagoric one at that embedded in this otherwise realistic novel, makes it especially prominent; yet it has received no previous critical attention.

The dream occurs during Stephen's childhood love for Collins, the Gordons' "florid, full-lipped and full-bosomed" housemaid (13). It is engendered and framed by the "housemaid's knee" episode -- the term that Collins uses to describe the swelling in her knee which results from "polishing them floors" (17). Stephen slips into the dream while expressing her desire for the housemaid's knee to be transferred from Collins to herself so that she can undergo the "'orrible operation" Collins, "true to her class" fears (17):

> "Please, Jesus, give me a housemaid's knee instead of Collins -- do, *do*, Lord Jesus. Please Jesus, I would like to bear all Collins' pain the way You did, and I don't want any angels! I would like to wash Collins in my blood, Lord Jesus -- and I would like very much to be a Saviour to Collins -- I love her, and I want to be hurt like You were; please, dear Lord Jesus, do let me. Please give me a knee that's all full of water, so that I can have Collins' operation. I want to have it instead of her, 'cause she's frightened -- I'm not a bit frightened!"

---

[36] Recall Ulrichs's formulation of a feminine soul trapped in a masculine body or Krafft-Ebing's case of the inverted Hungarian male physician who experiences "his" genitalia as female. I examine transsexual body image in detail in my next chapter.

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> This petition she repeated until she fell asleep to dream that in some queer way she was Jesus and that Collins was kneeling and kissing her hand, because she, Stephen, had managed to cure her by cutting her knee with a bone paper-knife and grafting it on to her own. The dream was a mixture of rapture and discomfort, and it stayed quite a long time with Stephen. (18)

The fabric of the dream is sexual, a Christian-informed rescue fantasy in which Stephen, apparently occupying the place of subject in the dream, "saves" her beloved from bodily pain.[37] Collins functions as Stephen's first sexual investment in the novel, and the dream follows on directly from what is the most explicit sexual scene in the novel. This figures Collins exposing her swollen knee for the young Stephen to touch:

> They were standing alone in the spacious night-nursery, where Collins was limply making the bed. It was one of those rare and delicious occasions when Stephen could converse with her goddess undisturbed, for the nurse had gone out to post a letter. Collins rolled down a coarse woollen stocking and displayed the afflicted member; it was blotchy and swollen and far from attractive, but Stephen's eyes filled with quick anxious tears as she touched the knee with her finger. (17)

This prior real moment in the narrative can be read as engendering the dream, generating Stephen's fantasy of healing the suffering body of the housemaid. The peculiar details of the unconscious manifestation to follow in the form of the dream find their conscious base

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[37] In this regard, Stephen's dream resembles those rescue fantasies which contribute to Freud's transgendering of his female analysand in "Psychogenesis." In Freud's essay, the subject's fantasy is of "saving" her beloved from a bad sexual reputation: "When the girl learnt later on how far her adored lady deserved to be called by this title ["a 'light woman'"] and that she lived simply by giving her bodily favours, her reaction took the form of great compassion and of phantasies and plans for "rescuing" her beloved from these ignoble circumstances. We have been struck by the same endeavours to "rescue" in the men of the type referred to above, and in my description of it I have tried to give the analytic derivation of this tendency" (148).

In a footnote, Freud then refers the reader to his essay, "A Special Type of Object Choice Made by Men," thus retracing the particular form of his female homosexual's cathexis to the heterosexual men he discussed ten years earlier. The structure of Stephen's fantasy thus returns her, even in a psychoanalytic narrative, to an originally heterosexual masculinity.

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here. Stephen's observation (and it is her perception which governs both the scene and the dream representation) of the bodily debasement of Collins as she "limply" makes the bed is, in the dream, symbolized by Collins in a kneeling posture.[38] Most significantly, Collins' revelation and Stephen's touching of her "afflicted member" are responsible for producing the shift in Stephen's subsequent dream identification from Jesus ("she was Jesus") to Collins, of Stephen's final positioning herself in the place of Collins by grafting Collins' swelling onto herself.

These identificatory shifts are crucial. They reveal Stephen taking on *for herself* in her imaginary both the afflicted body and the healing of this body. Unconsciously motivating Stephen's identification with Collins -- her fantasy of healing via substitution -- is the novel's consistent representation of Stephen's own "afflicted member," afflicted in its very absence: the "maimed" and "defrauded" body of the female invert which is manifested in the mirror and the dress scenes. The chain of substitution (Stephen - Jesus - Collins) is enabled by the confused language describing the dream. Subjects and objects are above all ambiguous; pronouns quickly lose their referents and properties are left

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[38] Stephen's sexual desire is consistently aroused by the other's social debasement; as "lower" class, Collins is a template for Stephen's later erotic interests, Angela Crossby and Mary Llwellyn who in different ways do not match up to her own landed gentry origins. The kneeling Collins literally embodies this debasement. The kneeling maid is a key player in narratives of bourgeois childhood sexuality at the beginning of the century. In "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis," Freud states that the Wolf Man's desire depends upon the perception of the beloved in a debased posture -- kneeling. As in The Well, it is the debased image of the maid which arouses the child. The sight of Grusha, the Wolf Man's nursery maid, in such a posture initiates the chain of his desire in which all his subsequent love-objects function as substitutes for Grusha who herself (according to Freud) is a primary substitute for his mother. In their chapter, "Below Stairs: the Maid and the Family Romance," Peter Stallybrass and Allon White argue that, in writing of the nursery maid as surrogate for the primal scene mother, Freud elides the importance of economic class and the social from bourgeois family life and childhood sexuality. There is still work to be done on The Well's use of class to represent Stephen's sexuality.

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unspecified. It is clear that Collins is kneeling and Stephen is curing. Yet as to whose knee is being cut and what part of the body is receiving the grafted swelling (her own what?) is left wonderfully obscure. Might not this ambiguity allow the dream to stand on an imaginary level as a fantasy of grafting flesh from one part of the body to heal the invert's own "afflicted member"? Written ten years before female-to-male phalloplasty existed in the real, the passage omits the problematic details of surgical intervention. Cutting through flesh with a bone paper-knife would of course be impossible; the dream passes over this difficulty by placing it in the past tense. The moment of "surgery" has already occurred, the flesh has already been transplanted; but the healing of the "maimed" body is nevertheless accomplished through a fantastic form of surgical grafting.

A final argument to be made for the novel as transsexual concerns the status of Stephen's "lesbian" relationships. Most critics have noted that Stephen's relationships with women are unsuccessful: the feature that most compromises the attempt to read the novel as lesbian. Ruehl remarks that compared with heterosexuality, "lesbianism" is depicted as sterile and barren. Even de Lauretis reads the end of the novel, Stephen's "sacrifice" of Mary, as "a repudiation of lesbianism as such" (211). Concurring with Ruehl and de Lauretis, I believe we need to acknowledge what the novel affirms in this very repudiation of lesbianism. That Stephen gives up Mary to Martin Hallam in spite of Mary's devotion to her indicates that the invert functions not as a "lure" for lesbianism, as de Lauretis, Newton, Smith-Rosenberg have argued, but precisely as an exclusion of lesbian. Stephen cannot continue her relationship with Mary as an invert because her masculine identification exceeds lesbian relations. Ironically, through her passing over Mary (both passing over her and passing her over to Martin), Stephen affirms her identification with the heterosexual man. More powerfully -- and more troublingly for the transsexual critic -- than any moment in the novel, this act highlights her disidentification with women and locates her in a masculinist economy in which women are to be exchanged (given up / sacrificed / courted).

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vii. Conclusion: A Turbulent Age of Transition

> All that was heavy in [Stephen's] face sprang into view, the strong line of the jaw, the square, massive brow, the eyebrows, too thick and too wide for beauty. And yet there was a kind of large splendour about her -- absurd though she was, she was splendid at that moment -- grotesque and splendid, like some primitive thing conceived in a turbulent age of transition.
>
> The Well

In her discussion of the points of overlap and difference between the identities, politics and histories of lesbian, butch and female-to-male transsexual, Gayle Rubin speculates on the transsexual potential of lesbians in history: "It is interesting to ponder what . . . lesbian forbears might be considered transsexuals; if testosterone had been available, some would undoubtedly have seized the opportunity to take it" ("Of Catamites and Kings" 474). Although Rubin makes no reference to Radclyffe Hall or The Well , in the midst of her essay, the sole photograph is of Hall in 1936: profiled unsmiling in suit and tie, one hand straightening her lapel, the other rigidly holding a cigarette, cropped hair slicked back, Hall is at her most passing. Rubin's remark implies that the writing of transsexual history might depend upon performing retroactive readings of lesbian and gay history. As Rubin's essay itself shows, the two narratives are quite fundamentally entangled.

This chapter has attempted to suggest that, in its reading of sexology, it is lesbian and gay criticism that has been most revisionist, that has performed the retroactive rescripting of sexology in the narrative of lesbian and gay history. In equating the female invert with the modern figure of the lesbian, we have denied the fundamental transgendering of this subject as sexology attempted to describe it. An invert based on these historical sexological subjects, Stephen Gordon is "conceived in a turbulent age of transition." That is, The Well is produced at a discursive moment in which sexology had separated out inversion from homosexuality, not entirely, but sufficiently to make the two

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subjects irreducible to each other. It is produced at a technological transitional moment in which inverts had effected gender and, some, sex transitions (but not systematically). The sexological figure of the invert represents the transgendered identity itself in transition towards a medicalized exclusive focus on gender identity disorders, one which will enable the transgendered subject officially and formally to transition to transsexual. Restoring this narrative allows us not only to make sense of Stephen's transgendering in The Well and its troubled place in past criticism, it recovers this absolutely formative moment in the history of the transsexual subject.

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Chapter Three

A Skin of One's Own: Toward a Theory of Transsexual Embodiment

> To be oneself is first of all to have a skin of one's own and, secondly, to use it as a space in which one can experience sensations.
>
> Didier Anzieu, The Skin Ego

> The layer which I really needed to take off was what can only be described as a second skin. But no matter how hot or how cold or 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 piece of clothing, except, I couldn't because that last layer was me.
>
> Raymond Thompson, What Took You So Long?

> It was as though I had no skin.
>
> Caroline Cossey, My Story

> Why should the area of the skin, which guarantees a human being's existence in space, be most despised and left to the tender mercies of the senses?
>
> Yukio Mishima, Sun & Steel

> Skin is a mask a source of strangeness, and by refiguring my face, I feel I'm actually taking off a mask.
>
> Orlan, cited in Louise Gray, "Me, My Surgeon and My Art"

i. Introduction

In December 1993, I attended "Orlan: Omnipresence" at the Sandra Gering Gallery in New York. Part exhibition, part performance, part lecture, the event displayed the latest work of the French performance artist Orlan: the surgical reconstruction of her face according to a computer composite of five canonical representations of beautiful women, including the Mona Lisa and Botticelli's Venus. The text for this art pastiche was provided by Orlan's face, the tools of inscription, surgical knives, cosmetic implants, tucks and sutures. Among Gering's exhibits was a video of one of the surgical procedures (for the project appeared to be comprised of several), originally relayed live from the Upper

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East Side operating theater to multiple international galleries. The video transformed the surgery into spectacle: the surgical team, fitted out in black robes and conical hats for the occasion, performed on Orlan's laid out body. The video and the live satellite broadcasts of the surgery, as Julia Epstein has remarked, "literaliz[ed] the term 'operating theater'" (Altered Conditions 2). As if to underline the theatricality of the surgical intervention, a surgeon's bloody robe stretched pinned to the wall at Gering's bore the legend, "The body is but a costume." The robe seemed intended to function as a kind of surgical fetish for the viewer, a relic from the operation simultaneously provoking and warding off our anxieties about the nature of what we were seeing in the gallery, the "but" in its legend an attempt to forestall our own "but"s, to reassure us of the universal superficiality and mutability of the body: the body is but a costume; it can be (surgically) changed but this does not change us; the body is all surface; we remain constant -- ourselves -- a core self somewhere deep within its folds. In spite of this disavowal, the body's materiality (its fleshiness, its non-plasticity and non-performativity) was in evidence elsewhere in the gallery: in the photographs of Orlan's face, much swollen, bruised and misshapen, which served as a daily record of Orlan's very gradual post-surgical recovery; and (evidently a recovery not yet completed) in Orlan herself, (omni)present at the gallery the day I went, her face mostly hidden behind dramatic big dark glasses, what wasn't, still puffy and luminous, oddly large. (She looked more than a little peaky and nothing like the computer composite of the artists' women on whom her face had been modeled.)

How, I asked Orlan in the question and answer period, after mentioning the work I was then beginning on transsexuality, how did she understand the relation between body and identity in her work? Did she feel any sense of identity transformation, of an internal

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shifting, as her face underwent its successive alterations, as she progressed through the surgeries? I wondered what it was like to wake up to a different face each morning. I wondered at Orlan's apparent detachment from her face that she could radically alter its appearance, its lineaments, in the name of whatever this was -- art? performance? spectacle? postmodernism? I wondered how she sustained her self in the face (literally) of such change: was it (the transformation but by implication the self also) only skin deep? Although Orlan didn't directly answer my question (there were problems in translation), she picked up on my reference to transsexuality, saying simply she felt rather like a female-to-female transsexual ("une transsexuelle femme-à-femme"). I was struck by this reformulation of transsexual identity. Eliding the element of sex change, it nonetheless suggested a total identity (ex)change: one changes from one woman to another woman; identity mutates through the surgical mutations. Inasmuch as transsexuality consists of simultaneous corporeal and social dramatic change, Orlan's ready appropriation implied that something of her self, something of her gendered self as a woman, was invested in the surgical transformations, that the surgical effects were not simply surface, cosmetic; for the transsexual, identity is inextricably hooked into the experience of the body. Paradoxically reassuring, it was Orlan's embrace of the transsexual analogy that countered the robe's claims about the performativity, the non-referentiality of the body, breaking through the freakiness that otherwise characterized the event: an insane literalization of the poststructuralist insistence on the absolute constructedness of the body. The transsexual analogy reconnected the surgical transformation of bodily matter to identity.[1]

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[1] The exhibition of artifacts from Orlan's seventh surgical performance, "This My Body,

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This chapter considers how transsexuality intervenes in the dominant postmodern configuration of the body: whether in the process of surgical construction, the body may be revealed to be irreducible to the idea of its construction, to its poststructuralist designation as cultural effect. While the notion of the body as costume is certainly welded to the transsexual in the cultural imagination (the transsexual changes sexed parts like a set of clothes, treats the body as tractable and alterable, provisional and immaterial),[2] transsexual accounts of their transition bring into relief the reductiveness in this representation. The autobiographies reveal that the body matters in at least two intricated senses. First, in the sense that its materiality is rendered crucially important in reflecting or holding the subject's gender identity. In that s/he seeks to align the body with gender identification, to inscribe gender as sex on the body; in that the progression toward these goals of sexed embodiment constitutes the transsexual narrative; the transsexual does not approach the body as an immaterial provisional surround but as the very "seat" of the self.

This My Software," is currently showing in Newcastle, UK (April 1996). Orlan has had cheek implants inserted into her forehead. As part of the exhibition, Orlan's "surplus" tissues from the surgery are mounted on texts from Lacan. In planning is the culmination of this decade-long project, "The Reincarnation of Saint Orlan," to coincide with the millennium: the construction on Orlan's face of the largest nose possible. See Louise Gray.

[2] "For transsexuals a book may be read by its cover, and the bodily frame is thought of as another article of clothing, to be retouched at will. Here the transsexual's relationship to one's own [sic: the awkward result of side-stepping a gendered pronoun] body is not unlike that of candidates for plastic surgery, especially those women who make fortunes for their surgeons by having all parts of their face and body rectified" (Millot 116). Millot's comparison patently assumes that women who undergo plastic surgery experience their soma as immaterial. Actually, while there must be some degree of splitting between body image and physical body to motivate cosmetic surgery, it is arguable that individuals seek out plastic surgery precisely because the appearance and / or feel of their body is integral to their sense of their identity (like the transsexual in this count then).

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Simply put, if the body were experienced as a costume, why the life-quest to alter its contours? Second, the body matters in the basic sense that the transsexual's resexing consists in the redistribution of actual corporeal matter. Beyond the transgendered identification, the trans-sexing of the transsexual involves a series of somatic transformations. Hormone therapy begins this process, dramatically contravening the functioning of the gonads, refiguring the body's contours, altering tissue structure (muscle, fat, breast, genital), redistributing hair, changing skin texture, and so forth. Gender reassignment surgery continues and radicalizes this process: removing sex organs (genital and secondary, internal and external), reshaping the remains and / or relocating other bodily tissues -- nerves, skin, flesh -- to form others. Transsexuality is a thoroughly bodily affair, immersing its subjects -- and those reading of it -- in the bodily matter of sexual difference.

Narratives about transforming bodily matter then, transsexual autobiographies demand their reader consider the significance of this matter: how the physical, the psychic and the cultural are imbricated in the sexed body. What makes it possible for a female-to-male transsexual to name the somatic material (skin, tissue and nerves) transplanted from his forearm or his abdomen to his groin, "my penis," or for a male-to-female transsexual to name the inverted remains of her penis, "my vagina," is a refiguring of the sexed body that takes place, simultaneously, along corporeal, psychic and symbolic axes. Gendered becoming, becoming a man or a woman, occurs for the transsexual at the points of their intersection, complex crossings for sure, but that the flesh wields enormous gendered significance for the transsexual cannot be ignored. If what is required of current gender theory is that it find a language to describe the bodiliness of gender crossings, precisely as

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it has begun to explore their identificatory significance, sex change accounts in transsexual autobiographies both press this concern and provide some of the vocabulary.

As Didier Anzieu has argued so persuasively, the fleshly body is the great repressed of our age, and its absence from much contemporary thought since structuralism symptomizes and perpetuates this repression.[3] A Freudian psychoanalyst, Anzieu foregrounds the repressive dynamic; but it could be argued convincingly according to a Foucauldian model that the mass deployment of the body in contemporary theoretical discourse produces or continues to produce the dematerialization of the body. In an attempt to unleash the repressed material of the body, Anzieu has written a remarkable psychoanalysis of the skin. Bordering inside and outside the body, the point of separation and contact between you and me, our skin is the interface between self and other, between the biological, the psychic and the social. It holds each of us together, quite literally contains us, protects us, keeps us discrete, and yet is our first mode of communication with each other and the world. Anzieu has proposed the skin as the primary organ underlying the formation of the ego, its handling, its touching, its holding -- our experience of its feel -- individualizing our psychic functioning, quite crucially making us who we are. Anzieu's means of demonstrating what he takes to be the central tenet of Freudian psychoanalysis, forgotten in its structuralist assumption -- that "[e]very psychical

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[3] "Throughout almost the whole of the third quarter of the twentieth century, the great missing, unrecognized, unacknowledged element in education, everyday life, the rise of structuralism, the psychologism of many therapists and sometimes even in child-rearing practices, has been and still remains to a great extent the body, as a vital dimension of human reality and as a pre-sexual and irreducible datum, the anaclitic grounding of all psychical functions" (Skin Ego 21).

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activity is anaclitically dependent upon a biological function" -- the skin ego provides a theoretical tool for considering how, in transsexual accounts of their surgical transformations, sex is changed (Skin Ego 40). The surgical production of transsexual bodies may be organized into two stages: the ablation of organs (e.g. hysterectomy, gonadectomy); and the redistribution of the skin and surface tissues of the body to form transsexual parts (e.g. vaginoplasty, phalloplasty, mastectomy). The making of these new parts consists in the surgical manipulation of the body's skin and surface tissues: their grafting, stretching, inverting, splitting, tucking, suturing, and so forth. How does gender reassignment surgery as a manipulation of the body's surface change the transsexual's sex -- materially and psychically? Of what does the moment of sex change consist? How and when do such material manipulations enable the transsexual to feel, according to his / her own account, that his / her body is appropriately sexed?

Anzieu's skin ego allows us to make sense of the transsexual's representation of her / his sexed body, to trace the narrative of transsexual body image in the autobiographies. Because the terms of this formulation are even discretely among the most unsettled in constructionist identity theory (subject, representation, experience, body), from the prevalent perspective in gender theory, the narrative of transsexual autobiography, of becoming sexed, a woman or a man, appears naively overdetermined. Butler asserts that "we can never tell a story about how it is a body comes to be marked by the category of sex" (Bodies 98); yet this is the very story that transsexual autobiography, from the point of view of the subject via the authorization of his or her somatic and psychic experience, sets out to tell. Cynicism at the outset toward the tasks, terms, figures and authenticity of such stories will only encourage us, circuitously, to

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theorize our own cynicism instead of performing the reading at hand. Entrenchment in poststructuralist theory's devaluation of the realms of experience and the physical body, espousing its suspicions toward referentiality, makes it difficult if not impossible to read with care the transsexual plot, to foreground its stake in sexed embodiment. As the trajectory from wrong embodiment to right embodiment drives the transsexual subject, reading transsexual autobiographies necessitates a shift in theoretical grounds. And precisely because it recognizes the body and the feeling of embodiment as crucial to identity, Anzieu's skin ego provides something of a map to these grounds, cuts the path for an approach that can attend to the transsexual insistence on the embodiment of gendered subjectivity.[4]

Transsexual transitioning aims to align the feeling of gendered embodiment, that is gendered body image, with material body. This goal raises questions about the nature of body image and its relation to material body. How can body image be so radically split off from material body in the first place? What makes body image feel sufficiently substantial as to persuade the transsexual to alter his or her body to conform to it? Even body image, which we might be tempted to understand as imaginary, asserts its materiality in transsexual autobiographies, acquires a felt reality that the subject transcribes into the flesh through hormones and surgery. In the context of treating non-transsexual body image distortions, neurologist Oliver Sacks has posited a physiological dimension to body image

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[4] In the bodily ego footnote in Gender Trouble that I argued in chapter 1 was crucial to Butler's configuration of the body, Butler cites Anzieu's The Skin Ego as "a provocative account . . . which, unfortunately, does not consider the implications of its account for the

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and consequently to the bodily agnosia suffered by his patients. Like Anzieu's skin ego, Sacks's "neurology of identity" offers a materialist theory of psychic-somatic interchange which may be adapted to access the psychophysiological matter of trans-sex (Leg 185).

Theorists who read an integrated body image as underlying successful physical and psychic functioning in the subject, both Sacks and Anzieu ground their work in Freud's formulation of the ego as a bodily projection. Like contemporary materialist psychoanalytic feminisms, both writers emphasize the significance of the body in Freud's work and the corporeal origins of psychoanalysis itself; for Freud was himself a neurologist before a psychoanalyst. This chapter is undergirded by these corporeal (re)turns to Freud after the linguistic turn in psychoanalysis. It participates in their attempt to reinstate the body as crucial psychic terrain.[5]

ii. Second Skins: Transsexual Body Images

> "I am the crinkled egg that nobody wants," I said to her, "but I am as good on the inside as all the other eggs."
> Raymond Thompson, What Took You So Long?

What if thought were as much an affair of the skin as of the brain?

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sexed body" (163 n. 43). I demonstrate here how Anzieu may nevertheless be engaged to provide such an account.

[5] One such recent materialist psychoanalytic feminist text, Elizabeth Grosz's Volatile Bodies, prompted me to read Anzieu and re-read Sacks and to think through their applicability to transsexual bodies. Although I later take issue with Grosz's representation of transsexuality, I am implicitly guided by her "corporeal feminism," which "invert[s] the primacy of a psychical interiority by demonstrating its necessary dependence on a corporeal exteriority" (xiii). For other recent materialist psychoanalytic feminisms, see Teresa Brennan, The Interpretation of the Flesh and Marcia Ian, Remembering the Phallic Mother. As Brennan's later History After Lacan indicates, however, materialism and Lacanianism are not inevitably incompatible.

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Didier Anzieu, The Skin Ego

In what is surely one of the most disturbing recent representations of the transsexual, the psychopathic figure at the center of Jonathan Demme's 1990 film, *The Silence of the Lambs*, a former psychiatric patient refused gender reassignment surgery kills fat girls, skins them, and is shown loonily sewing their skins together to form a costume of woman-ness to clothe his own body. Jame Gumb's activity reifies the perception of the male-to-female transsexual as a man who seeks to become woman at any cost, whose woman-ness is irredeemably artificial, constructed, unnatural: the man posturing in a woman's body, the female body but a costume for an immutable male self. As noted by Stephen Whittle, Gumb strikingly echoes those concerns about the superficiality and unnaturalness of the transsexual's sex that drive Janice Raymond's anti-transsexual manifesto, The Transsexual Empire. Raymond's "representation of the transsexual is [that of] an artificially constructed female -- she terms it: 'artifactual femaleness -- The 'she-male' is made -- i.e. constructed, fashioned and fabricated'" ("Transsexuals and the Law" 72). Through Gumb, the transsexual is imaged as literally fashioning and fabricating the surface of the female body: a patchwork of female skin to disguise his maleness.[6]

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[6] I have retained the male pronoun for Gumb, convinced by Whittle's argument that Gumb is not really transsexual. Whittle traces Gumb's psychotic "cross-dressing" via, *Psycho*'s Norman Bates, to the figure of Ed Gein, the serial killer in Robert Bloch's 1959 novel, *Psycho*, upon which the *Psycho* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* films were based. In Bloch's novel, Gein, himself a fictionalized version of a real historical figure, makes himself a suit of female skin, like his filmic counterpart in *The Silence of the Lambs*: "Beside the cannibalism, the grave robbing, the torture and the murder, [Gein] also made himself partial suits from the skins and hair of his victims, or the cadavers he exhumed.

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The Silence of the Lambs and Raymond's tract both conceive of transsexuality as a medicalized sickness, where sickness connotes not only pathology but moral disease. The transsexual is diseased and is the disease, infecting a healthy body politic precisely through his invasion of the female body. This imagery effectively arrogates and psychopathologizes what has become the formula for transsexual ontology: the subject trapped in, and trying to escape, the wrong (sexed) body. A topos of transsexual autobiographies, the wrong-body formula is used by transsexuals themselves to express the sensory experience of transsexuality: the feeling of being caught in the wrong body. In the autobiographies the disease conveyed, if any, is that of a physically felt discomfort -- a dis-ease -- on the part of the transsexual subject. The transphobic stereotype in Raymond / Silence is particularly noxious because it co-opts figures immanently significant to transsexual accounts, inscribing the somatic trouble of the transsexual into the transsexual as trouble for the social corpus.

The detail of this Hollywood corruption -- its particular focus on the skin as crucial surface for the fantasy of sex change -- further replicates details from transsexual accounts. Gumb is refused the medical technology to enable him to throw off his own skin (to escape his "wrong body"). His recourse is to fabricate (to make up and produce as a fabric) a layer of female skin to cover his male skin. Transsexual subjects frequently

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He strapped these female torso skins, masks and 'wigs' to his body whilst he wandered around his farm" ("Transsexuals and the Law" 87). Although the characters of Gein, Bates and Gumb are derived from "a real person," he was "not a transvestite or transsexual. Unfortunately the characters of transvestite or transsexual are used as scapegoats to illustrate the imaginary female violator" ("Transsexuals and the Law" 92-93). In other words, the transsexual / transvestite element is the cinematic supplement to

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articulate their bodily alienation as a discomfort with their skin or bodily encasing: being trapped in the wrong body is figured as being in the wrong, or an extra or a second, skin, and transsexuality is expressed as the desire to shed or to step out of this skin. Fantasies of excoriation punctuate the autobiographies. Pre-transition, Jan Morris writes that she "began to dream of ways in which I might throw off the hide of my body and reveal myself pristine within -- forever emancipated into that state of simplicity" (19-20). Morris's autobiography narrates her transsexuality as a progression toward a happy state of disembodiment, as a mystical quest for a bodiless soul. The goal of transition and of the narrative is represented as to have no skin at all.[7] Leslie Feinberg also writes of a desire for disembodiment in terms of shedding the body like a skin. S/he represents the body as a restrictive enclosing layer for the self within: "I think how nice it would be to unzip my body from forehead to navel and go on vacation. But there is no escaping it, I'd have to pack myself along" (Journal 20). Feinberg's image shifts from the body as a single piece of clothing, to the body as a suitcase full of clothing with the "self" packed inside. In both metaphors, the true self is en-cased in a restrictive or burdensome outer layer, the body. And in one of the oral transsexual accounts cited by Bryan Tully, an anonymous male-to-female expresses her alienation from her male body in terms of being encased, surrounded by a false skin: "I used to look at my body and think it was a bit like a diver's suit, it

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the real event. In all these representations, moreover, the implication is that transsexuality is an extreme form of transvestism, a kind of body-transvestism.

[7] "I see [transsexuality] above all as a dilemma neither of the body nor of the brain but of the spirit" (10). The hero of her narrative is the disembodied Tibetan holy man whom Morris (as James) encounters on Everest. The Tibetan "without visible means of survival .

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didn't feel like me inside" (76). The image of the body-as-diver's-suit suggests that the subject's authentic self might be revealed if only the outer layer of the visible body could be peeled off, like a diver's suit. Yet the speaker goes on to interpret her own simile startlingly: "it didn't feel like me inside." The "me" is not inside, either; indeed, the "real me" seems to have disappeared from the picture altogether, I would suggest so fundamental is the bodily alienation. One is left with the disturbing image of the body as a false outer casing with nothing inside: a hollow shell or empty skin. What's disturbing is that corporeality appears to provide no reference for identity.

What is the currency of this genre of body image in transsexual narratives? Why does it recur and what relation of self to body does it posit? Certainly an inquiry into the value of the wrong body formula should acknowledge at the outset its status as powerful medico-discursive sign, one of great strategic use to the transsexual. As the formula tropes transsexuality in its medical narrative version, by drawing on it in the therapeutic setting, the transsexual seeks out the medical rubber-stamp for his or her transsexuality. Being trapped in the wrong body has become the crux of an authenticating transsexual "rhetoric": language, narratives, and figures the subject deploys to obtain access to hormones and surgery Yet is the wrong-body figure's proliferation solely attributable to this authorizing force? Is its power solely discursive?

Asserting that it is and urging the development of "a deeper analytic language for transsexual theory" in its place, Sandy Stone dismisses the wrong body image as symptomatic of the "phallocentric, binary character of gender differentiation" held up by

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. . mov[ed] with a proud, gliding, and effortless motion that seemed inexorable. . . . [T]he

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the medical practitioners in their streamlining of true transsexuals ("A Posttranssexual Manifesto" 297). Her attribution of the image to the clinician's authorship fails to explain its circulation in *published* transsexual autobiographies: its continued use once the subject has achieved gender reassignment and need no longer jump through the psychiatrist's hoops. One can of course conceive of transsexuals as dupes of the medically narrative, uncritically living out its plot -- indeed, Stone's "posttranssexual theory" constantly verges on this more-poststructuralist--transsexual-than-thou position -- but this sets up the framework for invalidating all transsexual experience as a mere effect of medical discourse.

Where Stone patronizes other transsexuals for ontologizing transsexuality through the wrong body image, it is the contention of this chapter that transsexuals continue to deploy the image precisely because of its ontological force. It captures the ontological dimension to transsexuality, conveying most effectively the experience of transsexual embodiment. It functions as an identity leitmotif; when the autobiographies are read together this feeling comes to appear foundational and shared. Mario Martino's autobiography uses the image of wrong embodiment to organize the transsexual trajectory. Casting his body as a labyrinth in which his true self is lost ("this labyrinth of erroneous human anatomy" [161]), Martino divides his narrative into two parts, somatic entrapment (Part One is entitled "The Labyrinth") and somatic escape once hormone treatment and upper surgery have been achieved (Part Two, "Beyond the Labyrinth"). The image of entrapment within a container, in other words, is not only indexical of but

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more I thought about it, the more clearly I realized that he had no body at all" (88).

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fundamentally structures his life-story as a transsexual and the way in which he conceives of his transsexuality.

Although the image of wrong embodiment is invoked in virtually all accounts, as the above variations in its use demonstrate, it is not reproduced formulaically. Rather, the transsexual autobiographer personalizes the image. Katherine Cummings metaphorizes the alien male body of John Cummings as a false mask only to substitute it with that of the metaphor of this body as "a prison of flesh and blood [for] there is a constant ache for emancipation and a sense of wonder that no one senses the cries for help from the prisoner within" (209). Cummings revises the image in the process of approximating her precise somatic feeling. Beyond its rhetorical power, the image of being trapped in the wrong body functions to express a sexed body dysphoria profoundly and subjectively experienced. It recurs in autobiographical accounts because being trapped in the wrong body is quite simply what transsexuality feels like: a sensory experience of pre-transition (dis)embodiment; the abjection of the body that sets in motion the transsexual quest.

More dramatically than any other, female-to-male Raymond Thompson's transsexual autobiography substantiates the constative dimension of the image of entrapment in the wrong body, fleshing out transsexuality into a psychophysiological condition. Thompson's narrative represents him as embodying the image, feeling it: he suffers claustrophobia in his body precisely as a false outer skin or enclosure locking inside an authentic "inner body":

> I needed to be out of my body, to be free. It felt as if my "inner body" was forcing itself to the ends of my limbs. It was growing ever larger inside of me, making me feel I was bursting at the seams and wanting out . . . out . . . *out!*

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> Because this was impossible, this process would abruptly reverse and I would start to shrink inside myself. My whole inner body shrank until I became very small inside. It was as if I became so small I had to find some safe place to hide inside myself. My tiny inner body was in unfamiliar surroundings, in a place it didn't belong and I felt utterly unsafe. I became like a little shadow inside my physical body, a shadow running around everywhere trying to find somewhere inside. (200)

The image of an internal body attempting to force its way out of the referential flesh and then of its recoiling is Thompson's attempt to convey what is obviously an intensely sensory, visceral experience. As Thompson's own name for these sensations underlines -- "bodily feelings," the transsexual trope of the subject trapped within the wrong body is materialized as somatic feeling (253). What Took You So Long? insists on transsexuality as a condition altering the body's physicality as much as a physical sickness. Pre-transition, Thompson is struck by moments of semi-paralysis in which he is unable to move or feel his body. Attributed to his transsexuality, these moments stem from the conflict between the true body within and the false body without, between sentient body image and insentient visible body. As though more real and substantial, the body image, the authentic body within, appears to bear, to feel, the agony and the material body is dematerialized (note that the autobiographical "I" of the above passage is located in internal body image, as it is in the entire narrative). The conflict between inner and outer body is incarnated, and the figure of the authentic inner body seeking to break out of its outer body prison dramatically enacted. In an incident lasting several days, Thompson takes to his bed, refuses food and drink, as though body image is driven to deny body-prison its very necessary material fortifications, as if death is its only means of release from improper embodiment. Only the intervention of his family prevents this precipitation into suicide, by which time Thompson's inner body, in an assertion of its authenticity and

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dominance over visible body, has succeeded in metamorphosing his physical body into a flimsy, barely containing, shell: his body is now "positively emaciated" (202). Unable to break out of its "prison of flesh and bones," body image punitively reconstitutes the material body into flesh and bones (165).

When the body image transforms fleshly matter and inscribes its struggle on the material body, it exteriorizes what is conceived as internal. The figure of the "body trapped within" transgresses its imprisoning bounds and transsexual body image acquires a material force with which the subject -- and his reader -- must contend. In a remarkable instance of quasi-hysterical symptomization, Thompson's narrative literalizes this psychic-corporeal inside-out-ness. On seeing his reflection in the mirror, Thompson finds his face covered with weeping blisters. As the narrative provides no somatic reason for their presence, and Thompson presents them as signs of the externalization of his internal state ("my internal stress [was showing] on the outside" [202]), the reader is asked to accept these physical marks as evidence of his "inside" on his "outside," the trace of body image acting on material body: symptoms of bodily representation wounding or punishing the literal body that pitifully fails to embody it, a kind of hysterization of the struggle of the body trapped within. Not simply marking the dissociation between physical body and body image, the blisters reproduce in their very micro-structure that dynamic of an inner body pushing up against, trying to escape from the material outer body: vesicles filled with bodily fluids bursting up and out from their internal course through to the body's surface, overflowing their assigned passage; as if the figure of the inner body striving to break out of its container has erupted on the surface of its container, broken out literally in blisters on the skin. "Because my body was becoming more and more alien to me as I

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developed," Thompson writes of the agon between physical body and body image "there was an urge to rip off my own skin, for lack of a better description. The frustration and anxiety were tearing me to bits" (54). In fact, as this instance of its materialization underlines, the description couldn't be better: the blisters produce the splitting or bursting of the skin as a kind of unconscious material effect of this "urge." Thompson's experience of the body trapped within forcing its way out makes possible, at least phantasmatically, the material grounds or base underlying the transsexual trope as a whole.

In order to address this materialization of transsexual body image, to bring into relief the place at which the imaginary might back on to the material, what is needed is a psychoanalysis of the body's surface or interface with the psyche. For if the urge to break out of one's skin or bodily encasing is sensible, that is, if it can be physically felt and unconsciously materialized and is not simply a discursive figure, the skin -- as the surface mediating "inside" and "outside" the body -- presents itself as the point of contact between material body and body image, between visible and felt matter. As vesicles located on the surface of the skin, Thompson's blisters are a dermatological condition; that the majority of dermatological disorders, as is accepted among medical workers, are manifestations of psychic disturbance or upheaval, in other words, psychosomatic conditions, designates the material skin precisely as a kind of psychic-somatic interface: an intertext sited on the borders between psyche and body, imaginary and reality, an organ enabling and illustrating the psychic-corporeal interchange of subjectivity. It is upon the conceptualization of the

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skin as such an interface that Anzieu formulates his skin ego: a body image - body ego formula developed from the psychic resonances of the material skin.[8]

In Anzieu, all psychic structures are ultimately derived from and return their meaning to the body. "I myself would oppose the formula: 'the unconscious is structured like a language' with a formulation that is implicit in Freud: 'the unconscious is the body.' The unconscious seems to me to be structured like the body," Anzieu has said, positioning his psychoanalysis antithetically to Lacan's (Skin for Thought 43).[9] If the unconscious is isomorphic to, and materially supported by, the body, the figure of transsexual wrong embodiment, precisely as it is reiterated in transsexual accounts, might be understood not as rhetorical image, but as body image, one foundational to transsexual subjectivity. Apprehending the figure as unconscious according to Anzieu would emphasize its felt reality, for in Anzieu's topography of the subject, the unconscious backs onto the material body; the unconscious is enmeshed with body in the space of the body image. Insofar as it highlights the skin as this point of joining, the interface between psyche and body, Anzieu's skin ego provides an explanation, one which schematically melds the organic

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[8] Psycho-dermatology is foundational to Anzieu's theory. He traces his first thoughts about a skin ego to his early work as a trainee psychologist on a dermatological unit at the Hôpital Saint-Louis: see Skin for Thought 24.

[9] Anzieu understands Lacanian theory with its centralization of language as exacerbating the desomatization of the subject, both in practice and in theory: see Skin for Thought 68. I read Anzieu's skin ego as representing a contemporary shift in psychoanalytic theory from (linguistic) structuralism -- the materialization of language -- to (corporeal) materialism -- the psychoanalysis of the body. (For a critique of Lacan's materialization of language, see Ian). Anzieu relates how his critique of Lacan originated in his experience undergoing the trainee-analyst analysis with him: see Interview Two, Skin for Thought.

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with the psychic, for the purchase of images of wrong embodiment in transsexual accounts; for why the subject continues to represent his or her transsexuality as being imprisoned in a false or flawed skin or bodily encasing; for the particular consistence with which s/he focuses his / her bodily discomfort on the skin or body's surface.[10] The reason is that the skin is the locale for the physical experience of body image, and the surface upon which is projected the psychic representation of the body. Body image, made possible by skin, represents the point of contact between psyche and body. Anzieu's skin ego develops from his quite literal reading of Freud's description of the ego as "not merely a surface entity, but . . . the projection of a surface" (Ego and the Id 20; cited in Skin Ego 85).[11] The physical body's surface or encasing -- in a wonderfully uncomplicated and

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[10] In arguing for the somatic psychogenesis of the skin ego, Anzieu, enlisting embryology and histology, points out that the skin, the first organ to develop in the embryo, is formed from the same material as the brain: the ectoderm. "The brain, a sensate surface protected by the cranium, is in permanent contact with that skin, a sensitive epidermis protected by the thickening and hardening of the parts nearest the surface, and with its organs." In addition to their origination in the same germ structure and their juxtaposition in utero, the skin and the brain share the same double-layered organization, are both what Anzieu calls "surface entities" (Skin Ego 9). This genesis provides a biological explanation for why the skin is so caught up in psychic reality. Given this connection, it is interesting that the most recent scientific research into transsexual etiology posits a transsexual brain (see n.17).

[11] The key passage for Anzieu appears to be the explanatory note Freud attached in 1927 to that statement from his 1923 essay: "'I.e. the ego is ultimately derived from bodily sensations, chiefly from those springing from the surface of the body. It may thus be regarded as a mental projection of the surface of the body, besides, as we have seen above, representing the superfices of the mental apparatus'" (Ego and the Id 20 n.16; cited in Skin Ego 85). See chapter 1 for my discussion of Judith Butler's debt to Roy Schafer's quite different use of these same passages in Freud. While Schafer-Butler configure the body by connecting the notions of "surface" and "mental projection," Anzieu emphasizes "the projection of a surface" as "derived from bodily sensations." Where their structuralist / poststructuralist reading collapses corporeal referent into psychic signified, Anzieu's sustains the material body as discrete generative or productive referent.

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obvious interpretation Anzieu renders this as the skin -- provides the anaclitic support for the psychic apparatus: the material skin sustains the ego. If one feels psychic discomfort over body image, this discomfort will be reflected back on or through the skin. Thus as the skin represents the nexus of the psychic and the physical, it makes sense that such psychic discomfort as feeling trapped in the wrong body, first, can be physically felt, and second, may be transcribed unconsciously, and apparently miraculously, onto the literal skin, as is the case with the blisters that appear on Thompson's face.

The skin is a sense organ, generative of touch; it is in fact our most vital sense organ: "one can live without sight, hearing, taste or smell, but it is impossible to survive if the greater part of one's skin is not intact" (Skin Ego 14). Because of the skin's function as psychic-somatic intertext, not being able to live without one's skin is not only a physical but a psychic state. Psychic damage can inscribe itself on the skin in the form of skin disorders; conversely and unsurprisingly, damage to the material skin (such as burning or scarring) is likely to damage the subject's body image, to alter his / her bodily sense and presentation. From the mutuality of this exchange, Anzieu hypothesizes a precise correspondence between material body surface and body image: "the seriousness of damage to the skin . . . is in direct relation to the extent, both quantitative and qualitative, of the flaws in the Skin Ego" (Skin Ego 35). According to this proportioning, psychic-corporeal harmony can be rendered as the feeling of being at home in one's skin: "To be oneself is first of all to have a skin of one's own and, secondly, to use it as a space in which one can experience sensations" (Skin Ego 51). Subjectivity is not just about having a physical skin / body, it's about feeling one owns it; in other words, it's a matter of psychic investment of self in skin / body.

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If I feel confined in the wrong skin or wrong body, on a fundamental level, it must be said that I fail to own my skin, to feel at home in it, to accept it as my own. Transsexual autobiographers often figure their sense of entrapment within an alien skin as having no skin, of being skin-less: lacking a proper (not only right but owned) bodily surround or container. Thompson writes: "[I]t felt as if I came into this world with no physical form to protect me. I was not a solid, tangible human being, like everyone else seemed to be. I felt vulnerable and alone" (26). Enacting Anzieu's theory of the correlation between body image and sensory experience, Thompson (like the analysands who enter Anzieu's office manifesting psychic disturbances in shivering and feeling cold) feels this unprotected, uncontained body image somatically. His "body feelings" are characterized by coldness and immobility, an hysterical semi-paralysis. He is unable to get his limbs to function normally, as though his bodily alienation consisted of the failure to "know" his body as his own: "Since my body is not my own I cannot feel the warmth of it, so I am cold, very cold on the inside. . . . I could simply never be comfortable and warm in my own skin. . . . There is a sense of disconnectedness and unreality, of being left out in the cold. Most of the time I couldn't get my body to move from my chair, whilst panic was raging inside me" (249). These are not metaphors in Thompson's narrative; the figures of somatic entrapment are rather catachrestically translated into his actual bodily experience.

How does one function without feeling surrounded by a proper body? How does the subject survive without a skin of his or her own? Anzieu outlines how the subject with a damaged or flawed body image, the subject who imagines him or herself skin-less or with a broken skin, develops defenses -- psychic but sometimes enacted -- against this

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state: means of producing an imaginary skin, of rekindling a feeling of bodily belonging. Surely the most traumatic of these compensatory measures consists in producing "[m]utilations of the skin -- sometimes real, but more often imaginary -- [which] are dramatic attempts to maintain the boundaries of the body and the Ego and to re-establish a sense of being intact and self-cohesive" (Skin Ego 20).[12] As a transsexual who fails to feel ownership of his skin, Thompson performs repeated acts of real self-directed violence, turning against his pre-transition body precisely as if it were not his own, hitting his head against a wall, punching himself in the face, throwing himself down ravines, coating his body with mud. His skin in particular serves as locus for this self-reflexive aggression. He inscribes his skin with tattoos (in his words they are "self-inflicted"), covering the entire area on the backs of his hands, his thumbs and knuckles: "This was done by first writing or drawing the tattoo on the skin with a pen. Then I punctured my skin along the lines with a needle so that it would draw blood. These hundreds of pin pricks were then stained with paint or indian ink" (52). Following these on his hands, he acquires chest and neck tattoos.

The ability to give oneself pain, to harm one's own body, surely depends upon a great degree of bodily alienation; yet the tattoos, like the self-directed pain more

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[12] "The Viennese artist Rudolf Scwarzholgler, who perceived his own body as the object of his art, amputated his own skin, inch by inch, until he killed himself. He was photographed throughout the process, and the photographs exhibited at Kassel in Germany" (Skin Ego 20). Might Anzieu read Orlan's plastic surgery as having a similar psychic goal: to mark out a skin ego in its absence through skin mutilation? In the light of the myth of Marsyas (the god flayed by Apollo), Anzieu reads masochism as an attempt to reconstruct the boundaries of the bodily self. The masochist's desires (to be cut, whipped,

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generally, seem to function as part of Thompson's attempt to feel his body as his own, quite simply, to feel it. In the absence of feeling his body surrounded and supported, feeling its limits, its attachment to self (or rather in the feeling of the absence of this feeling), this self-directed inscriptive violence uses pain to establish bodily limits, the boundaries of the self. Thompson tattoos his skin as if he would have his body bear / bare his true identity, the self hidden within: his authentic signature. Such acts of marking the body's surface in an effort to make it one's own, to feel belonging in it, prefigure the surgical inscriptions of gender reassignment: on a larger and of course medically-officiated scale, the transsexual's way of (re)making the body / skin in order to feel at home in it. When Thompson decides to have the tattoos from his neck and hands removed, this surgery does not erase but exacerbates the skin damage; the skin is slit and stitched in a way that leaves painful and prominent scaring. One scar on his right hand splits open and becomes infected, leaving "a large oozing hole in my hand" (83). During the phalloplasty procedures, when the suture on the underside of Thompson's penis comes loose and the skin splits, Thompson dreams that the skin on his hand along the scar of the tattoo removal has reopened, this time revealing a horrifying ball of fat beneath the skin. The dream, displacing the split surface from penis to hand, constructs as symbolic parallels the subject's own interventions on his body's surface and his substantial transsexual surgery: both appear as inscriptive attempts at bodily ownership and belonging, both taking place via the psychically-productive material skin. Skin surfaces, Anzieu suggests, are the fabric of many dreams.

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beaten) converge, after all, in the desire to have his / her skin inscribed with the signs of

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Surely not incidentally, Thompson's attempts to inscribe his own skin occur before he has begun hormone treatment, before testosterone has androgenized (that is, coarsened, hardened, thickened) his skin. Once this process of androgenization has been set in motion and Thompson no longer bears a visibly female skin, this sense of skin-lessness recedes and the direct physical self-abuse, as if correlated to the gendered appearance of the body, ceases. It is startling to grasp the extent to which the skin's texture and appearance determines gendered reading, to which our skin can be conceived as a gendered text. Even so, post-hormones and pre-surgery constitute a weird transitional zone for the transsexual body, a space in which its naked sex can be perceived as neither / nor or both. Passing during this period therefore entails covering or concealing this nakedness so that the body might be accepted as uniformly, that is singly, gendered. In Thompson, passing as a man pre-surgery is achieved not only through testosterone therapy, but through disguising what is still a female morphology. The daily layerings of binder, several T-shirts and thick work shirt, re-shaping his breasted body into male contours, form a kind of provisional, transitional male skin or surround, protective (it hides the hated body and prevents his discovery) and, at the same time, restrictive, stifling (he can't move without it; it becomes a skin-tight second skin). Simultaneous with Thompson's successful passing in the narrative, the images of damaged or disintegrating surfaces and containers are refracted away from his body and projected onto inanimate objects. Thompson achieves most of his transition exceptionally early, beginning hormone therapy at sixteen and undergoing a double mastectomy at twenty-one. But as a penis is

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his / her pain.

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essential to his body image (since late childhood, he packs the front of his trousers, filling in for what he feels should be already there), more than half of the autobiography concerns itself with his long, distressing wait for this surgery. When his prospects for phalloplasty appear most tenuous, Thompson directs his urge to rip and tear up his skin onto his home, smashing furniture, windows and crockery, his narrative itself recognizing the displacement of destructiveness from self-protection to concrete protection: "The walls of protection that I had carefully built about myself, I was now breaking down" (248). In spite of his building skills, he lives for some years without adequate material walls of protection, in the midst of broken windows, collapsed ceilings (through which fall rain and snow), piles of dirt and rubble: in other words, within a damaged, fragmented and inadequate container. Yet once the course of phalloplasty surgeries gets underway, Thompson sets to reconstructing the house, confirming that its physical condition is inextricably tied up with his own, as if this "envelope" of home can be reintegrated only alongside the envelope of body image.

Since the ego is a bodily ego, the sense of selfhood, according to Anzieu, is fundamentally entangled with such images of integrity, of bodily wholeness. Conversely, states of depersonalization, of not feeling real, are enmeshed with images of inadequate containers, on which boundaries are blurred, surfaces flawed, envelopes perforated. "A reality of the order of phantasy" (a psychic projection of the body derived from the body), the skin ego as the unconscious "figures in phantasies, dreams, everyday speech, posture, disturbances of thought" (Skin Ego 4). In What Took You So Long? the images of damaged, broken surfaces before Thompson's phalloplasty proliferate. Some, like the progressive dilapidation of Thompson's house, his grandfather's heavily scarred and

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curled-in hand, and his father's loss of his fingers in the steel work machinery, make sense as significant events in the subject's life-plot. Others -- eggs with ruined "crinkled skin" that Thompson remembers from a TV program, a toad with no legs he finds in the road as a child and carries with him everywhere -- appear more phantasmagorically, free-floating oneirically in the narrative, their significance apparently arbitrary but tied up with Thompson's psychic reality, in particular his body image. Onto the surfaces of such "others," Thompson projects "this ugly, fragmented body of mine," a body glaringly incomplete when overlaid with the integrity of his male body image, a body in bits and pieces that only phalloplasty, as Thompson himself writes after this procedure, makes "whole" (191, 309). Pausing over incidents of amputation in others' bodily forms -- the legless toad, the father's fingerless hand -- the narrative implicitly refigures Thompson's own female contours as a transsexual man into a case of amputation, as though his material body has "lost" what his male body image rightfully possess, namely, a penis: a loss which surgery is then represented as naturally restoring. These figures as guises of transsexual body image are important for enabling the naturalization of the subsequent surgical interventions into an otherwise "healthy" body. They play a crucial role in producing transsexuality as a narrative beginning in somatic lack and wrongness and ending in its restoration and correction.

If the skin is the organ enabling the sense of touch, how does one touch, how is one touched, in a skin not one's own? Legendarily, the genital parts of the pre-surgical body remain for transsexuals untouchable; genital eroticism, writes Anzieu, is possible only for those who feel a basic level of security and comfort in their own skins. Cossey and Renée Richards both describe their acute discomfort at having their penises touched.

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"I found that part of my body so repulsive that [my lover's] desire for me began to sicken and repel me" (Cossey, 74). "I discouraged any fondling of my penis. . . . I felt similarly about oral sex. Here again, my objections probably boiled down to the fact that this action represents such an intense focus on my penis" (Richards 81-82). As a neonatal female whose imaginary morphology, while flat-chested and emphatically impenetrable, does not include a penis, Feinberg's Jess Goldberg develops this untouchability into the basis of h/er sexuality. Untouchability does not constitute part of h/er transsexual transition, a state to be surpassed once surgically resolved with an alternative genital configuration, but is foundational of h/er identity as a "stone butch" lesbian. In Goldberg, however, there is a powerful and anguishing ambivalence involved in the production of outlaw zones on the body: for the fear of being touched coexists uneasily with the desire to be touched, a desire unspeakable to lovers, though not in the narrative itself -- particularly in her relationship with Edna.[13] Goldberg wants to feel sex in h/er flesh but the psychic cost is too great. It would require the erogenization of those female body parts excised from h/er imaginary morphology; it would require her to negotiate their re-inclusion and to speak the unspeakable of her femaleness, to undo her transgendered investment in an alternative bodily configuration. A similar contradiction is at work in the psychic erasure of genital zones in pre-surgical transsexual bodies. On the one hand, the delimiting refuses to sex

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[13] "Edna moved against me, tormenting me with her nails and her lips until I felt crazy with wanting more. Fear gripped my throat. I couldn't remember how to submit, but I wanted her to guide me there. Her nails trailed up the inside of one of my thighs. 'I'm scared,' I admitted out loud.

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these areas: the genitals remain unsexed, both non-erogenous and not included in the transsexual's imaginary "true sex" morphology. On the other hand, this non-erogenization implicitly acknowledges those genital parts as already sexed (that is male or female); it is this which renders them untouchable. Even in Stone Butch Blues, Edna's hand can't move above Goldberg's thigh because what lies there is recognized by both as already female. The erogenization of male and female parts would threaten the clarity, the dominance, of the alternatively sexed body image, would threaten then the subject's very transgendered identification.

Thus the transsexual's detachment from material sex is sustained through the very untouchability of parts conceived as not belonging, as inappropriate. The pre-transition body is experienced in fragments, in bits and pieces: the subject blocks out parts felt to contradict the authentic body within. Thompson writes of being unable to even conceive of his female parts. "Not-me," the female genitals radically, cruelly, fail to coincide with self-conceptualization:

> 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 the fact that they were there. I never looked at the parts of my body which 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. Having a woman touch me sexually would not only have seemed perverse to me, but also it would have broken my detachment. (75)

The disidentification of the transsexual with his or her pre-transition anatomy might be grasped as the subject's refusal to recognize as authentic self, to own, neonatal sex ("My

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She stopped touching me and lay still in my arms. Even after she'd fallen asleep in my embrace I stared at the ceiling, longing for her to take me past my own fear and not

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body didn't exist in the way it was born"): the contours of body image are outlined as fundamentally non-coincident with material body. It is this sense of im-proper-ness -- the conceptualization of the sexed morphology as not the property of the subject's body image -- that is captured so succinctly in the wrong body formula. It becomes a description simply of the refusal of body ego to own referential body. I do not recognize as proper, as my property, this material surround; these sexed parts are not-me; thus I must be trapped in the wrong body. Inappropriateness is located securely in the material body, and the entire configuration becomes pivotal in persuading the subject to seek surgical intervention to alter the flesh, rather than psychological intervention to transform body image. Non-ownership is hooked into the body, and if the body is not owned, it is into the experience of the body (body image), not *my* body, that surgery intervenes.

Feeling one's body as one's own is surely a core component of subjectivity, perhaps its very basis. In his work on body dysphoria, Oliver Sacks has asked: "What is more important for us, at an elemental level, than the control, the owning and operation, of our own physical selves?" (Man 43). In Sack's case histories, somatic non-recognition entails not only the loss of the limbs concerned in the subjects' bodily representation -- or on one occasion, the totality of the body image -- but loss of control and feeling in body parts.[14] All mimicking hysterization, the effect of erasure in bodily representation is, above all, profoundly, bizarrely, and sometimes in a blackly-humorous way, material, as in

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knowing how to ask" (Stone Butch Blues 216).

[14]See A Leg to Stand On, and "Hands," "Phantoms," and "The Man who Fell out of Bed" in The Man Who Mistook His Wife For a Hat. For the case of loss of total body-image

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the instance of the man who, having "lost" his leg in his body image, finds what he takes to be a foreign leg in his bed (his own). Deciding it to be a severed limb planted as a practical joke by medical students, he throws it out of the bed only to find himself, much to his bewilderment, on the floor. In elucidating the ways in which the feeling of owning one's body is embodied -- or of not owning it produces disembodiment, Sack's "neurographies" of such instances of bodily agnosia argue for the neurophysiological base underlying body-image. More than an imaginary construction, more than psychic excess, the feeling of owning one's body is essential to the body's successful sensorimotor functioning. It constitutes the "vital 'sixth sense' by which the body knows itself, the neurophysiological basis for this sense of ownership of the body, of belonging in it"; for this substantial bodily feeling, Sacks uses Sherrington's "proprioception," a term which retains within it the notion of ownership, of the body as the subject's property (Leg 46). Proprioception is body image that resides in the sentient rather than the visual, this feeling of owning one's body being more foundational than visual body image to our body's operation. Sacks argues that the visual body image is "normally rather feeble (it is of course absent in the blind), and normally subsidiary to the proprioceptive body-model" (Man 48-49). This is a knowledge of the body concerning less body *image*, the visual, the phenomenological, than postural schema: the *sense* of the body beyond its representation.[15]

("pithing," as the patient herself puts it so perfectly), see "The Disembodied Lady" also in The Man.

[15] Anzieu also insists on the supremacy of the sense of touch over sight in body image development. He emphasizes that the "skin is the touchstone (literally) to which the

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Sacks represents the loss of proprioception in his own leg after a climbing accident as a felt loss of bodily knowledge that even the vision of his leg attached to the rest of his body cannot recover: "*I knew not my leg.* It was utterly strange, not-mine, unfamiliar. I gazed upon it with absolute non-recognition. . . . The more I gazed at that cylinder of chalk, the more alien and incomprehensible it appeared to me. I could no longer feel it as "mine," as part of me. It seemed to bear no relation to me. It was absolutely *not-me* -- and yet, impossibly, it was attached to me -- and even more impossibly, 'continuous' with me" (A Leg 47-48; emphasis in original). The transsexual's resistance to owning his or her neonatal sexed parts might be conceived as enacting in the realm of sexual difference the symptoms of the kinds of body image disturbances recorded in Sacks's work. The same claims about not knowing the body, and yet of being able to feel its unfamiliarity, its foreigness, its discontinuity with self, may be found in transsexual accounts of their body dysphoria. Thompson produces this simile to explain the sense of non-reconciliation with his pre-transition body, sight again unable to compensate for the feeling of disembodiment:

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various sensory date are referred back," and that "the skin possesses a *structural primacy* over all the other senses" (Skin Ego 61; my emphasis). He argues that the skin ego is engendered by physical bodily contact. The subject's first sense of self begins at birth, during its first few days, even perhaps in its final stages in utero, through sensory experience, through the touching and stimulation of its skin. The child's experience of birth is one of being touched and rubbed: "The event of birth brings the child who is being born an experience of an all-over body massage and a generalized rubbing of the skin in the course of the mother's contractions and its expulsion from the vaginal envelope, dilated to the dimension of the baby" (Skin Ego 61). In its valorization of the sense of touch in the constitution of the subject, Anzieu's work joins forces with Luce Irigaray's feminist psychoanalytic theory of the female subject (though he doesn't cite her). Contrast these narratives to Lacan's occularcentric scheme for the origins of the subject (the mirror stage in which the subject is constituted and split by regarding himself as an other), famously criticized, of course, by Irigaray.

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"It's also a bit like walking into a room that you know is supposed to be familiar. You know that all the things in the room should be recognisable, but they aren't, and you're looking . . . for that familiar something, always trying to look beyond, but there is nothing" (249). Like Sacks, Thompson feels detachment from, non-belonging in, and an unfamiliarity with, his body, disturbing because of the consciousness that the body should be what is most familiar to self. Paradoxically, moreover, he feels this unfamiliarity somatically at the level of body. This sentient feeling of disembodiment constitutes the experience of bodily agnosia; a-gnos: the unknown, here, the body as unknown: that which, at least in our everyday life, Sacks argues we take for granted as the very base for perception and knowledge themselves.[16] While Sacks never writes of sexual anatomy, translating him / her in Sacks's scheme, the transsexual might be grasped as a subject who has "lost" sex proprioception, whose subjectivity is structured by a kind of sex scotoma: s/he can't feel her or his sex or s/he can feel the unfeltness; it's the felt-unfelt blind spot.

Sacks's case histories work on one level as a scientifically legitimate explanation for how the transsexual may physically feel a sexed body image non-coincident with his or her material body, over and above this material body; and it is this dynamic which underlies the figure of the body trapped within. Like Anzieu's skin ego, Sacks's neurology allows us to reformulate transsexuality into a body image disturbance where body image, while still a psychic projection, is nevertheless deeply felt, profoundly

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[16] As Sacks points out, it was Freud who coined the term agnosia and in so doing, envisioned "[t]he new science of brain / mind" which became neuropsychology (Man 4). In its origins, psychoanalysis is embedded in body image disturbances. Freud's work with Breuer on hysteria of course engendered psychoanalysis as the unconscious was turned to for explanations for bodily dysfunctions.

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embodied and only malleable as the material body may be manipulated. Although I am not positing an organic basis to transsexuality, most recent research into transsexual etiology centralizes the brain and privileges theories of an organic genesis for the transsexual condition.[17] My purpose in deploying Sacks like Anzieu is perhaps not so dissimilar from the strategic value of this kind of research: that is, to challenge the derogation of transsexuality as simply a cultural or psychic effect, the elision of the crucial somatic element propped up by what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Franks have termed the tendency for "reflexive" or "automatic antibiologism" in theory (512, 513). The idea that transsexuality is a cultural effect undergirds socio-political critiques of transsexuality, for instance Janice Raymond's: transsexuality is a product of a patriarchal binary-gendered cultural system. Revolutionize the system, her argument goes, and we wouldn't have, we wouldn't need to have, transsexuals. Effectively more pernicious because less explicitly a polemic against transsexuality, the notion that transsexuality is a psychic or psychosocial construction inhabits the psychoanalytic theory -- and the mass of poststructuralist work on gender spawned from it -- that displaces the material body into a system of signification. Lacan and Catherine Millot after him, for instance, bundle transsexuality with psychosis, seeing in the transsexual's disidentification with his or her neonatal sex a psychotic foreclosing of the symbolic, a refusal to recognize that no one is or has the

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17 Jiang-Ning Zhou, Michael A. Hofman, Louis J. G. Gooren and Dick F. Swaab's neuroscientific research has demonstrated that, in male-to-female transsexuals, the part of the brain "essential for sexual behavior," the stria terminalis was female-sized. As the stria terminalis is not influenced by hormone administration in adult life, their study "is the first to show a female brain structure in genetically male transsexuals and supports the

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phallus. Millot writes that the male-to-female wants to incarnate The Woman whose existence Lacan refuses, while the female-to-male in his quest for phalloplasty collapses phallus into penis. In so doing, both "identify with the phallus -- an impossible identification with jouissance which the very existence of the symbolic precludes. This untenable position, which transsexuals nonetheless try to maintain in funamabulistic tension, results in the demand for sex change" (140). According to Lacanian psychoanalysis then, the "problematics" of transsexuality is the desire to *be* a gender.[18]

While I have been arguing that the transsexual subject does indeed blank out to differing degrees his or her neonatal sex in his or her bodily representation, s/he does not believe that she already embodies an alternative sex (the psychotic refusal of reality).[19]

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hypothesis that gender identity develops as a result of an interaction between the developing brain and sex hormones" (68).

[18] While his formulation of sex as an "imperative" irreducible to the historically constructed "role" of gender usefully underscores what he terms the *"inevitable* dimension of sexually marked embodiment," in following Millot uncritically, Charles Shepherdson unfortunately also aligns the transsexual with the psychotic (161; emphasis in original). He also argues that transsexuality forecloses the question of sexual difference, the "certainty" of transsexuality substituting the demand for Lacanian desire, and the technology that enables the subject's transition not so much "a force of liberation, but, on the contrary, the accomplice of a society that sustains the fantasy of 'the other sex'" (181). His analogizing of the transsexual to Freud's Schreber, like Millot's, is particularly pathologizing. It suggests transsexuality as a form of paranoid psychosis, a state entirely of the mind, and not the body image condition I am arguing that it is here. For Freud, moreover, the root of Schreber's paranoia is crucially a *repressed homosexual cathexis.* I am grateful to Professor Hayes for bringing Shepherdson's essay to my attention.

[19] Even DSM-IV which inscribes transsexuality under a mental disease model makes clear the mutual exclusivity of transsexuality and psychosis: "In Schizophrenia, there may rarely be delusions of belonging to the other sex. Insistence by a person with a Gender Identity Disorder that the or she is of the other sex is not considered a delusion, because what is invariably meant is that the person feels like a member of the other sex rather than truly believes that he or she is a member of the other sex" (537).

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Nor does it amount to an ambivalent disavowal of neonatal sex (the fetishist's indifference: the favored poststructuralist paradigm for the transsexual). No transsexual autobiographer has written of ambivalence over his or her neonatal sex; there is no oscillation between acceptance and denial, between identification and disidentification. Rather, soma is radically disowned. Entering into the massive somatic transformations of gender reassignment leaves no room for a structuring ambivalence.

Both of these psychoanalytic paradigms, psychosis and fetishism, embed transsexuality within deeply psychopathologizing narratives, and join forces with Raymond's explicitly anti-transsexual manifesto in engendering cultural representations such as the monstrous Jame Gumb, who can't tell the difference between achieving a skin / body as a woman and skinning women. Most significantly, in the same way as Raymond's politicization of transsexuality, this type of psychoanalysis elides that key domain of the body, of sensory affect, of bodily feeling, from transsexuality and from sex. Body image theories by contrast reveal how the blocking of neonatal sex can be felt by the transsexual on the level of the body, suggesting that transsexuality, precisely as it is a body image phenomenon, is at least as much a somatic as a psychic experience.

The ramifications of these differences in body narratives reach beyond transsexuality to psychoanalytic theory, specifically concerning the question of what is the structure of the Freudian unconscious: language or the body? From within different fields, neurology and a corporeal psychoanalysis respectively, Sacks and Anzieu perform parallel work uncovering the materiality of body image.[20] Both deriving their body image

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models from Freud's conceptualization of the ego as a body-ego, Anzieu and Sacks read the sense of integrity and of bordered-ness of this body-ego to be pivotal to the subject's happy functioning; as Sacks writes, proprioception is "the fundamental, organic mooring of identity -- at least of that corporeal identity, or 'body-ego,' which Freud sees as the basis of self" (Man 52). By contrast, in Lacan, the integrity of the ego is illusory, for the ego's formative moment is the subject's misrecognition -- his or her delusion -- before the mirror of an independent self and a sufficient body.[21] Whereas in Lacan, splitting, fragmentation and alienation are definitive of the subject, in Sacks and Anzieu, such states are practicably unlivable, most often representative of psychic suffering. Indeed, Anzieu draws a careful distinction between the productive theoretical project of interrogating the subject, and the damaging loss of belief in one's self:

> Belief is a vital human need. It is impossible to live without believing one is alive. One cannot perceive the outside world without believing in its reality. One is not a person if one does not believe in the identity and continuity of the self. . . . The human being who holds these beliefs has certainly to question them. But the person who does not have them has to acquire them before he can experience his own being and his own well-being. (Skin Ego 131)

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[20]Sacks himself figures his project as analogous to psychoanalysis when he lists psychoanalytic equivalents of proprioception: body image, imago, internal objects, terms which have a "more-than-coincidental correspondence to those of neurology" (Leg 50).

[21] A theory of the subject that centralizes the ego and reconfigures it as a body image concept, Anzieu's skin ego thus comes closer to the American ego-psychology derided by Lacan than to the structuralist or linguistic psychoanalysis of his own country (including, of course, that of Lacan himself, and of Jean Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, for instance). For one formulation of Lacan's critique of American ego-psychology, see "Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," in which Lacan criticizes ego-psychology for reducing the subject to ego, and not accounting for the play of language in the unconscious. For Anzieu's discussion of the importance of the ego in his work in opposition to Lacan, see Skin For Thought pp. 56-59.

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Appropriating the Moebius-strip configuration from Lacan's representation of the normative structure of the ego, the torsion and unbordered-ness (it has no inside nor outside) of which has meant its promotion to an archetypal symbol of the poststructuralist disbelief in the integrity and continuity of the subject, Anzieu uses it specifically to denote the ego in impaired and self-destructive psychic states. His cases illustrate that the subject's inability to distinguish "inside" from "outside" is most often responsible in "borderline" conditions for his or her acute psychic suffering, particularly if the subject can't believe in or experience his or her body as his or her own.[22] Anzieu's psychoanalytic practice understands as its task the enablement of the suffering subject to smooth out this torsion and to re-establish the boundaries of the self and body. Insofar as its purpose, like that of Sacks's more medically-institutionalized neurological work, is the recovery of individuals, and insofar as it believes that this is both possible and beneficial to the subject, Anzieu's psychoanalysis is quite unashamedly humanist and corporealist.

Not only do their theories allow the substantiation of the figure of the wrong body into a transsexual ontology, Anzieu and Sacks elucidate the cruciality of the sense of

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[22] According to Anzieu, our time is characterized by borderline states in which subjects suffer from "an absence of borders or limits," in which Western culture itself at the end of the twentieth century owes much of its anomie to a macrocosmic version of this failure to set limits: its failure to set limits, for instance, "on the arms race, on nuclear explosions, on the acceleration of history, on economic growth, on insatiable consumption, on the increasing disparity between the rich nations and the Third World, on the gigantic scale of scientific projects and economic enterprise"; to set limits on "violence wrought on nature as well as that perpetrated on human beings" (Skin Ego 6-7). It is conceivable that Anzieu might read poststructuralist theory in the wake of its embrace of Lacan's Moebius-strip as itself symptomatic of this psychotic failure to set limits. For Anzieu's use of Lacan's Moebius-strip configuration, see Skin Ego p.124 n.1.

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bodily integrity to our successful and happy functioning. The narrative drive operative in their stories of the subject's experience of his or her body is the same held as most precious by the transsexual (and of course the same whose very undoing is performed as the work of poststructuralist theory): from fragmentation to integration; from alienation to reconciliation, from loss to restoration. Both neurologist and psychoanalyst perceive their patients' discomfort or suffering to be intricated with some form of corporeally-effective loss; re-covery consists in an equipollent corporeal reappropriation. This notion of corporeal reappropriation inhabits the logic of gender reassignment surgery: attaining that feeling of a coherent and integral body of one's own.

iii. From Mutilation to Integration: The Poetics of Gender Reassignment Surgery

> "If my penis is removed in the operation and a small amount of tissue is left to be engorged on sexual excitement, then if I have an orgasm, would it be right to consider it a female one or a male one?"
>
> Anonymous male-to-female transsexual cited in Tully, Accounting for Transsexualism and Transhomosexuality

> "And so I ask myself, in mercy, or in common sense, if we cannot alter the conviction to fit the body, should we not, in certain circumstances, alter the body to fit the conviction?"
>
> Harry Benjamin, cited in Jan Morris, Conundrum

Sharon Olds's poem, "Outside the Operating Room of the Sex-Change Doctor," begins with envisioning a tray of severed penises, the imagined remnants from a series of gender reassignment surgeries. Although manifestly rejecting the scene's comparability to those of historical locations world-renowned for their systematization of torture ("This is not Vietnam, Chile, Buchenwald" [300]), in the very juxtaposition of these names, the poem conjures up grand-scale barbarism, and (in spite of the refutation of similarity) blurs

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"sex change" surgery into their backdrop. The poem's pivotal image misrepresents the mechanics of male-to-female gender reassignment surgery. For the last thirty years these have included orchidectomy (castration) but not penectomy (full surgical removal of the penis); rather the penis is hollowed out, its skin surround preserved attached, and inverted to form the vaginal lining. This point is less incidental than may seem for the image of severed penises portrays gender reassignment surgery not as the refashioning of bodily sex but as its literal removal, as if gender reassignment surgery were a matter of desexing, rather than resexing, the body. In keeping with this position, the poem's interest is not with the transsexual bodies recovering from the surgery but with their severed sex. The body of the poem (so to speak) goes on to bring to life the seven severed penises, animating them with their transsexual subjects' thoughts, as if these severed parts could speak *for* their former "owners"; as if the truth of the subject lay not with her post-reassignment body but with the severed sex; as if the penis were the "seat" of her true sex and subjectivity.[23] The poem picks up on and plays to the cultural stigmatization of transsexuality and the misconceptions that underpin this: that transsexuality consists in the brutal mutilation of healthy bodies, that gender reassignment surgery does not so much effect sex change as it transmogrifies "normal" men and women into unsexed or hermaphroditic monstrous others simply through the excision of their "natural" functioning sex.

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[23] The feminist humor in the poem stems from this very animation of the penises; for there *is* a joke about the detachability of the phallus-penis which I am not conveying here because the joke is made at the expense of transsexuals and their surgical ordeals: a fetishistic focusing on the "mutilated" parts

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Upon gender reassignment surgery, upon assumptions concerning its mechanics and effects, pivot popular attitudes to transsexuality. More than the potentially dramatic somatic effects of the long-term hormone therapy that necessarily precedes it, gender reassignment surgery is conceived as the hinge upon which the transsexual's "transsex" turns: the moment of "sex change." Yet contemporary conceptualizations of sex make it difficult to believe that surgery, through the excision and restructuring of body parts, miraculously and wholly alchemizes one sex into "the other." Sex is currently ascribed a complex of meanings which push the category beyond the materiality of the body. Sex is a feature so fundamental to the subject, so definitive of identity, yet at the same time a property so intangible, so indefinable, how can the crude manipulations of surgery on the body's visible surface really effect its change? For a start, sex is no longer located monolithically in the genitals, in body parts accessible to surgical intervention. Sex is disseminated throughout the inscrutable parts of the body: bodily sex is accepted as a characteristic and effect of the gonads, the chromosomes, perhaps even the brain, parts of the body that cannot be exchanged in gender reassignment. On the basis of this scientific multiplication of somatic sex, the transsexual changes sex only partially, that is only in the circumscribed sense of hormonal and genital sex. Second, the popularization of social scientific and psychoanalytic thought, the entry of the categories of the social and the psyche into the common lexicon for identity, has left us wary of reducing sex to the body *per se*. It is routine now to wonder how much of sex is gender: a matter of socialization, cultural construction and personal history, the accretion of experiences into being a man or woman. How can surgical intervention into biological material access these socially material domains of identity? Third, one of the questions feminism has foregrounded in

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the current framework for thinking sex, what is the status of the difference in sexual difference anyway? Are we talking about antithesis or likeness? What about the difference across, the difference within rather than between, the sexes? Isn't the naturalization of sex into a binary twoness itself a cultural construct -- a binary then that the transsexual mistakenly takes literally?[24] If the differences between the sexes are neither given nor universal, in what way does the transsexual cross a space which is not clearly demarcated, which is not necessarily a dividing space? In what way does the transsexual *change* sex? Finally, these questions (among others for this brief list is not intended as exhaustive) about the constitution of sex have been marshaled in radicalized form in the poststructuralist deconstruction of sex. The deconstruction of sex argues that all sex as much as gender is performative, not constative, an effect of our doing, not a description of our being. In its contemporary formulation, there is no sex left over, no immanent sexed part to the self, that is not already gender ("gender all along"[Butler, Gender Trouble 8]). Crucially then (for this constitutes the theoretical zeitgeist), if we no longer believe in sex as a fact of our being, how can we conceive of the transsexual as changing it at all? As we all perform our genders to produce the appearance of sex -- and can perform these genders differently anyway -- what substance is there for the transsexual to change?

If sex is irreducible not only to the sex organs accessible to surgical remolding but to the body itself, the significance of gender reassignment surgery in the context of

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poststructuralist work on gender inevitably poses problems. The deliteralization of sex (its detachment from referentiality) positions the transsexual in a freak zone: undeniably somatically radically altered by surgery, as far as the signification of his or her sex goes, however, unchanged. In this scheme the material body is the least significant constituent in identity. In her brief reference to transsexuality, Grosz refuses sex change as a substantive reality even while she celebrates the poststructuralist inevitable failure of sexual difference. Insisting on sexual difference as by definition indefinable, "a problematic . . entail[ing] a certain failure of knowledge to bridge the gap, the interval, between the sexes," Grosz situates the transsexual in this very place of failure (Volatile Bodies 208).[25] "At best the transsexual can live out his fantasy of femininity -- a fantasy that in itself is usually disappointed with the rather crude transformations effected by surgical and chemical interventions. The transsexual may look like a woman but can never feel like or be a woman" (Volatile Bodies 207). Sex is rarefied beyond substance, inaccessible to mere surgical and chemical interventions. Looking like a woman but not really one, in effect no more a woman than the transvestite, both clothed in the fantasy of womanhood, the transsexual actually gets a rawer deal than the transvestite precisely because the transsexual's "fantasy" of gender is "disappointed" by crude surgical intervention. Gender reassignment surgery makes "him" no more a woman but less

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[24] In "The Five Sexes," Ann Fausto-Sterling shows how even medico-discursive narratives on sex, in particular research into intersexual conditions, reveal the dimorphic sex model as arbitrary.

[25] The citation continues: "There remains something ungraspable, something outside, unpredictable, and uncontainable about the other sex for each sex" (Volatile Bodies 208).

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integral, somehow less "finished" in body. If sexual difference remains the unbridgeable gap between men and women, the "crude transformations" must leave the transsexual monstrously in the very gap or interval that is the unfathomable, unnamable space-time (gap-interval) between the sexes. In short, the transsexual as hermaphroditic prodigy embodies the very failure of sexual difference.

While poststructuralist gender theory does not so much challenge as couple with popular anxieties about gender reassignment surgery, perhaps the difference between the two discourses resides in the status of the natural in relation to the body. Whereas theory has embraced the posthuman denaturalized hybrid body in the form of the cyborg, the hermaphrodite, the transgenderist and virtual identities (and the transsexual may be included in this scheme of denaturalization),[26] in practice, the natural body still holds much sway. The radical surgical intervention into a body conceived as not ill, as healthy and functioning, without doubt renders transsexuality most perverse, that is unnatural, in the cultural imagination. Surgery on the non-diseased, non-disfigured body can only disfigure or mutilate. Gender reassignment surgery (like other forms of "cosmetic" surgery but because it meddles in the intricate foundational domain of sex to a much greater degree) is differentiated from substantive reconstructive surgery: it is not seen to resolve any physical defect; it is constructed as non-functional plastic surgery. Kathy Davis proposes that it was only the surgical work performed on bodies wounded in mass warfare that "eliminate[d] the moral onus attached to plastic surgery and . . . enable[d] [plastic surgery]

Ironically, the poststructuralist deliteralization of sex can often seem like a further mystification of sex.

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to emerge as a full-fledged medical specialty" (15). The historical conjuncture of gender reassignment surgery as formulated from post-war techniques presented itself when the first documented medically-officiated comprehensive transsexual transition (combining hormones and surgery) -- Michael Dillon -- was made possible by reconstructive work performed on the bodies of men whose genitals had been severed or damaged in the First World War.

Yet although plastic surgery may have emerged from the war as a validated medical technique, when not conducted on bodies apprehended as wounded or deformed, it remains even today shot through with moral complications. The very category of "cosmetic" plastic surgery serves to distinguish and devalue surgery performed for "the aesthetic improvement of otherwise healthy bodies" (the implication is non-functional and thus of ambiguous medical and ethical value) from substantive surgery correcting physical dysfunction and accidental disfigurements (read curative and thus amoral) (Davis 16). The construction of some surgeries as inessential shores up assumptions about gender reassignment surgery: the logic is that if the bodies subjected to surgery are not already wounded or deformed, then the surgery itself must wound or deform. In fact in the United States, in order to evade funding responsibility, insurance companies with few exceptions classify gender reassignment procedures in spite of their substantive content as cosmetic; that they are able to do so suggests this association already has currency.

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[26] See for instance the Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, Alphonso Lingis and Stone.

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Gender reassignment surgery is rendered doubly unnatural, desexing the subject and deforming the body that has nothing wrong with it.[27]

This nexus of cynicism toward gender reassignment surgery is what the transsexual autobiographer confronts in recounting his or her somatic transition, and s/he shows s/he is only too aware of it. "There is a vast amount of ignorance and mythology surrounding gender-reassignment surgery. Most people, for example, are convinced that the result must be either freakish, painful or unsightly" (Cossey, My Story 92). As a consequence, when it comes to telling the details of their gender reassignment surgery, transsexual autobiographers are hesitant, defensive, aggressive, apologetic or any combination of these. Invariably second-guessing their reader's response, the autobiographers reassure, parry, affirm: "Was I scared? Of course I was! Scared and exhilarated and worried and apprehensive. Did I consider backing off, canceling or postponing the date? Not for an instant" (Cummings 219). Most do not indulge the reader with such good-natured pandering as Cummings. Morris, for instance, directly addressing the ascription of monstrosity to transsexuality, is openly hostile: "I suppose there may seem to you something grotesque in the transsexual impulse, but it has never seemed ignoble or even unnatural to me" (20). April Ashley belittles the reader for any desires for the gruesome details of her gender reassignment surgery: "Do you want diagrams of the procedure? I can't supply them" (87). Ever concerned to convey the experience of transsexuality to his reader (perhaps because his autobiography is co-authored with his therapist!), putting

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her / him in the place of his "bodily feelings", Thompson is more willing to explain the state of mind that precedes his phalloplasty, that makes surgery necessary in his narrative:

> I know that some people believe that this kind of surgery is playing with fire, that it constitutes self-mutilation, but they obviously don't understand the self-alienation and the misery of being trapped in the wrong body. Being detached from one's body is a very isolated and lonely place to be. The very idea of mutilation was horrifying to me, I don't relish pain, but in order to live my life with some degree of happiness and harmony, I had to go through with it. (283)

Graciously, he sympathizes with our anxieties, shares them even, and situates the failure to make sense of the transsexual's desire for surgery not with us, his readers, but with "some [i.e., other] people." Note that where Morris, Ashley, and even Cummings implicitly, project incomprehension and (morbid) curiosity defensively onto the reader in the second person ("you"), Thompson shifts them politicly to a neutral third ("they"), so that we, the readers are, by default, constructed more sympathetically as more sympathetic. The autobiographers' construction of the reader determines what of and how the subject's gender reassignment surgery is told. Accordingly, as he shows the most trust toward his reader, Thompson's What Took You So Long? provides the most detailed and graphic descriptions of the transsexual subject's surgical ordeals.

As he gets to the marrow of popular assumptions about gender reassignment surgery -- "that it constitutes self-mutilation" -- Thompson also makes it possible to challenge those assumptions. Gender reassignment, he suggests, is not renderable as self-mutilation precisely because of transsexual "self-alienation": detachment from the body

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[27] It is perhaps as a necessary counter to this that transsexuality continues to be represented in DSM according to a disease-model: an illness that requires surgery as its remedy.

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puts the subject in that "lonely place" of non-belonging. Given the transsexual's body-ego's failure to own, to accept as self, material body, the surgical intervention into this terrain is an intervention not into self but the "not-me." Transsexual body image, the configuration of a subject trapped in the wrong body, is crucial in the autobiographies in laying the groundwork for gender reassignment surgery; it constitutes the logic of surgery, justifies it even, for the transsexual, for the medical establishment, and, in autobiographer's view, for the reader. The ostensive goal of gender reassignment surgery according to the autobiographies is the establishment of the "not-me" body into "me," this split corresponding to and brought into relief by the generic autobiographical split between written and writing "I": the body post- and pre-transition. Simply put, I was (an) other; now I am me.

According to this autobiographical split that translates across all of the autobiographies, Richards does not "mutilate" her own genitals but those of Dick Raskind, this very "mutilation" essential for making Renée "whole." The function of surgery is consistently represented as integrating this other, appropriating the lost, correcting the wrong. This poetics of healing, of integration, of becoming "me," pervades the descriptions of gender reassignment surgery and after. Images of wholeness and bodily integration, in implicit repudiation of the cultural derogation of transsexuality as mutilation, dominate descriptions of post-surgical recovery in the autobiographies: "Elated, completed at last," (Ashley 89); "I was all of a piece" (Morris 141); "[A] new life in the body of a complete man" (Thompson 299). Filling in the gaps, removing the excess, gender reassignment surgery fleshes out the transsexual's body-picture into a whole:

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> In the months before my operation I had lots of dreams, I would always see my body above the waist, i.e. a woman's face and a woman's bust, but the image stopped there. Then I started to dream of the operation itself. It was horrific because I was aware of it, but each time the operation was interrupted, leaving me sexless.
>
> The day after my operation, in my first dream I saw myself for the first time, naked and whole, with my woman's sex. It's funny that I was able to dream of the sex I had never been -- I was still wrapped up in bandages. (Harlow 42)

As it reshapes the material body, gender reassignment surgery integrates body image: this is its primary function. For if the pre-operative transsexual body image is delimited and fragmented through the psychic excision of neonatal sex, surgery enables the post-operative body image to become integrated. In its common transsexual rendition in antithesis to its popular representation, the transsexual bodily trajectory via gender reassignment surgery is actually *from* fragmentation and mutilation to coalescence and wholeness.

In addition to the language of holism, images of shedding or removing a restrictive skin -- skin figures -- punctuate the autobiographer's description of the stages of her or his gender reassignment surgery. If the dominant body image for the transsexual pre-transition is that of being trapped within an extraneous "other" skin, gender reassignment surgery, as a fantasy of restoring the body to the self, is figured as bringing release from this skin. Of his sense of his body after mastectomy, Thompson writes: "It was like shedding an annoying and uncomfortable garment and being back in my own self" (177). Likewise, female-to-male Martino metaphorizes his "not-me" breasts as clothing extraneous to bodily-self that surgery removes: drowsily coming to after his mastectomy, he wonders whether the surgery has indeed taken place, "[O]r was I still *wearing* those unsightly breasts?" (185; my emphasis). Figuratively releasing the female-to-male from

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this restrictive second skin, mastectomy also literally gives him freer movement of body. Both Martino and Thompson indicate that much of their post-surgical relief resides in being able to leave aside the layers of binding and clothes required to compress and conceal their breasts. The physical experience of being able to wear fewer layers, in addition to, and as the beneficial effect of, the surgical removal of the breasts, surely contributes to the shaping of the post-mastectomy body image as less burdened, less encased, released from its second skin. Body image is a product of and produces physical experience.

According to the poetics of gender reassignment surgery, the shedding or release from this second skin signifies the return to a true or natural self / body as imagined by the transsexual. Surgery strips the body bare to what it should have been, reintegrates its bits and pieces into a concordant whole: in Thompson's oxymoronic rendition, "It was if I had always looked and felt like I was now, as if I had become what I already was" (177). The trajectory is doubly paradoxical, toward a past that never was. As I suggested in chapter 2, this "should have been" is the tense of transsexual desire: the regret for what the body was not that should have become which drives the subject into his or her transsexual future.

I want to suggest that what makes possible the psychic translation of the surgical incursions into the body into a poetics of healing, of making whole, is a kind of transsexual somatic memory. What makes the transsexual able and willing to submit to the knife -- the splitting, cutting, removal and reshaping of organs, tissues and skin that the other might conceive as mutilation -- is the drive to get the body back to what it ought to have been. Surgery is made sense of, embraced as salvation, as re-membering the body which

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should have been. This restorative, re-membering drive is also common to accounts of reconstructive surgeries among non-transsexual subjects: from rhinoplasty to post-mastectomy breast reconstruction, the subject seeks out through surgery an idealized body / face from the past -- the past figure as it should have been. Lucy Grealy, for instance, describes the process of some thirty reconstructive surgeries on her cancer-disfigured face as a "journey back to my face," a progression toward a face that should have been, a face that never grew because as a child most of her jaw was surgically removed (160).[28]

Memory is crucial to how we experience our bodies. In his work on phantom limbs, Sacks has pointed to the key role of somatic memory in structuring body image. The phantom limb may be understood as a sensory memory of the lost body part, a sensory feeling of its presence that remains in its very absence. Cases of phantomization reveal the body (the experience is that of an unconscious involuntary sensation) engaged in the struggle not to forget its original body image; phantomization may be grasped, in fact, as the mirror image inversion of agnosia. Whereas agnosia represents the forgetting in the body image of somatically-attached, functioning parts, leaving the subject a kind of "'internal' amputee" (for s/he "loses" limbs from her or his inner or representational

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[28]As an autobiography concerning psychical recovery from a disfigured body image (or more precisely facial image) more than it is a narrative about surgical recovery from actual facial disfigurement (for the surgeries fail in succession), Grealy's Autobiography of a Face has much in common with transsexual autobiographies. Like transsexual autobiographers, Grealy writes of feeling trapped in her body, of suffering somatic shame, and of feeling alienated from her reflected image; additionally, she represents her struggle as one toward integrity in which body image is central. Grealy's narrative poignantly addresses the question Orlan's art begged: to what extent is the face the countenance of the self?

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body), the phenomenon of the phantom limb represents the remembering in the body image of parts actually lost from the material body (Leg 50).

In the case of the transsexual, the body constructed through gender reassignment surgery is not one that actually existed in the past, one that is literally re-membered, but one that should have existed: the conditional perfect of the verb to be that is the tense of the transsexual trajectory; gender reassignment surgery is a recovery of what was not. The body of transsexual becoming is born out of a yearning for a perfect past, that is, not memory but nostalgia. Nostalgia is the desire for the purified version of what was, not for the return to home *per se* (*nostos*), but to the romanticized ideal of home. Nostalgia is memory annealed in imagination: the re-collection of the fragments of the remembered past, their welding into an imaginary whole. Grosz suggests that the phantom limb phenomenon represents a psychic nostalgia for somatic wholeness: "The phantom is an expression of nostalgia for the unity and wholeness of the body, its completion. It is a memorial to the missing limb, a psychical delegate that stands in its place" (Volatile Bodies 73).[29] I am reading phantomization differently as a body image phenomenon at the

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[29] Grosz does not consider the difference between memory and nostalgia, nor does she speak of transsexual or transgendered bodies in the context of nostalgia, or phantomization. In its capacity as "corporeal feminism," however, Volatile Bodies does ask whether women's purported castrated state amounts to the experience of a phantomized phallus: "Do women have a phantom phallus? What is the status of a fantasized amputation (such as is required by castration) and a real one? Do women experience the castration complex as a bodily amputation as well as a psychosocial constraint? If so, is there, somewhere in woman's psyche, a representation of the phallus she has lost?" (73). In a more strictly psychoanalytic moment, Lingis conceives of the child as the mother's phantom phallus, although this phantomization appears more symbolic than somatic: "What the son now sees reflected in his mother's eyes is not simply his visual reflection, but a demand for him as the phantom part of which she has

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interface between soma and psyche, not a psychic projection imposed on the body. Grosz does not reference Butler's work on heterosexuality's melancholic investment of sex in body parts but her vocabulary of death and memorials is strikingly similar.

Based on a double conceptualization -- of gender reassignment surgery as a nostalgic return to the sexed contours that should have been; and of phantomization as an expression of nostalgia for the idealized somatotype in its physical absence -- might the transsexual's post-reassignment body be in some sense already phantomized pre-reassignment, already a sensory reality? Although phantom limbs are conceived as debilitating in that the feeling "in" the severed body part's spatial absence remains -- often painfully, uselessly, distressingly, after its physical loss -- Sacks focuses on the enabling aspects of phantoms for amputees: positive phantoms. In order to use a replacement artificial limb, the amputee needs to appropriate the prosthesis as his or her own, to incorporate it into his or her body image. To do so, s/he needs to experience a phantom presence in the physical absence of the somatic limb. As one of Sacks's patients with a leg amputation explains, it is his positive phantom leg which "'animates the prosthesis, and allows me to walk'"(Man 69). To use the prosthetic leg, the subject must "re-member" what it was like to use that leg. Does this not suggest the means by which the transsexual is able to incorporate the newly shaped parts into his or her body image, to claim the rearranged material as "my penis" or "my vagina"? How would s/he be able to feel post-surgical constructions as these parts, unless these parts were already phantomized?

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been amputated. The phallus arises as a pure signification and original absence" (119). Of course in the Lacanian psychoanalysis, in the sense that no one has / is it, the phallus is always already phantomized.

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There must already be in a felt imaginary, a transsexed body image in order for the transsexual to appropriate the rearranged somatic material as his or her new sex; there must be a prior phantomization of sex, which is not to undermine but to underline the felt presence of transsex precisely in the very space of its physical absence. For if the neonatal sex represents an agnosic or alien part for the transsexual, leading him or her to experience the material body in bits and pieces as s/he dis-(re)members his or her sexed parts, then the transsexual's "true" sex, the body trapped within, realized in theory by gender reassignment, might be understood to complement this agnosia as his or her phantom sex: the parts felt as more real, the parts that "complete" the transsexual body image. The phantomization of sex would appear as the concomitant of the not-knowing (the agnosia) of the real. Both conditions produce a body image radically non-coincident with the material body, a body image which pushes past the limits of material contours -- and pushes the transsexual past these limits. Both conditions combine to produce a body image experienced as real enough to cause the transsexual to seek the reshaping of his / her material body. Body image is experienced as empirical and substantial in a sense that fleshly sexed body is not.[30]

Gender reassignment surgery may be grasped as healing and changing the transsexual subject in that it serves as the antidote to both of these body image distortions, simultaneously effecting the ablation of the dis-owned organs ("removing everything that didn't belong [Thompson 161]) and the realization of the already phantomized sexed

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[30] Grosz writes that phantomization and agnosia demonstrate "[t]he irreducibility of psychology to biology and of biology to psychology" (Volatile Bodies 89).

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parts. Surgery deploys the skin and tissues to materialize the transsexual body image with fleshly prostheses in the shape of the sentient ghost-body. Herein lies the source for the poetics of restoration in transsexual accounts superseding popular assumptions of mutilation. The surgical grafting of materials endows the transsexual with the corporeal referents for these imaginary or phantomized signifieds, restores their substance. These parts become namable for the transsexual only when realized by surgery. For the surgery-opting transsexual, however potent, the phantomized sex is insufficient in and of itself to transform the meaning of bodily matter. "If I could have lived in my own inner reality I might have survived without surgery" (Thompson 178). But he cannot. Sex does not reside wholly in the imaginary. Sex is deeply felt as a psychic reality but finds its externalization, its substantiation, its referencing in the material body. Gender reassignment surgery, by definition, recognizes the material body as a substantive and *de facto* sexually significant, although tractable and reconstructible, domain.

The cooperation between surgery as material intervention and body image as the phantomization of sex is responsible for enabling the transsexual to feel transsexed, for making possible the reconception of the body. "How new and wonderful it seemed," Cummings recalls of her feelings after her vaginoplasty, "to be thinking of 'my vagina'!" (223). "My vagina" becomes thinkable, namable as such, in response to the surgical construction as the transplanted, restructured tissue is recognized both as self ("my") and sexed ("vagina"). That Cummings, like Julia Grant, Hunt, Cossey and Richards, can all think "vagina" of what is in fact the inverted skin of her penis, reveals how crucial is the dynamic of mutual enablement between the material and the psychic in the constitution of transsex. The surgical procedure for vaginoplasty, by retaining the erogenous skin of the

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penis as the vaginal lining and transplanting the penile glans into position as clitoris, encourages the subject's erogenization of her new genitals, her psychic investment in the material as erotic parts.[31] Mimesis is important as regards not only the appearance of transsexual genitals but their sexual function: the surgery is designed as much as possible to imitate vaginal and clitoral orgasm. Yet the restructured penile tissues can be said to become a vagina / clitoris for the transsexual only inasmuch as she already imagines and feels these parts as her own. The imaginary design of transsex endows meaning to the surgical transformation, and indeed, pressures the very development of such surgical achievements in which the intricate genitals can be simulated in appearance and operation. Insofar as body image takes as its psychic-corporeal interface the surface of the body -- the skin and surface tissues of the body -- surgery addresses body image precisely through the manipulation of these tissues; the transsexual's sex is changed as the subject feels this surface to be significantly altered.

The threat of physical damage to these parts poses the threat of equivalent psychic damage. This correspondence is brought into relief when Thompson is told he could lose his penis during one of the final stages of his phalloplasty. Created from tissues harvested from his thigh in the form of a pedicle tube flap, the penis is attached at one end to his

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[31] Likewise contemporary phalloplasty techniques for FTMs which relocate the clitoris onto the surface of the penis and transport nerves intact from the donor site -- normally now forearm in a free-flap maneuver -- so that they may be reconnected at the groin to encourage erotogenicity. Phalloplasty has proven a much more complex, hazardous, and less successful procedure than vaginoplasty. The latest work by the cutting-edge team at the Free University Hospital in Amsterdam (led by Lois Gooren, the world's first professor of transsexuality) has returned to pedicle flaps taken from the abdominal area. The clitoris is left intact underneath the phalloplasty.

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groin and at the other to his hip, while the central section, the prospective penile body, is lifted free on its underside from the abdominal skin. At this stage, it looks like a suitcase handle (it is often described as such in medical literature): a tube joined at either end to the body. The next stage involves cutting the penis loose from its transitional root at Thompson's hip, and allowing it to hang free from his groin. The risk to the penis is necrosis (tissue death and therefore, tissue loss) which may result when it loses its blood supply from the hip end. As the surgeon explains this, Thompson, not surprisingly having battled through three previous operations over some eighteen months, panics. For a moment in the narrative, he considers halting his quest for a penis there and then, and living with the pedicle tube flap attached to his hip and groin, the "penis" a piece of flesh slung sideways across the right side of his mid-body, immobile, indeployable, and of course looking nothing like a penis. "Even though it had felt somewhat unnatural to have my penis attached to my leg, I had grown accustomed to it, and I felt I didn't want to lose even that. Even in its abnormal position I was more 'me' than I would have been without it" (300). Even at this stage of the procedure, when the pedicle tube flap resembles and functions as a pedicle tube flap -- a tissue transplant in transitional attachment on the body on its way to becoming something else -- the surgery has already enabled Thompson to invest in this thigh material as his penis: that is, as with Cummings's vagina, both his ("more 'me'") and as a penis. The suitcase handle has, in the circular fashion of transsexual becoming, filled the place of the phantom penis in the body image: "I already saw my penis [the flap] as an entity with a life of its own, like a little human being. It was

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as if I had to breathe life into this part of my body, which should always have been there, should have been mine from birth. This was meant to be, I was a man" (300).[32]

Not only is the pedicle tube flap immediately psychically incorporated into his body image as a penis, it comes to stand for his transsexed self, personifying his authentically gendered subjectivity: It has "a life of its own, like a little human being. . . . This [penis] was meant to be, I was a man". In the medical narrative of transsexuality, gender reassignment surgery represents the *telos* of transsexual becoming, a narrative structure in which the autobiographies, by virtue of the medicalization of the writing subject, necessarily partake. In post-surgical scenes, the transsexual virtually installs his or her transsexed subjectivity in the new tender parts, precisely as if s/he *becomes* these parts (in the same sense that Grealy writes that her succession of facial surgeries leads her to "become" her face). Momentarily post-reassignment, the transsexual trajectory itself appears to be at stake in them. The subject's focus on these organs is to be expected, considering the fact that they are most often hard-gained, and that these areas have been subject to such intense surgical attention. However, it may also be a response to a dramatically altered physically body. On a mechanical level, the new organs present themselves as unfamiliar zones, whatever the subject's certainty of their appropriateness. The post-reassignment body poses a new geography, and the transsexual must undergo --

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[32] As a further sign of this powerful psychic investment in transsexual body parts, Thompson's penis is immediately namable as such, even while it looks nothing like a penis. This is in stark contrast to the unnamability of the female genital parts and functions: Thompson's autobiography unfailingly euphemizes vagina, menstruation and breasts. Where agnosia renders unnamable what *is*, phantomization renders namable what is not -- that is, until gender reassignment fleshes out the imaginary body with material referents.

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proprioceptively -- some adjustment to her or his remolded contours. For instance, Cummings's problems with vaginal dilation following surgery (required to keep the vagina from closing in on itself) stem from her unfamiliarity with her new genitals. Frankly, she's at a loss as to what her vagina feels or looks like. Having no bodily sense of the depth of her vagina, she's not sure when the dilator is inside; the body's new material limits are as yet strange. In a comparable moment, once his penis has been detached successfully from its vascular roots on his thigh, Thompson finds he must rethink the most basic and automatic of bodily movements, such as getting out of the bath. How is he supposed to "handle" this new fleshy addition? Should he let the penis fall naturally, or is he supposed to support it as he stands? Such post-reassignment episodes, common in the autobiographies, both comic and frightening, mark the body off again as unfamiliar, unknown, in a way that echoes its pre-reassignment unfamiliarity. The new contours of the flesh must be negotiated, relearned. But where the pre-reassignment body's unfamiliarity is described as alien (the foreign, the abject), the post-reassignment body is simply the not yet known.

Sandy Stone remarks that surgery is inscribed in transsexual autobiographies as the magical moment of sex change.[33] I have been suggesting that the "moment" is in fact more

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[33] Transsexual autobiographers "reinforce a binary, oppositional mode of gender identification. They go from being unambiguous men, albeit unhappy men, to unambiguous women. There is no territory between. Further, each constructs a specific narrative moment when their personal sexual identification changes from male to female. This moment is the moment of neocoporraphy -- that is of gender reassignment or 'sex change surgery'" (Stone, A Posttranssexual Manifesto 286). Stone's primary sources are the autobiographies of Morris, Hedy Jo Star and the highly apocryphal biography of Lili Elbe.

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fraught, more recursive, indeed less momentous, and that the feeling of sex change is complex, even ambiguous. While surgery presents the transsexual with a new geography, it is naturalized through a poetics of healing and integration as restorative, returning to the subject a body that is rightfully his or hers, that in an imaginary sense *already was*, rather than metamorphosing him or her into dramatic alterity. In the medical narrative of transsexuality, gender reassignment is the climax, the goal, the moment of resolution, of cure-all. Gender reassignment surgery promises the ultimate the supreme passing: a passing in the flesh, one that allows the discarding of external passing devices involving concealing, strapping, wrapping and padding the body. The skin itself becomes the article of gendered passing as gender shifts from doing to being, from performance to the flesh. Touching her genitals after her vaginoplasty, it is this skin-deep passing that Dawn Langley Simmons celebrates as the achievement of her surgery: "Nobody would be able to tell the difference. . . . I knew I was like all other women. . . Not a blemish, not a scar; the vaginal lips perfection" (124; ellipses in original). The fantasy of gender reassignment surgery is that it erases the difference of transsexuality, covers over its traces with a seamless and real-looking gendered body. Constructed ironically in the medical narrative as the apogee of transsexuality, gender reassignment surgery in theory allows the transsexual to pass as non-transsexual, to appear as a "real" man or a "real" woman and to step out of his or her transsexual skin-identity. One becomes most fully a transsexual when one is able to leave that identity, that body, most completely behind.

Yet transsexual autobiographers do not simply leave that body-identity behind. Especially post-reassignment, they hold on to their transsexual identity with a tenacity that is general enough to put in question Stone's critique of their reinforcing the binary of

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gender. All of the autobiographies are written under the sign of transsexuality, as their subtitles make clear: "The Story of a Transsexual," "An Extraordinary Narrative of Transsexualism," and so forth. In the autobiographical act, the transsexual outs her- or himself and reappropriates transsexual subjectivity undoing the work surgery in the context of the medical narrative of transsexuality holds as its goal: to assimilate the transsexual into non-transsexual manhood or womanhood, to redesign the body so that one won't be able to "tell the difference," the difference, that is, of transsexuality. It is the very function of autobiography to tell this difference, producing a contradiction between the forms of transsexuality and autobiography, a contradiction between passing the body (off) versus writing it (out). The tension between transsexuality and autobiography amounts to a tension between body and history: a tension that centers on the issue of remarkability. Gender reassignment surgery can leave the transsexual body ostensibly unremarkable, and certainly this drive toward appearing unremarkable, as Bryan Tully has noted, threads through the transsexual narrative, in both its medical and subjective versions. Cossey writes of her vaginoplasty: "The operation gave me the chance to function in a sexual relationship. It give me the choice. And it gave me a chance to live a more normal life with a man" (My Story 103).[34]

The capacity to appear unremarkable brings with it possibilities for livability which should not be underestimated. Yet becoming fully unremarkable requires the transsexual

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[34] Davis's interviews with women seeking plastic surgery indicate that a comparable quest for bodily ordinariness typically lies behind their desire for surgery. The motivation for transsexual surgery comes to appear as paradigmatic of rather than the exception to general reconstructive surgery.

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to renounce the remarkable history -- the very means to this unremarkability: a renunciation the autobiographers in the very writing of their autobiographies as transsexuals do not perform. Writing as transsexuals, the autobiographers continue to stake a claim in transsexual identity, and indeed, may even insist on a certain difference, a certain distance from genetic men and women, by drawing on their transsexual histories. Morris, Hunt and Cummings describe how their lives as men (in which, as transsexuals who transitioned in middle age after heterosexual marriage and children they were quite deeply invested) renders their status as women fraught with complexity. While it can make the body seamless in its "new" sex, where does this history go post-reassignment? At the end of her autobiography, Morris insists that the question posed to her so often -- what does it feel like to be a woman after living so many years as a man? -- is doubly unanswerable: both because of the extended history of her transgendered identification (she never felt herself to be a man), and because of her radically foreshortened history as a woman. Under the sign of her autobiography, she is first and foremost a transsexual.

"There will always be arguments about what is, or is not, a 'real' woman," Cummings admits in her introduction (x). Instead of positioning her subjectivity in relation to these arguments, Cummings says only that she is a transsexual living as a woman. If transsexuals take up a position in terms of the binary of gender (how can one not?), it does not follow that they go from being "unambiguous men . . . to unambiguous women" or vice versa. Gender reassignment surgery enables the living "as a," and thus makes the life and the body livable -- or more so. But the autobiographers' refusal to relinquish transsexual identity suggests that transition is less about becoming dramatically altered gender-wise than it is about becoming a transsexual. Perhaps it is *only after*

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gender reassignment, once gendered passing is secured, that "transsexual" becomes for the autobiographers the identity most confidently, even for some most comfortably, claimed.

Ann Bolin has isolated gender reassignment as transsexuals' "rite of incorporation" (182). "Surgery . . . is their access to normalcy. They can finally be treated as if they had always been women [Bolin's ethnomethodological study is of MTFs only]. The value of the rite . . . lies in the 'incorporation it permits.'" (183). Surgery as incorporation marks the transsexual's assimilation into the world of gendered realness: her social incorporation into gendered normalcy. Without gender reassignment surgery, MTFs "would not have the opportunity to drift into society as bona fide women" (182). In refusing to renounce their transsexuality, transsexual autobiographers resist incorporation *by* the unremarkably-gendered world, their narratives taking up where surgery leaves off in preserving the subject's history. Once the body no longer reveals its history (that is, post-reassignment), the subject takes up its telling. The subject's self-positioning at an angle to genetic womanhood or manhood arises from this desire to keep intact the remarkability of her or his history, rather than from the desire to inhabit a disruptive space in between sexual difference[35] As Kim Harlow implies, it is possible for the transsexual to perceive her or his body as incorporated through gender reassignment into the realness of sex and, at the same time, to preserve her or his history as a transsexual from this incorporation: "[I]t'd be wrong to say that today I'm a woman, I'm a transsexual, and what makes me a transsexual is that I was born a boy, and I changed so as to become someone physically

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[35]The postmodern transsexual autobiography of Kate Bornstein, analogous to Stone's posttranssexual manifesto, is the exception to this.

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totally female, with a physique which goes with my mind" (10). Although Harlow views herself as "totally physically female," she nonetheless conceives of her gender history as situating her outside womanhood. The body has been subject to change; but the story of this changed body is subject to preservation -- to recording as transsexual autobiography.

Gender reassignment surgery is a rite of incorporation for the transsexual in the immediate sense of the body, in-corporation: a rite of bodily appropriation. Surgery works to resolve the feeling of dis- or wrong embodiment by securing for the transsexual a skin of his or her own: a body that appropriately surrounds body image. The autobiographies certainly contribute to the idea of gender reassignment surgery as a rite of passage, one which centers on the body and its materiality. Harrowing scenes of near-death experiences (Richards's tracheal shave, Martino's mastectomy), of botch-job medical interventions (Julia Grant's vaginal probe, Martino's first phalloplasty), or simply of some of the routine but nonetheless terrifying problems entailed in any major surgery (malfunctioning catheters in Cossey and Thompson); descriptions of the pain, the shock, the discomfort to the body; the cycle of suffering and recovery, of the wounded body healing: in repetition, these features give to gender reassignment surgery a specific structure, so that it does take on the form of *the* definitive transsexual experience, a transsexual rite of passage, as if it were the surgery that makes the subject most fully a transsexual. Before he can receive authorization from his psychiatrist for his phalloplasty, Thompson is required to state his willingness to tolerate the physical pain and distress which accompanies the surgery, as if the experience of such surgery itself were the symbolic vehicle for transsexual transformation -- the identifying marker of transsexuality -- as much as its mechanics.

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iv. Audre Lorde's The Cancer Journals: "Power vs. Prosthesis"

> I just don't feel like I'm really a woman now.
> Anonymous woman post-mastectomy (cited in Davis 154)
>
> [E]ither I would love my body one-breasted now, or remain forever alien to myself.
> (The Cancer Journals 44)

Audre Lorde's The Cancer Journals attempts to redefine the female bodyscape to foreground women who refuse surgical implants or breast prostheses post-mastectomy. Lorde's premise is that the breast prosthesis (whether a surgically implanted silicone gel packet or material padding worn in the space of the absent breast) is a "travesty" with dangerous consequences (10). Keeping women invisible from each other and the world, the breast prosthesis discomfits them from accepting their changed bodies and forming a politically active community on the basis of their experience with breast cancer. Symptomatic of the sexist "patterns and networks . . . for women after breast surgery that encourage us to deny the realities of our bodies," "[t]he emphasis upon wearing a prosthesis is a way of avoiding having women come to terms with their own pain and loss, and thereby their own strength" (41; 49). Arguing that the "socially sanctioned prosthesis is merely another way of keeping women with breast cancer silent and separate from each other," she urges the mono-breasted or unbreasted woman to come out of the prosthetic closet and allow herself to be read as no less of a woman, rather as one with a particular history of breast cancer (16). Coming out with a surgically-altered body, is the foundational act of what may be described as Lorde's feminist politics of breast cancer, a politics consisting in a bifold demand: for the recognition of women's bodies as they

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actually are as distinct from their idealization in cultural representation (for the prosthesis reinforces the ideal image of the female body as amply and symmetrically breasted); and for the formation of post-mastectomy women into a supportive and politically active community.

For the transsexual, the surgical prosthesis is a marker of bodily nostalgia, a memory of the somatotype that should have been. Lorde argues that, for post-mastectomy women, this prosthetic nostalgia is systematically validated, even socially enforced. Lorde allows, however, that the power of the prosthesis to recreate what was on the body may nonetheless be a visceral desire common in post-operative women, and she is not immune from this: "After a mastectomy, for many women including myself, there is a feeling of wanting to go back, of not wanting to persevere through this experience to whatever enlightenment might be at the core of it. And it is this feeling, this nostalgia, which is encouraged by most of the post-surgical counseling for women with breast cancer" (55). The bodily nostalgia enacted and secured by prosthesis is politically immobilizing, effectively hindering women from mapping out a personal and political future based on the reality of their bodies and their history with illness. While Lorde figures it as a "regressive tie to the past," it may be said that the prosthesis in fact performs the erasure of the actual past (55). Substituting a retouched, re-imagined version, the breast prosthesis conceals the particular history of breast cancer in a woman's body, and the different surgical history of that body; it veils the difference of her experiential history. As the woman from Reach for Recovery claims in her failed attempt to get Lorde to wear a prosthesis, "'You'll never know the difference'" (42). In this sense, the prosthesis is properly nostalgic, constituting not a memory of a woman's actual

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past, but the past as it should have been, the rosy past (that is, without breast cancer, without surgery). It is precisely this difference The Cancer Journals seeks to validate: "Prosthesis offers the empty comfort of 'Nobody will know the difference.' But it is this very difference which I wish to affirm" (61). In order to hold onto his or her history as transsexual, the transsexual autobiographer trades in something of the nostalgia enabled by the surgical prostheses of gender reassignment without forfeiting the passing as non-transsexual, as "real," that is achieved through the surgically-designed organs. In Lorde's scheme, ostensibly there can be no such compromise or ambiguity. The political formulation as regards reconstructive surgery, according to her, is a case of clear-cut opposition: "power vs. prosthesis" (55).[36] Yet the personal narrative of The Cancer Journals muddies this neat polarity as the author's emotional and psychic pain around a body non-coincident with body image is in effect not so different from that of transsexuals, although of course her somatic journey is the reverse: surgery deals the blow of psychic and bodily loss.

In addition to its scope as critique of the cultural pressure on post-mastectomy women to wear breast prostheses, The Cancer Journals is Lorde's searingly candid account of her own experience with breast cancer and her resulting mastectomy: her attempts to come to terms with the cancer itself, the possible early death that it bodes, and

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[36]Lorde's critique of breast prostheses is prescient. Writing in 1979, thirteen years before the FDA barred the use of silicone gel implants for breast reconstructions, Lorde is unable to cite research that evidences the carcinogenic or pathogenic properties of silicone implants, yet she has a strong hunch that reconstructive surgery poses further serious health risks: "It is possible that the additional surgery necessary for the insertion of the prosthesis could stir up cancer cells which might otherwise remain dormant" (70).

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-- my reason for discussing it here as a kind of coda to the transsexual body image of this chapter -- to negotiate the psychic effects of the loss of her breast. This loss is tightly intricated with gendered meanings. Notched into the grain of her political critique of the equation of women with their breasts in the normative construction of women's bodies, indeed, sometimes almost working against that grain, is the notion that the breast as body part is absolutely caught up with Lorde's self-identity as a woman, feminist, African-American, lesbian, mother, writer. The question these journal or personal moments struggle with is: how to sustain the continuity of that identity -- "a woman, a black lesbian feminist mother lover poet" (25) -- when all its axes, all meeting at womanness in Lorde's experience of them as she writes about the mastectomy, transect the breasts? "Any amputation is a physical and psychic reality that must be integrated into a new sense of self" (16); like the transsexual, she must adjust physically and psychically to her remolded contours, "a new body," an undesired body at that, and there are mirror scenes after the surgery which illustrate her tackling this process, repudiating the body in the mirror as "not-me" (38). Not only does the mastectomy produce a bodily alienation acknowledged by Lorde, the bi-breasted body is not easily written off as cultural construct of womanhood because the bi-breasted body is how Lorde has experienced her self as a woman, African-American, lesbian, et cetera. As she writes it here, Lorde's own body image holds the breasts as most cherished, the lost breast wrapped up in the maternal: "The pain of separating from my breast was at least as sharp as the pain as separating from my mother" (25-26). The surgery performs a terrible second birth, engenders a new body and cuts this body / subject off from its productive, protective life-source. A part of the

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self and yet, as the mother, already other, the breast is symbolically entangled in women's relations with each other: its removal introduces a discomforting break, a split.

Indeed, Lorde betrays anxiety that the loss of her own breast will alter other women's experience of her as a woman, particularly their sensual experience. How will the lesbian other feel and feel about her mono-breasted body? How will she herself feel loving a woman with her one breast? While she later claims in The Journals that, "A lifetime of loving women had taught me that when women love each other, physical change does not alter that love," a few days after her mastectomy she is notably less confident, less dismissive of the psychic pain (56). This very notion that desire is not immune to somatic change, that sexual pleasure does not take place in a vacuum of body shapes, crosses her mind while she waits for the visit from Reach for Recovery:

> I was thinking, "What is it like to be making love to a woman and have only one breast brushing against her?"
>
> I thought, "How will we fit so perfectly together ever again?"
>
> I thought, "I wonder if our love-making had anything to do with it?"
>
> I thought, "What will it be like making love to me? Will she still find my body delicious?"
>
> And for the first time deeply and fleetingly a groundswell of sadness rolled up over me that filled my mouth and eyes almost to frowning. My right breast represented such an area of feeling and pleasure for me, how could I never bear to feel that again? (43)

Braving a political gesture in refusing a breast prosthesis, Lorde reveals that, even so, her breast in and of itself holds gendered and sexual significance for her as a woman and as a lesbian.[37]

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[37] This is not to suggest that all women experience breast cancer or breast surgery as interfering with their gendered body image. For Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, the experience

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That the autopathographical thread of The Cancer Journals is provocatively at odds with its scope as political treatise on the treatment of women with breast cancer enables Lorde to explore the raw subjective experience of bodily transformation. Although Lorde insists that all women with breast cancer are "warriors," she does not valorize her / their mono-breastedness with easy comparisons to the Amazons (60). In fact, when she does make reference to the Amazons, it is not to read into their mono-breastedness an archetypal feminist / lesbian-feminist warrior subjectivity as might be expected of a late 1970s lesbian-feminist text, but to consider the effect on their psyche of this mythic loss of breasts. She wonders at the Amazons' process of psychic adjustment, wonders how, as women / girls, they coped with a dramatically recontoured body: "The Amazons were only 15, I thought, how did they handle it (28); "I wonder how long it was before the Dahomean girl Amazons could take their changed landscapes for granted" (45). Effectively de-mythologizing their mono-breastedness, her concern is with the psychic realities of their post-surgical body image, a concern running through The Cancer Journals

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of breast cancer and medical treatment -- to admirably perverse effect -- affirms her identification with *gay men*. Sedgwick acknowledges that her body image investment in her breasts is clearly not strong to begin with. A low erotogenicity in the breast zone; an open desire for and identification with gay men; a non-reproductive feminine identity: these factors make her breasts "relatively peripheral to the complex places where gender and sexuality really happen" (Tendencies 262). This feeling of not feeling particularly like a woman undergoes political consolidation when Sedgwick hears a lesbian fulminating against the FDA's sinking a fortune into research on AIDS while breast cancer ("'our' disease") goes underfunded. What shocks and angers Sedgwick in this performance is its rigid gendering of diseases and the resultant repudiation of queer: "as though AIDS were *not* a disease of women or lesbians! . . . I feel I must refuse to identify [as a woman] on this ground. As a woman, I certainly could contract HIV. I happen to have contracted another, also very often fatal disease that makes its own demands of a new politics, a new identity location" (Tendencies 283). Sedgwick's identification with the masculine (as always) reaches out to embrace that dis-eased queer part.

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above and beyond the critique of the ways in which post-mastectomy women are pressured to re-align their bodies with the cultural representation, Woman.

Lorde's resistance to wearing a breast prosthesis may well be politically significant but it cannot be divorced from her psychic refusal to incorporate, to appropriate, the cloth prosthesis that is immediately on offer, a pink lambswool puff left by Reach for Recovery. Her reader might well wonder in fact which holds the most sway in the writing at this point: the political critique of prostheses or the subjective limits of Lorde's body image; what can and cannot be felt a part of her body. Lorde rejects the lambswool puff, avowing that she can never invest sensory feeling in this supplementary non corporeal part: "For not even the most skillful prosthesis in the world could undo that reality, or feel the way my breast had felt" (44). Unable to feel the prosthesis as her breast, to phantomize it, body image must be brought into line with the reshaped material body: the "should have been" must yield to the real. Most strikingly, Lorde's refusal to invest in the material padding as a new body part is as inseparable from race as from gender, from the matter of skin color. Lorde perceives the pink puff as all the more "not-me" on her body because "it was the wrong color":

> I came around my bed and stood in front of the mirror in my room, and stuffed the thing into the wrinkled folds of the right side of my bra where my right breast should have been. It perched on my chest askew, awkwardly inert and lifeless, and having nothing to do with any me I could possibly conceive of. Besides, it was the wrong color, and looked grotesquely pale through the cloth of my bra. (44)

The Cancer Journals points to not only the enmeshing of the psychic in the corporeal, but the pervasiveness of a gendered, racialized and sexualized body image for all subjects. The Journals brings home how this felt body image underlies our identities and quite

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possibly -- and sometimes at odds with -- our cultural theories. Most poignantly, Lorde's text does not shy from acknowledging the constative power of the physical body and the subject's feelings of embodiment.

v. Conclusion. Technosurgical Bodies

As biotechnology fastforwards into the future, realizing increasingly unimaginable feats in healing, transforming, remaking human bodies, critical theory is left to grapple with how these feats alter our conception of subjectivity and the body. One response to biotechnology, becoming common particularly in feminist cultural theory, is quite simply that of anxiety -- an anxiety which may well be entangled with generic end-of-the-millennium fears about ends and unknown beginnings, but which is nonetheless real. Feminist theorists tend to voice these concerns more clearly than anyone else perhaps because it is primarily female bodies and female reproductive capacities that have been subject to the biosciences' experimental gaze; or at least biotechnological developments in the areas of sexuality and reproduction have been among the most publicized and practiced. As Rosi Braidotti points out, if the pill allowed humans sex without babies, "with the new reproductive technologies we can have babies without sex" (Nomadic Subjects 42). Joining forces with the ideological discourse around AIDS that claims that the more inter-bodily the sexual exchange, the more deadly, biomedicine idealizes disembodied subjectivity, life without / beyond the body, in other words, as Braidotti writes, life without death: immortality. "All reference to death disappears in the discourse about 'biopower' -- power over life" (47). The body is no longer conceived as integral living matter but as an aggregate of detachable, exchangeable, and, one might add,

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replaceable, parts. In a neat reversal of Deleuze and Guattari, Braidotti formulates this anti-body assembly as "organs without bodies": "The whole discourse of the biosciences takes the organism as its object, and it therefore takes the body as a mosaic of detachable pieces. . . . In the practice of the 'techno-docs' the visibility, and intelligibility of the 'living body' are the prelude to its manipulation as an available supply of living material" (47). In a gesture which projects her work beyond the poststructuralist insistence on Lacanian "fragilization" as the only given of subjectivity, Braidotti insists that contemporary thought face "the urgency to reformulate the unity of the human being" (56).

Julia Epstein's Altered Conditions begins and ends with a similar critique of the fragmenting effect on the body of the biosciences, although without making that same gesture toward reintegration; Epstein pessimistically foresees as the Foucauldian inevitable the subject's recontainment by the technologies that produce her. As medical theory and practice has atomized into endlessly subdividing areas of specialization ("a different doctor for the ears and throat, the heart, the kidneys, the lungs, the urinary tract, the brain, the reproductive system" et cetera [5]), the integrity of the body has been shattered into an assemblage of unrelated parts or organs: "We have become not selves or even whole bodies or human ecosystems, but rather compilations of organs and tissues and environmental habitats" (5). Analogizing this fragmentation of the human body with the fin-de-siècle fragmentation of the body politic, Epstein suggests a kind of alienating balkanization of the body: "Globally disenfranchised millions, cut off from their homelands, resemble, at least metaphorically, the disassembled parts in which the high-tech biomedical system specializes. Our internal differentiations mimic an autoimmune disorder, as we madly try to locate and expel the antigenic foreign body" (5). Both

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Braidotti's and Epstein's critiques of contemporary medical technology implicitly stage a kind of nostalgia for a lost (pre-medicodiscursive) bodily / subject integrity (even though Braidotti insists that nostalgia be avoided).

Where does the medical technology that produces transsexual bodies fit into this new anxiety in theory about science, gender and the future of the body? Does the capacity to manufacture sex in spite of, that is against, the body's neonatal sex produce the transsexual body as a sex without real embodiment, or, the other side of the same coin, a body without a real sex -- in keeping with the cultural apprehension of the transsexual as beyond sex? What anxieties does gender reassignment technology provoke in thought about the body?

As early as 1979, the same year that Lorde wrote The Cancer Journals and took to task the medical validation of the cultural fetishization of the female body (woman = breast), Raymond's The Transsexual Empire argued that "transsexualism is fetishization par excellence" (31). In their obsessive focus on genital parts, transsexuals (and their medical enablers) mis-take the (sexed) parts for the (gendered) whole, and effectively fragment the integrity of the human subject into a body in bits and pieces. While Raymond's critique of transsexuality may be historicized (written in the heyday of holistic healing and the more widespread distribution of alternatives to Western medicine), the notion that transsexual surgery fetishizes sexed parts has continued to be credited. In "Spare Parts" (originally published in differences in 1989 and reprinted in Vested Interests in 1992), Marjorie Garber claims that transsexuals, both male-to-female and female-to-male, overestimate the penis, and "*essentialize* their genitalia. 'The absolute insignia of

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maleness' [the penis] *is* for them the index of male identity" (98; emphasis in original).[38] Both Raymond and Garber figure transsexual surgery as metonymizing gender in the genitals, taking the (spare) parts for the cultural whole. Seventies' lesbian feminist and nineties' queer positions come together: both suggest that gender reassignment produces a body in bits and pieces, an assembly of exchangeable parts -- a kind of mish-mash of sex organs without bodies (to borrow from Braidotti).

The most eccentric regions of contemporary postmodern theory celebrate the transsexual as the archetypal postmodern subject precisely for cutting the integral surface of the natural body into detachable and artificial parts. The transsexual's sexual "production" by technosurgery is read as an ultra-construction one which denaturalizes the body and sex. The Krokers's most recent anthology, The Last Sex figures the transsexual as a kind of techno- or virtual subject, his / her manufactured sex pushing back the borders of what's real, what's natural about the body. Drawing rather haphazardly on the new science of transgenics, the Krokers suggest that transsexuality produces "transgenic gender," that is "a virus free gender" or "recombinant sex," the virus in the Krokers's embrace of all things virtual nothing less than the material body itself, living flesh (15). Recombinant sex, taking place without the virus of the body is the "only good sex today": "Sex without origin, localizing gender, or referential signifier. Beyond predatory sex then,

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[38] Garber answers her own question -- "if the story of transsexualism is not about sex at all, is it about subjectivity, specifically 'male subjectivity'"? (109) -- in the affirmative, reading transsexualism, like transvestism as "as limit cases for 'male subjectivity'" (94). Indeed, the crucial flaw in Garber's approach to transsexuality is that, not only does she fail to make an adequate distinction between transsexuality and transvestism, she does not even attempt one.

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a transgendered sex for an age of transsexuality where sex most of all, has fled its roots in the consanguinity of nature, refused its imprisonment in the phallocentric orbit of gender, abandoned the metaphorical sublimations of discursive sexuality, finally finding its home in a virtual sex" (15). Through the transsexual's "morphing" as they understand gender reassignment, the Krokers glimpse a "new sexual horizon, post-male, post-female," and crucially post-human(ist), the dawning of a new virtual age of which the transsexual will be hero (but not heroine: for the meaning of sexual difference is evacuated) (15, 19). If in Raymond's lesbian-feminist paradigm gender reassignment surgery secured the transsexual as patriarchal law-abider, literalizing the cultural constructs of gender in the flesh, in the Krokers's postmodern vision of bodiless, originless, virtual subjectivity, the surgery elevates the transsexual to a romanticized outlaw, a kind of cyberhacker wrecking the matter of sex.[39] In the Krokers's scheme, the material flesh -- frighteningly, considering the current climate in which AIDS has made sexed body parts in and of themselves to be feared as infected and infectious -- has become the marker of retrogressive identities; the discourse of transgenics (which in its quest for purer species strikes me as resembling that of fin-de-siècle nineteenth-century *eu*genics) is deployed against the material flesh, an impurity to be eliminated.

For the process of changing sex to be like morphing, for it to be as systematized, clean, insouciant and unbloody as the transformation of data on a computer screen, is

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[39]In Nothing Mat(t)ers: A Feminist Critique of Postmodernism, Somer Brodribb has shown that postmodernism's denial of origins and matter, of origins in mat(t)er, is fundamentally enmeshed with the devaluation of the feminine, particularly the maternal. Brodribb suggests Dionysus's motherless birth as a foundational postmodernist myth.

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surely, at least at one point or another, every transsexual's dream. "If I could just snap my fingers . . ."; "if there was a closet where we could go in one thing and come out another"; "Beam me up, Scottie." Such fantasies of immaculate transformation, of immediate materialization, are commonly voiced and exchanged, with self-deprecating humor although not without yearning, but of course remain fantasies.[40] Changing sex is very much a bodily affair, a material intervention into living flesh.

The common thread in these visions of medico-technology's impact on our conception of the body, whether specifically connected to gender reassignment (Raymond, Garber, the Krokers) or sexuality and reproduction in general (Braidotti, Epstein) is that they are all argued from a non-patient, non-medicalized subject position. In drawing conclusions about how medico-technology alters the body / the subject, all of the above theorists -- ironically considering the nature of the critique -- write in desubjectivized terms about generic bodies conceived as already integral. Their vision of surgery as fragmenting the body is then not surprising, For from the point of view of the other watching the surgical procedure, the body laid out on the operating table is always going to appear as an integrity and surgery as an incursion into this integrity: holes made in a whole. I have tried to present in this chapter the surgical subject's perspective. From this viewpoint, in terms of her or his body image of pre-surgical wrong embodiment, surgical transformation has quite a different meaning and value. In transsexual autobiographies,

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[40] Surely this is the reason why such a high proportion of transsexuals are science fiction aficionados, yet this does not make transsexuality a science fiction.

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the surgery is conceived as healing the body -- an unlivable already shattered body -- into an integrated whole.

The future can only hold medical technology that will make the process of sex change more successful, that is more convincing and more comprehensive. Even now, those transsexuals who religiously keep tabs on medical research in a ceaseless quest for improved techniques expect (hope?) the new art of tissue engineering to revolutionize current gender reassignment procedures. Developed in the research labs at MIT, tissue engineering brilliantly combines the sciences of biochemistry, medical engineering and genetics to manufacture living human tissue into the structure of bodily organs apart from the subject's body. The process takes DNA from the patient, places the cells on a pre-constructed organ mold, and tends to the organ under conditions where the cells can multiply and grow according to the mold's structure. The experiment currently receiving the most public attention is that of the manufacture of an ear for a four year old boy whose birth defect is a missing ear. The ear has been manufactured and is now implanted under the skin of a mouse (not much larger than the ear itself) so that the ear's survival, growth rate, and so forth can be monitored. Researchers expect the ear to be attached to the boy within the next few years. It is hoped that, sharing the same DNA as the subject's body, the tissue-engineered ear will not only immediately adapt to its host but continue to grow and age as if a natural part of the body. If successful, the procedure will render obsolete the free-flaps and skin grafts currently the mainstay of the plastic surgery, erasing most effectively the differences of those bodies upon which surgical work is performed, enabling all bodies to pass as integral. Already the MIT team talk of working on more complex human organs, such as the liver. It is not difficult to imagine that sex organs

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would eventually be included in this process of body-part manufacture, if not first for transsexuals then for burn or accident victims who suffer from lost or damaged genitals, eventually becoming part of transsexual procedures like plastic surgery after the Second World War in a trickle-down fashion.

More than any other contemporary medical practice, tissue engineering challenges the boundaries between the artificial and the natural body: it consists in the artificial manufacturing of organs through the natural reproduction of tissue cells. Quite literally, moreover, it reproduces Braidotti's nightmarish vision of organs without bodies -- body parts growing apart from bodily wholes; an industry for manufacturing organs; and the possibility of indefinite replacement once organs are defunct certainly raises the specter of considerably prolonged life, if not immortality itself. Yet these parts manufactured beyond the body all have as their goal the reintegration of the human body, the restoration of lost, absent or malfunctioning material flesh. It is upon such nostalgia for the integral human form that this most cutting-edge area of technosurgery is based.

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Chapter Four

Mirror Images: Transsexuality and Autobiography

> Narcissus, contemplating his face in the fountain's depth, is so fascinated with the apparition that he would die bending toward himself. . . . The author of an autobiography masters this anxiety by submitting to it; beyond all images, he follows unceasingly the call of his own being.
>
> Georges Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography"

> The most sexual act I did at these times was to regard myself in the mirror. I would stare, longingly I suppose, into the face of the little girl opposite me. Somehow, in the mirror my femininity was more real. Like Narcissus I was fascinated by that unattainable image, and like him I pined"
>
> Renée Richards, The Renée Richards Story

> Like Narcissus, I had fallen in love with the image in the mirror, which showed me that all the dreams of my life could be realised for a few moments now and then.
>
> Katherine Cummings, Katherine's Diary

i. Introduction

In her autobiography, Conundrum: An Extraordinary Narrative of Transsexualism, Jan Morris restages her final act before her gender reassignment surgery. Ensconced in Burou's famous clinic in Casablanca, anaesthetized and pubes freshly shaven, Morris rises from her bed and makes her woozy way to the mirror: "[I] went to say good-bye to myself in the mirror. We would never meet again, and I wanted to give that other self a long last look in the eye, and a wink for luck" (140). For she, this self that writes, is to emerge "alive, well, and sex-changed in Casablanca" in "a new body," the "old" one, not so much that of a man as of a "hybrid or chimera," to be discarded like a snake's skin on Burou's operating table (140, 141). Already inscribed as a fabulous moment in what is the most consciously mystical of transsexual autobiographies, Morris's gesture before the mirror has a legendary status in transsexual folklore. As a night-before ritual simply

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referenced, appropriated or satirized, it is woven into other male-to-female transsexual autobiographies, juxtaposed with authors' accounts of their own pre-surgical rituals.[1] Morris's "mirror stage" has been drawn on because it figures the specific split of the transsexual subject, and prefigures the passage, or to use the correct terminology, the transition -- here surgery -- that promises to heal that split. The moment is Morris through the looking glass: *s/he* passes in an androgyne ("a chimera, half male, half female"), and *she* passes out an integral subject ("normal," "*clean*") (109;141).

While Morris's is doubtless the most famous, other transsexual autobiographers with remarkable consistence punctuate their accounts with such mirror scenes. Looking into the mirror is an obvious metaphor for the autobiographical act -- ostensibly at least, an act of self-reflection -- but in transsexual autobiography, the mirror serves to create the transsexual as a particular kind of autobiographical subject. To begin with, as in Morris's autobiography above, the mirror appears as a referential object within the life-story itself. Recounted "actual" mirror scenes have two key purposes: to convey schematically first, the self-alienation, in particular the bodily dysphoria, the transsexual subject feels in looking at his / her reflected body; and second, as the subject improvises an imaginary

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[1] See, for instance, Nancy Hunt: "I remembered that on the night before her operation, Jan Morris had arisen from her bed in Casablanca to bid farewell to her male genitalia. A quixotic gesture, I thought. I don't give a damn if I never saw mine again, and I certainly had no intention of arising in that frigid room to bid them good-bye" (201); and, in gleeful parodic vein, Sandy Stone: "I was reminded of this account on the eve of my own surgery. Gee, I thought on that occasion, it would be interesting to magically become another person in that binary and final way. So I tried it myself -- going to the mirror and saying goodbye to the person I saw there -- and unfortunately it didn't work. A few days later, when I could next get to the mirror, the person looking back at me was still me. I still don't understand what I did wrong" (301 n.21). Stone's "Posttranssexual Manifesto," in which this episode appears, also begins with Morris's mirror scene.

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body before the mirror with transgendered dress and / or prosthetic parts, the way in which an imaginary staging corrects this alienation. Both types of mirror scenes within the narrative work together to organize and set in motion the transsexual plot. As with Morris above, hormones and surgery promise to permanently undo the distortion on either side of the mirror. They bring the looking subject and the reflected image into gendered alignment or *identity*; medical technology realizes the imaginary body (always already more real to the transsexual) in the world.

Transsexuality would heal the gendered split; autobiography, the rupture in gender plots unique to the transsexual story. And this surely accounts for why so many transsexuals create their autobiographies: a desire to make coherent sense out of the "change," to produce continuity in the face of such a dramatic shift. The autobiographical form allows the transformation of fragments into a narrative, unites both "lives" (as a man and as a woman) on either side of transition into a singular story: that of the transsexual. Moreover, the unifying autobiographical theme is most often not solely transsexuality, but a consistent, coherent gender identity retrospectively installed *ab initio*: I have always been / felt / behaved / looked (more) like a girl / boy. Though the two "I"s on either side of the autobiographical mirror are split by sex -- I was born female; I write as a man -- the premise of a consistent gendered identification (I have always felt like a man) draws them together again. For like all autobiographical narrative, the structure is necessarily that of retrospective reconstruction: the writing "I" traces its transgendered self back to the birth of the "I" of the *bios*, seeking to establish continuity of self.

The subject's recounting of this particular plot (the always already of transgendered identification and behavior) is more than a product of his / her desire for a

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coherent self; it is the necessary symptom of transsexuality as a diagnosable mental health condition. The story of a strong, early and consistent transgendered subject is demanded by the clinical authorities, namely, the psychiatrists, psychologists and psychotherapists, who traditionally function as the gatekeepers to transsexual conversion. Without the approval of these authorities, the transsexual is likely to face insuperable difficulties in realizing his / her transsexuality, in carrying through the story to its teleological end. As a rule, the clinician listens for certain tropes before diagnosing transsexuality. These tropes have been established both by clinicians -- DSM III-R and IV, "experts" -- and by transsexuals themselves. The presenting subject draws on and yet simultaneously may force revisions to the psychiatric narrative of transsexuality; this has by no means remained unchanged since its officially-recognized construction in the late forties, early fifties with David Cauldwell and Harry Benjamin. Published transsexual autobiographies also participate in this interactive process of intervention and revision.

Like two mirrors endlessly reflecting each other, autobiography and transsexuality are caught up in an inter-reflective dynamic, but this should not be understood in the terms of the playful mise en abyme that symptomizes postmodernism. While the clinician might be thought of as functioning as the transsexual autobiography's first critic, the primary text here -- the oral autobiography -- stands in for the subject. The story must represent, embody his / her condition, for this alone is diagnosable as transsexual (not the body). In this context in which the text stands in for the body, the clinician's textual interpretation has the power to determine the course of the transsexual's life. A "misreading" can wreak irreparable psychological and emotional damage, can even indirectly kill or maim. While the autobiographical narrative in the clinician's office functions in the absence of any other

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point of reference, this narrative is not truly detached from the subject but embodies him / her to a degree that means that everything is at stake in its construction, by both author and reader.

The published transsexual autobiography is this autobiography the second time around, and often revisits or contains an account of the first autobiographical act and the clinician's response: another redoubling. The differing construction of the "reader" shapes the different versions: for some autobiographers, what cannot be told to the clinician can now be confided to the general reader; for others, certain matter remains delimited as unspeakable. Transsexual autobiographies apparently never forget their therapeutic / analytic origins. Some autobiographies self-consciously reproduce the life-narrative as case history: Renée Richards's is a brilliant ironic replaying of her life as exemplary analytical material. Many others harness in the form of a prefatory note or ventriloquize within the text of the autobiography the clinician's voice in order to authenticate or authorize their transsexuality (and by the same token, their autobiography). Whatever these variations, with remarkable consistence, the autobiographies delineate transsexuality as a distinctive narrative, an archetypal story structured around shared tropes (gendered difference, bodily shame and dysphoria for instance) and fulfilling a particular narrative organization made up of successive stages: suffering and confusion; the epiphany of self-discovery; corporeal and social transformation / conversion; and finally the arrival "home." In its autobiographical telling, the transsexual *bios* appears as already a highly formalized narrative.

While transsexuality and autobiography would seem to suture the split of the transsexual subject, their combination in the form of transsexual autobiography

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paradoxically reintroduces a split, a difference. However much the autobiographer through the narrative of an always-already transgender identification seeks to construct a stably gendered self, the dominant plot of the story is nevertheless inevitably that of a "sex change." Even though transsexual autobiographers are most often the first to point out that a comprehensive "sex change" is in effect never fully realizable,[2] it is the cultural fantasy of this phenomenon -- and, doubtless, the concomitant mixture of vicarious desire and disgust for the "sex change" subject -- that sustains the larger market for the autobiographies in the first place. Thus it is not surprising that the notion of literal "sex change" has an ineluctable presence in the autobiographies. To feel it, one need look no further than the subtitles of two recent female-to-male autobiographies: Raymond Thompson's What Took You So Long? A Girl's Journey Into Manhood and Paul Hewitt's A Self-Made Man: The Diary of a Man Born in a Woman's Body.[3] These subtitles, in their dramatization of "sex change," declare the realization of the "freaky" within the single statement in a style not so different from National Inquirer headlines

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[2] That is, genital and secondary sex characteristics may be altered, gonadal and chromosomal sex may as yet not. For transsexual autobiographers' remarks on the impossibility of "sex change," see Robert Allen (116), Cummings (x), and Morris (103).

[3] Both published in 1995, curiously, both autobiographies are from the British Isles (Raymond is Welsh). Moreover, they represent only the third and fourth FTM autobiographies published, Allen being the first in 1954, Mario Martino the second in 1977. 1996 has brought the publication of yet another UK FTM autobiography, Mark Rees's Dear Sir or Madam: The Autobiography of a Female-to-Male Transsexual. This spate of FTM autobiographies begins the work of compensating for their long-standing dearth and owes something to the greater media visibility of FTMs in the nineties (see Amy Bloom, Cynthia Gorney, Emily Yoffe, for instance). In a precise illustration of the productive effect of media attention on FTM autobiography, Hewitt's A Self-Made Man

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("Two-Headed Alien Baby Born to New Jersey Housewife"). In so doing, they undermine not only the naturalization of "sex change" but the continuous unified gendered identification most often proposed by the text of the transsexual autobiography, so that the "I" is indeed figured as split freakily along the lines of sex. The autograph is that of a man; yet the "I" of the *bios* was once a girl / woman. How do author and reader reconcile these two "I"s into a coherent autobiographical subject? Who -- what sex(es) -- is the subject of this story? Man, and / or woman, and / or transsexual? The difference between the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the enunciating, present in all autobiography, is brought into startling relief by these autobiographies' *investment* (I am speaking of transsexual autobiography in terms of the commodification of freakiness on which its popular, i.e., non-transsexual, distribution depends) in the phenomenon of "sex change." That rupturing of the "I" is engendered in the very performance of transsexual autobiography, produced whenever it refers itself.

ii. Transsexual Mirror Stages: The Narrative of Becoming Myself

> I couldn't stand seeing myself naked in the mirror and seeing that penis, I just couldn't. But now I take pleasure in seeing myself naked in the mirror -- I look just as I should be.
>
> Kim Harlow, Kim

Lacan's mirror stage transforms the subject's experience of his body from a sensory body-in-pieces into a specular totality (imago). In Lacan's account, the look in the mirror -- albeit a misrecognition ("*méconnaissance*") -- makes possible the formation

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was "written with" The Daily Express's feature writer, Jane Warren, after her story on Hewitt had appeared on the front page of this British tabloid on October 21, 1993.

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of the imaginary body, and replaces "fragilization" with "orthopaedic" totality (6, 5, 4). I argue that, in opposition to Judith Butler, elucidating her debt to Lacan, the privileging of vision in this story of the origins of the bodily ego undermines Freud's notion of the bodily ego as "derived from bodily sensations" (20, n.16). In support of my critique and in a direct inversion of the Lacanian schema, transsexual autobiography figures the look in the mirror at the pre-transition self as having a shattering effect on the subject. Shattered is an apparently already formed integral imaginary body, experienced as a *felt* reality: I already felt like a boy / girl. Taking its place, the question, the "conundrum," the violently split subject, that motivates the transsexual plot: How can I be otherwise to myself? How can I appear to myself and (as psychoanalytic mirror stages appear to be as much about intersubjectivity as intrasubjectivity) to others as otherwise? Female-to-male transsexual Mario Martino's metaphorization of his life as "a series of distorted mirrors" underlines the essential function of the mirror in setting in motion the transsexual plot. More specifically, it encapsulates the conflict between the irreality of his reflected image as a girl (what he sees) and the felt reality of his boy-ness: "My life was a series of distorted mirrors. I saw myself in their crazy reflections as false to the image I had of myself. *I was a boy!* I felt like one, I dressed like one, I fought like one" (xi; emphasis in original).

Far from reorganizing her / his body image into a whole, the mirror enables the transsexual to approach it precisely as a body in bits and pieces: an assembly of body parts that may be concealed, amputated or relocated. Unlike Lacan's "jubilant" ideal subject in whom the mirror image inaugurates the psychic dynamic of identification, the image in the mirror brings into effect in the transsexual an anguishing gendered disidentification, one which begins the transgendered identity story. As the mirror distorts

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and lies, representing the not-me, it is this specular image which motivates the quest for somatic "correction," that is, the transsexual plot. Transsexual autobiographers often describe a return to the mirror and their endeavors to bring the faulty pre-transition specular image into alignment with an already felt, already gendered integral body image. Canary Conn, Katherine Cummings and Renée Richards relate scenes of childhood crossdressing in front of the mirror, mostly furtive moments, although sometimes, as in the case of Cummings and Richards, validated, even encouraged by a sister and / or mother. The *crossdressed* image serves as an attempt to *re-dress* that first distorted reflection. The narratives then chart the increasing drive on the part of the transsexual subject to make this redressing both less evanescent and less private. As a teenager, Cummings constructs a self-timing mechanism out of cotton thread and a wind-up key for a cheap Kodak camera, allowing her to take self-portraits. These photographs serve to provide "some concrete evidence of my rare moments of femininity" (13): "Cumbersome and slow but for the first time I could make permanent images of my stolen moments" (14). More commonly, the transsexual autobiographer seeks to realize this crossdressed mirror image by seeing it reflected in the eyes of others, by going public with it: Caroline Cossey and Jayne County describe early ventures wearing make-up and feminizing clothing out. Once transformed from the young Dick into Renée, Richards (Raskind) wanders Manhattan, all dressed up with nowhere to go, in the quest only for public recognition of herself (himself) as a woman: "My times as Renée were all form and no substance. . . . Renée would go nowhere and come from nowhere" (69). The form itself, the image, as it is reflected by the other, is what matters.

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Mirror stages are featured heavily in transsexual autobiographies because they symbolize schematically the transsexual transition; they anticipate with stunning accuracy the transsexual plot to follow, namely, the specific bodily alterations the subject undergoes. One powerful example of such a proleptic moment before the mirror can be found in Martino's autobiography. Indeed, the following scene is introduced (engendered) with Martino shaving his (her) pubic hair.[4] As the young girl Marie, Martino places an enema nozzle over his (her) clitoris to improvise a penis on his (her) naked body before the mirror. This act prefigures in the imaginary (the mirror) his acquisition of a "real" fleshly penis which is recounted in the penultimate chapter of his autobiography and entitled "Phalloplasty." According to this narrative sequence, the childhood moment "justifies" the later surgery by naturalizing it -- assuring us (or at least attempting to) of the value of the surgical procedure in spite of its horrendous details. The childhood mirror scene suggests that the penis should have been there all along, that it was already an authentic part of Martino's felt body image. The narrative of Martino's transsexuality and this autobiography appears to be driven toward its natural conclusion.

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[4] In female-to-male autobiographies, shaving surpasses crossdressing as a before-the-mirror activity. "To the big mirrored door in our bathroom, I was secretly to reveal my true self as the male I knew myself to be. Here behind the locked door, I was to cover my face with Pa's shaving cream, work up a fine lather, and shave, fully convinced this would sprout a beard" (Martino 7). See also Hewitt's remarks on his pleasure in shaving: the photographic plate entitled "Shaving is such a thrill," and in the text, *passim*. Male-to-females also include shaving-in-the-mirror scenes, although of course their significance is quite the inverse. See n. 7 in this chapter and the opening of my next citation from Richards.

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In an episode comparable because it serves to prefigure the entire plot of her autobiography, Richards narrates her (his) crossdressing before a hotel mirror as a magical transformation, an alchemization, of the young jock Dick into the elegant Renée:

> After shaving my body, I would begin the makeup. Slowly my young man's face would alter, and the mirror would begin to reflect the face of a different character -- similar but redefined. After this, Renée would be stronger, more present, but the figure in the mirror would still be Dick wearing a mask. . . . Next I would obliterate Dick's genitals. In the pain of this process, Renée grew stronger. This sacrifice was for her. Still, Dick remained, a rather foolish figure with whatever tape or string contraption was used that evening in full sight and his face painted like a woman's. . . . Panties and perhaps a panty girdle would hide the hated apparatus, leaving only a smooth, feminine contour between my legs. Renée loved that. . . . Dick was further away than ever, receding into uneasy oblivion previously inhabited by Renée. When the undergarments were in turn covered by the dress, only one step remained: the placement of my wig. This was the crowning moment. As I lowered it lovingly onto my head, I felt my feminization was completed. With those tresses framing my face, Renée was absolutely in control. (68-69)

As this moment anticipates, Richards's autobiography will go on to dramatize her transition precisely in these terms of the vanquishing of Dick by Renée, a struggle played out between two characters on the stage of the autobiographical subject's body and psyche.

Renée's emergence and Dick's disappearance is represented as thoroughly entangled in the specular, in what's visible (and what's not) in the mirror. Dick's disappearance has the double entendre of a pun, a doubling made possible precisely through the presence of the mirror: as (his) dick disappears in the mirror -- taped back and concealed under panties, girdle and dress -- Renée appears in the mirror. This construction of Richards's (Raskind's) transsexuality through the specular and the (in)visibility of her (his) genitalia resurfaces the day after her gender reassignment surgery when her surgeon

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returns to inspect his work: "'Let's see what we've got here or, more accurately, what we don't got here'" (283). When Richards complains, that, of course, she can't see "it," Dr. Granato produces a hand-held mirror:

> He grabbed it and proudly lined up the reflection so that I could see it. What I saw was essentially what I had seen many times between the legs of the women with whom I'd been intimate -- a normal-looking introitus but incredibly distinctive because it was mine. I had the doctor hold the mirror at all angles so that I could see it from every possible perspective. My pubic area had been shaved for the operation, so I had a clear view of all the structures, the clearest I've ever had; there were not even any sutures visible. Dr. Granato stood by like a proud father, obviously relishing my delight. Finally I laid my head back on the pillow.
>
> "I was afraid to look."
>
> "I know, he said, "that's why I made you." He smiled smugly and asked a needless question. "How do you like it?"
>
> "Fine," I said. I'm sure he knew that it was an understatement. (283-284)

While the surgeon cracks his joke about the female genitalia as lack (Renée wearily wondering "how often he'd made that joke" [283]), Renée sees reflected back at her not the absence of his joke but an arrangement of something quite material -- "all the *structures*" -- of "a normal-looking introitus." The maneuverable mirror allows her to see her new genitals and to recognize them with delight -- here is Lacan's jubilation! -- as her own ("incredibly distinctive because it was mine"). With the removal of dick / Dick, the traumatic intrasubjective split is healed; on release from the hospital, Renée "just felt like Renée, the person I knew I had been all along" (286). In Richards's account, the "introitus" itself is intriguingly ascribed this sense of a healed split, an integrity, a whole rather than the hole of the surgeon's joke, with no joins or "sutures" apparent. The word introitus -- where we might expect vagina -- makes us pause. An introitus to what? "Introitus" suggests that what Renée sees here is just the beginning, the entrance to even

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more complex and delightful "structures." What *further*, we might well ask, might Renée have seen with the curved reflective surface of a speculum?[5]

Mirror scenes in transsexual autobiography mark the different stages in the transsexual plot. They symbolize transition as a progression toward the moment when the subject can finally identify (with) herself in the specular image, when she is not "afraid to look," when she considers herself to have achieved an integral coherent gender identity (body reflecting body image). The narrative of Nancy Hunt's autobiography, Mirror Image: The Odyssey of a Male-to-Female Transsexual is organized, as its title suggests, as a quest for this ideal reflection of self, troped by the mirror image. Hunt's changing experience of the mirror charts her transsexual trajectory. Each mirror episode in the text centers on a literal mirror, but also figuratively represents Hunt's shifting transsexual identity -- her transition itself. While attempting to live as a man, Hunt relates this episode of seeing her- (him-) self reflected in the officers' mess mirror:

> At one end of the street stood company headquarters and the latrine, at the other the mess hall and a full-length mirror on whose frame were imprinted the words *I am a tough, rugged, fighting Infantryman.* At first when I studied my reflection -- hollow-chested, stoop-shouldered -- I laughed self-consciously, but before the training cycle had ended, I believed the mirror's words. (61; italics in original)

The mirror would seek to construct the looker as the ideal subject of American military masculinity by inserting his specular image into this frame (literally framing him). The sentence inscribed on the frame is designed to appear spoken by -- and thus in its turn to speak -- his specular image. The looker is then expected to identify with his own

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reflection. The dynamic promises to be considerably more economical and ideologically effective than that which would require the looker to identify with the representation of an other -- a statue or a picture of a soldier, for example. At first, however, Hunt sees only incongruity between her (his) mirror image and the proposed ideal subject: she (he) fails to identify her (his) reflection with the inscription. And even when she (he) starts to believe in these words, as she tells the reader at the end of the passage, her (his) own disidentificatory relation as a transsexual to her (his) male specular image does not produce the unambivalent subject the mirror desires. For Hunt (as for other male-to-female transsexuals who seek refuge from their female identification by the "flight into hypermasculinity"), her (his) performance as a man, however successful, remains a masquerade.[6] There remains at this point something ineluctable in the mirror image that is not-me. The design of the army mirror has of course not anticipated the (transsexual) subject who feels split off from her (his) own specular image in the first place.

Hunt's narrative goes on to document the transsexual's "odyssey" in terms of a quest for the mirror image that reflects her body image. Several subsequent mirror episodes in her autobiography illustrate that cross-dressing before the mirror brings her

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[5] The mirror-enabled look at the newly constructed vagina recurs in other MTF autobiographies: see Caroline Cossey, My Story 99; Conn 317; Julia Grant 233

[6] G. R. Brown's formula, the "flight into hypermasculinity" appears in Leah Cahan Schaefer and Connie Christine Wheeler's "Treatment of Gender Identity Disorders." Schaefer and Wheeler define it as a male-to-female's "attempt to eradicate this [female-identified] inner self by excessive involvement in male-dominated behavior" (15). Other male-to-female autobiographers who document this "flight" and thematize these periods of living the hypermasculine in terms of a masquerade include: April Ashley, Cummings, Jane Fry, Julia Grant, and Richards all (!) as navy servicemen; Roberta Cowell as a fighter

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some relief (redressing that transsexual split), but at the same time brings into cruel relief the maleness of her (his) body: "I would dress as a woman and gaze at my reflection in my mother's bedroom mirror. That lean, hard body, decked out in nylons and ruffles! It was obscene, ludicrous, disgusting. The incongruity could never be repaired. I could never be a woman, no matter how passionately I wished it" (68). As Hunt alters this body, shaving her (his) mustache, undergoing electrolysis, and eventually dressing and living full-time as a woman, she (he) as looking subject is more able to identify with the increasingly feminized specular image:

> I looked at my face in the mirror, the face of a man who dressed up in drag, who danced with other men and kissed them in a way that anyone aware of my anatomic sex would unhesitatingly label homosexual, a man who was taking the most frightful risks with an ideal marriage, who almost daily stood in danger of arrest for violating the city's cross-dressing ordinance -- I looked at this face and smiled and said, "I like you." It was a novel experience. (134)

This gradual self-identification enables her to transcend increasingly the incongruity between sex and gender (the "obscenity" is here the specter of homosexuality) as she continues to effect changes to her anatomy with hormones and surgery to align it with her image. The progression of her physical and social transition as a male-to-female is schematically correlated to these mirror stages, mutually determining and determined by what she sees within the mirror's frame. When her career as a journalist sends her to Cairo where the process of electrolysis is interrupted, Hunt sees in the return of her beard in the mirror the return of "the enemy . . . [her] damnable male identity":

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pilot, racing car driver and engineer; Christine Jorgensen, as fighter pilot; and Morris, as army officer and mountaineer.

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> In the bathroom, too, I studied my face in the mirror. My beard was beginning to grow again. I watched it as a leper might watch encrustations invading his healthy skin. . . that damned beard! No matter how closely I shaved, in six hours time it would show its dark shadow on my face. In Chicago, I had had to time my public appearances like Cinderella, always conscious of the clock, knowing that in six hours I would have to scuttle into hiding like a fugitive. Ellen [Hunt's second wife] and I had come to refer to this phenomenon as "turning back into a pumpkin." Each whisker burned out at the roots had seemed like a tiny step toward salvation. (128)[7]

In addition, Hunt's autobiography refigures her (his) female lovers as her (his) symbolic ideal female self: the Woman she (he) desires to become more than have, or have in a way that can incorporate becoming. Of Ellen, the companion who practically and symbolically enables her (his) transition, Hunt writes she "was so entirely woman -- in body, dress, and behavior -- that my love had become mixed with envy. I wanted to be like her" (108); of Maria, an intermarital lover, explicitly positioning her in her (his) metaphor as her (his) mirror image: "I'm sure she supposed that I wanted to penetrate her, and indeed I did, though what I wanted was to blend my body with hers, to stand inside that lovely frame and feel the world through her senses, to gaze at my mirror reflection from her dark eyes and know myself as a woman" (91). Instead of wanting Woman to function as Other, Hunt wants her to function as self.[8] These encounters also

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[7] Dick Raskind's beard has a comparable significance in Richards's autobiography. His analyst's suggestion that, as Dick, he grow a beard to keep his feminine identification in tow, proves effective: "As my beard waxed full, Renée waned" (140). Inversely, when Raskind is required by the navy to shave the beard, Richards writes that as Dick, "[I] could almost feel Renée stirring as I whacked away at it. Each time I sent a razorful of lather and beard spinning down the drain, the gloom settled more deeply around me" (142).

[8] Hunt's dedicatory note, however, underlines what is apparent from her story: that, at some point, the relationship of mirroring breaks down between her and her great love,

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serve as mirror stages in the progression of Hunt's life-plot, of her transsexuality *as* narrative. Appropriately, the narrative reaches closure with the image of Hunt's attainment of full identification with her specular image, a symbolic image (admittedly schmaltzy) of her "finding herself": "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 least I am me, a woman . . ." (263). The story is over: I am what I am; the mirror finally reflects me.

iii. Quick Rewind: The Spec(tac)ular Transsexual

In a particularly systematic way, Hunt's autobiography deploys the mirror image to signal the turning points in the plot of the transsexual narrative. When Bettina Rheims's arrangement of a series of photographs of Kim Harlow reverses this plot, the effect is profoundly unsettling. Rheims's photographs of the breathtakingly beautiful French male-to-female transsexual, Kim Harlow, together with Harlow's own autobiographical vignettes, make up the brief text, Kim. The nature of this collaboration between photographer and autobiographical subject makes this text unique among transsexual autobiographies. Although the majority of transsexual autobiographies include photographs of the author at various stages in transition, in Kim, the photographs

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Ellen, for Hunt's gains as a woman constitute Ellen's losses. The note reads: "To Ellen. Who lost her life while saving mine" (n. p.). The dynamic between Hunt and Woman shifts from identity to chiasmus (which, in its reversal of the first term, captures the true relation of self to mirror image).

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dominate the written text.[9] First, there are 22 full pages of photographs compared with 27 pages of Harlow's writings, and on many of the latter, the text covers only part of the page; the text appears to supplement the photographs rather than the photographs serving to illustrate the text. Second, whereas Rheims's photographs are highly stylized and finished, with Kim as photographic subject carefully posed, Harlow's writings have a fragmented and abbreviated quality. The note opening the text, signed "Her mother, brothers and sisters," states that Harlow "was unable to finish her story. Her last lines are about a friend of hers who fell to AIDS. And it was that illness which cut short this work, her work" (5). Harlow's narrative is quite literally unfinished. Finally, the location of Rheims's name after Harlow's on the title page elevates Rheims's status unabashedly to that of a co-author of Kim. And there can be no doubt that Rheims was clearly more than instrumental in getting the work published: in one of the notes that appear italicized and signed "B.R." in the margins at various points throughout the text, Rheims tells of the promise she made to Kim that the book would be published: she evidently had access to the appropriate resources to enable her to make and keep such a promise.

If Kim is dominated by the visual, perhaps Rheims is more than co-author. For of Kim the representational subject (as distinct from Kim the autobiographical subject), she is

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[9] Among those autobiographies which do not contain photographs are: Morris's Conundrum (although on the Henry Holt 1986 edition, Jan Morris appears in the author's photo-slot on the rear cover); and autobiographies written under pseudonyms, Jerry / Jerri McClain's To Be a Woman and Jane Fry's Being Different. In spite of the text's emphasis on the visual, Nancy Hunt's Mirror Image also contains no photographs. While the reader is not told that "Nancy Hunt" is a pseudonym, this is implicit in her narrative's concealment of her former (male) name and its claims that she was / is a well-known

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without doubt sole author, her photographs all producing the transsexual as model-perfect, killer-sexy. Kim is presented wearing little, but just enough: plunging-front sequined and cutaway fishnet bodysuits, lace bra, panties, stockings and suspenders, serving to reveal perfect breasts and, in one, the top of a perfect crotch. These shots allow Kim Harlow a subjectivity in addition to her transsexuality, which, while of contestable value for some genetic women, is of great strategic worth to the transsexual: that of a beautiful and "real-looking" woman.

The effect of the series of 16 photographs that close the book is more ambivalent. In Harlow's own words, in these photos "Bettina does tell my story but backwards. First you see me looking really feminine and sensual, going out, walking around in a big hotel, then in my room in a négligée, in my lingerie, then naked, then bit by bit you see me gradually lose my composure and cry. You see me taking off my make-up and at the end I'm dressed as a boy" (8). The photographs restage Harlow's narrative in reverse, transforming her from woman to boy -- not man, as the last four shots of Kim crossdressed as male (pinstriped suit and white shirt but, with none too subtle symbolism, no tie) show, a still beautiful and sexy androgynous boy.[10] Significantly, Rheims introduces this series with one of those marginal notes by remarking that Kim "had always refused to show me photos taken of herself when she was still Alexandre" (24). The series represents Rheims's "reinvention" of Alexandre on the body of Kim, with Rheims supplying performatively what Harlow withholds in reality. While (Because?) Harlow, the

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American journalist: the elision of photographs appears to be part of the larger scheme of the author's not "coming out."

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autobiographical subject, would keep the "real" Alexandre hidden, Rheims's authority / authorship reproduces an imaginary version of "him" doubled by Kim.

The middle seven shots in the series are particularly startling. They represent Kim in the stages of reverse "transition" -- from girl to boy: Kim faces what is presumably the hotel bathroom mirror, her top now off and jewelry gone, her eye make-up streaking her face (remember she notes crying during this scene), adding to her increasingly anxious look. As she scoops her hair back, she seems to be trying to conceal with her hands and her arms as much as possible of her breasts. These gestures look as awkward as they sound: Kim appears uncomfortable, almost gawky. The central shots represent Kim at her least posed, most naked -- her most "real." The role of the mirror in these shots is crucial. Only in one of these photographs can we see the frame of the mirror, but this keys us in to the fact that all seven "transition" pieces are shot of the reflection in the mirror, the specular image, and not of Kim, the looking subject herself. The clue to this is the radiator, which remains on the bottom right corner of every shot, including the one which reveals the mirror's frame. If Rheims had shot Kim directly in any of the others, the radiator would have appeared on the bottom left. Further evidence is that, in two of the shots, Rheims catches the subject's non-specular arm within the photographic frame, a blur (for the focus is on the reflection in the mirror) partially concealing the mirror image itself. Rheims must have shot all these photographs from some point to the right of (the referential) Kim, focusing solely on her reflected image.

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[10] Although I see a beautiful boyish girl.

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The mirror is thus crucial to these shots, its function to stage the reversal of Kim's narrative. Given Harlow's (trans)sex in the photographic present and her refusal to show past photographs of the "real" Alexandre to Rheims, the representation of Alexandre can only take place in the imaginary. In that Harlow understands herself to have completed her transsexual narrative and resists replaying it for Rheims, Rheims's must resort to *her* imaginary in order to re-present Kim as a transsexual, to distinguish her from neonatal femaleness, and thus read through the gendered passing she does so well. The past that constitutes the subject may only be staged in the imaginary (of which the mirror is emblematic), reinvented in the photograph. The featuring of the specular in the photographs first of all inadvertently reminds us of the spectacular quality -- precisely this staginess -- of the reverse transition. And as if to underscore this point, Harlow's writing notes the imaginary or performative quality of the shoot, as she speaks of her disidentification with her/himself as photographic subject, "the somebody else," the boy Alexandre -- or here, not even Alexandre, but "Kim dressed as a boy": "Because in fact [dressing as a boy] was a bit hard, but at the same time *it was artificial, and I knew that even though it was me, it was really somebody else.* It was good that all my experience was behind it -- I was just acting, and I was really having fun . . . and it was exciting, and moving to see . . . to see how I behaved towards Kim dressed as a boy" (10; my italics; ellipses in original). "It was good that all my experience was behind it": it was good, I interpret this as saying, less because having been a "real" boy made Kim a better actor, than because this recreated moment of boy-ness was already over in the narrative of her transsexuality; the experience was over, past -- "behind" -- the imaginary recreation, and thus made it less "hard."

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It is thus more than ironic that Rheims reverses Harlow's narrative and makes present this past in the imaginary; it is extremely disturbing. Unlike the photographs in other transsexual autobiographies which function to represent the material changes (the transsex somatic stages) in the transsexual's journey, Rheims's series stages Harlow's transsexuality as a synchronic gender performance: it rescripts transsexuality from narrative of successive stages leading to a livable end to spectacle, a performance in which the subject's history is reversible and replayable. Not without a certain squeamishness toward their subject, the photographs resignify the alterations to the material body that constitute Harlow's transsexual history in the form of a single change of clothes. The somatic dimension of "sex change" is safely sublimated as gender change; the transsexual changes sexed bodies like a set of clothes. This dynamic of sublimation is something that, again, Harlow notes in the photographs: "The pictures are very beautiful -- they're not autobiographical, but they all have something in them that I've lived through. When I saw them I said to myself that *they were a kind of sublimation of everything I'd experienced*, it was really . . . I can really see myself in them. A wonderful gift from Bettina" (8; my italics; ellipsis in original). Her ellipsis itself speaks for the photographs' collective effect: that of the ellipsis of Harlow's life-experience as a transsexual, its sublimation to watchable performance .

In chapter one, I suggested that Butler, and the filmmaker Jennie Livingston, sublimated or transubstantiated transsexuality in their reading of Venus Xtravaganza. We discover in Rheims's photographs of Kim Harlow what appears to be symptomatic of the larger postmodern "assumption" of the transsexual: the subject can only be apprehended in / as the imaginary, *in* the performative *as* a performative. The effect is to displace the

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real of transsexuality, its somatic materiality, and its history to a less disturbing, more playful imaginary. This brings me to my second point concerning the significance of the mirror in Rheims's photographs. While Kim's beautiful transsexual body is quite clearly the object of the camera's gaze throughout the book -- and most likely the book's *raison d'être* -- when this body is at its most vulnerable and expressive, at its most "real," the mirror functions to refract our gaze; it suggests that this body can't be, *shouldn't* be, looked at directly, but this doesn't prevent our vicarious looking via the specular image. The double in the mirror serves to hold at bay the real subject (and prevents her returning our look) without blocking our view. We get to look; but we don't have to look directly or in too much detail. Like Medusa's head in Perseus's shield, the "real" transsexual can only be looked at and "captured" in her reflection, in the imaginary.

Visual representations of the transsexual popularly locate her / him before a mirror.[11] That they do so results in our perceiving the transsexual most often in this doubled mode. This suggests that we understand the transsexual as always already a doubled subject. This conceptualization of the transsexual as already doubled surely stems from our anxieties about his / her trans-sex: precisely about how that "his / her" formula can refer to the *same* subject. The bar between pronouns would seem to function for the transsexual not as a barrier keeping discrete genders but as a mediating line to be straddled. Trans-sex poses for the cultural imagination the problem of the sexed doubling

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[11] See the photographs of transsexuals in Nan Goldin for instance, and, to show that it is not solely male-to-females who are subjected to the specular (although possibly as women, they are more so), the clips of female-to-male, Max Valerio Wolfe shaving in Monika

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of a single subject: Rheims cannot picture Kim Harlow without also "seeing" Alexandre, in spite of Harlow's own concealment of him. At the same time, the doubling up of sex within an individual -- the very possibility of "sex change" -- is incompatible with our most basic assumptions about sex: that everyone is / has one, with the emphasis on one. [12] Transsexuality disrupts this understanding of the singularity of a subject's sex identity and would seem to transcend sexual difference altogether, or transition its divide. Our response to the apparent contradiction, the freakiness, of transsexuality -- the "evidence" that sex can be and is being changed -- is to displace the transsexual's "double sex" to the imaginary, an effect that the location of him / her before the mirror seeks to achieve.

What does it mean to consign transsexuality to the domain of the imaginary? As Catherine Millot writes in her Lacanian thesis on transsexuality, Horsexe, if sexual difference, "which owes much to symbolic dualisms, belongs to the register of the *real*," we grasp transsexuality as "a response to the dream of forcing back, and even abolishing, the frontiers of the *real*" (15; italics in original). In its passing between dualisms, transsexuality can take place only in the imaginary, in the realm before sexual difference. While for Millot, as psychoanalyst theorizing transsexuality from a safe point outside of it, this formulation is an appealing way to propose breaking down those (sexual) binaries of the "*real*" (does Millot mean the symbolic?), for the transsexual living it, the value of

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Treut's "Female Trouble," and of the fictional female-to-male transsexual who obsessively checks his face in rearview and other mirrors in Treut's earlier film, Virgin Machine.

[12] For a fascinating discussion of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century representations of hermaphrodites as twins and the reproductions of some of these plates, see Epstein: 93-99. Irigaray's "This Sex Which is Not One" plays on and intervenes in these same phallogocentric assumptions about the singularity of sex.

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being read as an imaginary figure is less certain. The endproduct of Millot's theory is to suggest that the transsexual is of neither sex, of the "sex of angels": beyond sexual difference. In the words of one transsexual, read all too eagerly and uncritically by Millot as a position statement rather than a critique of the cultural othering (stigmatization / romanticization) of transsexuality: "'Transsexuals are neither men nor women, but something else. . . . Transsexuals are mutants'" (130). In its proteiformity, Millot proposes, transsexuality "may even constitute a symptom of our civilization" (16). Yet I would rather propose Millot's thesis, like Rheims's photographs, as symptomatic of postmodernism's sublimation of what's real in transsexual experience. Living thus, in the register of the imaginary, "horsexe" (beyond sex), is neither feasible nor, for that matter, especially desirable. Yet on the level of representation, it would seem difficult to figure the transsexual outside this imaginary doubleness.

Rheims's photographs of Kim ascribe to the transsexual precisely this quality of imaginary doubleness: Kim is both Kim and Alexandre, boy and girl; and as to be both is impossible in reality, she must be of neither sex -- "something else" altogether. For Rheims, the specter of transsexuality as a freaky doubling haunts Kim's "real-looking" beauty, and Rheims's photographs ensure this is conveyed in their quick rewind to Alexandre. The mirror in the photographs works to sustain this doubleness. It signifies the other's perception of -- and perhaps envy for -- the transsexual's failure to achieve *identity*, to escape from the web of blurred and doubled images into the symbolic world of defined and clear-cut identities.

What remains most disturbing in Rheims's photographs is her reversal of Harlow's transsexual narrative. She uses the mirror to convey the notion that Harlow's

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transsexuality could have gone either way, could yet go either way. Such an implication subverts the transsexual's own sense of his / her "true" gender identity, and his / her scripting of a singular one-way trajectory (in the life and the autobiography) to achieve this. In contrast with Rheims's photographs of Kim, the mirror image in transsexual autobiographies is deployed to chart the subject's progression toward achieving identity, toward becoming "real," realizing his / her imaginary. The narrative goal of the autobiographies is, manifestly, to resolve that gendered doubleness, to represent the celebratory moment at which the subject is finally not "afraid to look" in the mirror.

iv. Writing Subject, Medical Object: Transsexual Autobiography as Case History

> If I sat down to write a case history of an imaginary transsexual, I could not come up with a more provocative set of circumstances than my childhood.
>
> Renée Richards, The Renée Richards Story

In his thoughts on autobiography's cultural and historical conditions and limits, Georges Gusdorf suggests that autobiography finds its origins in homologous moments in phylogenetic and ontogenetic histories, namely when the subject "seizes on himself for object" (32). In both histories, the discovery of the mirror emblematizes the subject's new capacity for reflexive consciousness. The invention of the Venetian silver-backed mirror at the end of the middle ages and the child's discovery of his specular image at the age of six months serve as such moments in the parallel universes of the subject of history and the history of the subject -- moments which make possible the autobiographical act; mythic

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origins that mark the subject's capacity to tell the story of "himself."[13] As feminist autobiography criticism has responded ingeniously to Gusdorf's exclusive gendering of this human subject in both mirror stages, this (his)story is neither universal nor itself ahistorical. The inclusion of women's autobiographies in the canon has gone hand in hand with the rewriting of this history on a number of points: the postulation of different engendering moments; the specification at all times of the autobiographical subject; and, most importantly for me here, the theory that that the genre is fundamentally implicated with ideological assumptions about gender and sexuality. Taking their cue from these premises of feminist autobiography criticism, these next two sections of my chapter examine the ways in which transsexual autobiography is complexly enmeshed with the medico-ideological construction of transsexuality.

What makes possible the telling of the transsexual story by the subject him- / herself? What are the "conditions and limits" of transsexual autobiography? If we specify Gusdorf's questions for the subject of transsexual autobiography, we must return to the medical case history in order to locate the beginnings of this self-told story of transsexuality. On the level of the history of the transsexual as discursive subject, transsexual autobiography finds its origins in the case histories of inverts that throng fin-de-siècle sexology. These sexological case histories, an odd concoction of the psychological and the physiological "symptoms" of transgendering before the advent of modern psychiatry and psychoanalysis, depended on presenting subjects' autobiographical

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narratives to construct a nosology of inversion. In a circular fashion, the sexological category of inversion at the same time enabled subjects to shape their lives and autobiographies in accordance with this authorized narrative and to organize their transgendered, sometimes specifically transsexual, desires and identifications into a discrete identity, that of the invert. As this identity of invert gave way to its modern transgendered equivalents (transsexual, transvestite, gender disordered, intersexual), those sexological case histories which reproduce the presenting inverts' narratives in their own voices represent the first published transgendered, and sometimes distinguishably transsexual, autobiographical narratives. This relation of mutual production and enablement, of interdependence, between individual transsexual subjects and transsexuality as medical condition has been sustained throughout to the present through the workings of autobiography.

My description of the (discursive and individual) emergence of the transsexual differs from Bernice Hausman's most sharply on this subject of autobiography. Remarkably, even in her chapter focusing specifically on transsexual autobiographies, Hausman does not consider the crucial function of autobiographical narrative in the construction of transsexual subjectivity; she does not address the transsexual as a subject in or of autobiographical narrative. Her critical history instead describes the transsexual's becoming through a kind of instantaneous and performative self-designation: the subject emerges as transsexual (again in discursive and individual history) simply through the

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[13] The importance of Lacan to the psychoanalytic thread in Gusdorf's story of the human subject is evidenced in a footnote citing the former's "Mirror Stage" essay: see Gusdorf 32 n.1.

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demand for sex change: "[T]he demand for sex change was instantiated as the primary symptom (and sign) of the transsexual" (110). This supposition massively oversimplifies the complex and fraught process of producing a narrative necessary to become a transsexual. The transsexual has never been granted "sex change" on the basis of a bald demand. Rather, s/he is required to produce a narrative, to tell a story that demonstrates convincingly his or her transgendered subjectivity over a lifetime. Surely as a consequence of remaining closed off to the notion of transsexuality as a narrative, an autobiographical act, Hausman presents as overdetermined the medical construction of the transsexual and bars his / her role as actor / author. She claims that in their demand for sex change, "transsexuals demonstrate that their relationship to [medical] technology is a dependent one" (110). Yet the relations between transsexual subject and the medical field specializing in transsexuality were and continue to be interconstitutive, though not infrequently also in contestation. The transsexual authors the medical narrative of transsexuality as much as s/he has been author(iz)ed by it and yet sometimes authors him- or herself at an angle to it. Given Hausman's acknowledged debt to Foucault's model of discursive history, it is surprising that Changing Sex does not consider the relations between subject and technology in their truly complex, contradictory, light.[14]

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[14] "At the broadest level, my work participates in what may be called the 'Foucauldian paradigm,' which I understand to involve the analysis of shifts in epistemological paradigms as a way of interpreting and marking the emergence of new forms of being human. In this sense, Foucault's work on madness, on the emergence of clinical medicine, on the development of prison systems in the nineteenth century, and (most famously) on the history of sexuality are [sic] foundational to the enterprise I undertake in this book" (viii).

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The first book-length transsexual autobiographies appear to have been those published in England in 1954 by Roberta Cowell and Robert Allen.[15] In truth, however, neither autobiographer terms him- / herself transsexual, presenting instead under the rubric of intersexuality and hermaphroditism. Both autobiographies make remarkably similar sets of contradictory claims about the nature of their "sex changes." While they contextualize their transgendered conditions within a medicalized framework of intersexuality / hermaphroditism, both authors also describe their "sex changes" as, in Allen's case, produced, in Cowell's, exacerbated, by the same external cause: the second world war. Their gendered conditions are rendered at the same time essential and constructed. Implying his maleness all along, Allen writes that his sex was wrongly assigned as female at birth.[16] Yet he makes oblique references to somatic changes spontaneously produced by his experiences during the war (he worked in a London station as a porter!) which determined his decision to switch from living as a woman to living as a man. Although the substance of these changes remains undetailed, Allen states categorically and mysteriously

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[15] A transsexual biography was published in Danish in 1933 (translated into English in 1953): Neils Hoyer's Man Into Woman: An Authentic Record of a Change of Sex; The True Story of the Miraculous Transformation of a Danish Painter, Einar Wegener. Wegener's / Lili Elbe's surgery included the implantation of ovaries: s/he died soonafter. Michael Dillon, the first known transsexual to undergo hormone treatment in conjunction with surgery, wrote his autobiography in the sixties but it never found a publisher (Hodgkinson 189).

[16] "I became Joyce Allen and my birth as a girl was registered in this way by my father. It is not only conceivable but a certainty that a less cursory examination of a mewling infant all those years ago would have revealed much more than an inkling of the truth, which was, that although Nature had treasoned against me, and left me incomplete in my maleness, I was still a male and not a female child" (30).

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first, that they left him "literally and incontrovertibly a man" (his narrative includes a doctor's letter which certifies that, on examination, he was found a "potent" male), and second, that they occurred without hormonal or surgical intervention -- "I was a man of my own making" (79). Cowell also maintains that she had intersexual characteristics from the outset, more psychological than physiological, but that these characteristics became marked on her body after the war. Following the Harley Street sexologist who first examined her, Cowell ascribes these changes (they seem to have consisted largely of gynecomastia) to "an alteration in gland balance, perhaps in gland structure . . . set off by a series of emotional upsets" caused by the war (74). Cowell's "sex reversal" is however less miraculous than Allen's (Milbourn x). She underwent hormone treatment and, in 1951, apparently the first operation of its kind in England, gender reassignment surgery; although, given that Cowell represents these medical interventions as simply "encouraging" what "nature" had already initiated, the term "reassignment" is somewhat of a misnomer: "hormone therapy, sexual plastic surgery, and surgical endocrinotherapy . . . meant that there was no longer any need to stand by helplessly whilst nature took its course" (79).

Despite the fact that even Allen's narrative demonstrates his dependence on medical certification of his "true sex" as male in order to alter his legally-assigned status from female, the larger effect of the deployment of intersexuality in both of these earliest book-length autobiographies is to minimize the medical construction of the subjects'

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gender condition and to naturalize the "change."[17] It is quite possible, moreover, that these early enlistments of intersexuality signify the authors' attempt to contrast their cases with that of renowned transsexual, Christine Jorgensen; for even though Jorgensen in her autobiography deploys the discourse of intersexuality to distinguish herself from homosexuals and transvestites, Jorgensen was indisputably the first transsexual of worldwide renown. Jorgensen returned to the United States from gender reassignment surgery in Denmark in 1953, the year before the publication of Allen's and Cowell's autobiographies. Allen and Cowell might well have sought to avoid the sensationalization -- and the concomitant stigmatization -- met with by Jorgensen as a transsexual. Her case marks the beginnings of what we might now understand as the popularization, the media-ization, of transsexuality.[18] This intense international coverage of the Jorgensen story

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[17]A not uncommon strategy even in later self-labeled transsexual autobiographies: Ashley, Cossey, Christine Jorgensen and Dawn Langley Simmons all draw on the discourse of intersexuality to differing degrees to explicate their transsexuality, Ashley in a juridical context in the first British dispute on the legal sex of transsexuals, Corbett v. Corbett (1969), in a strategic attempt to legitimate via physiology the transsexual's reassigned gender. Hausman also notes this appeal to physiological intersexuality in some of the autobiographies (Cowell, Jorgensen, Conn and Martino in particular) although she understands it not so much as an understandable desire to naturalize the sex change as a deliberately disingenuous attempt to conceal the technological construction of the transsexual's sex, and the fact that the transsexual is "an engineered subject" (147).

[18] The desire to avoid comparison with Jorgensen is certainly suggested in Allen who, towards the end of his story, appears to refer to the Jorgensen case, picking up particularly on its sensationalization, only to distinguish his own from it: "[W]ithin the past few months, one phase [of sex] has suddenly aroused a widespread interest -- the phenomena of so-called 'changes of sex.' Because of my own practical experience in the matter and my medical knowledge [after his eventful stint as a porter, Allen became a radiographer] I am able to give the reader a non-sensational and subjective view of the true facts, and I will begin by asserting categorically, that there is no such thing as a change of sex. The term is completely misleading and it may well prove dangerous and unwholesome if it is allowed to go unchallenged." (116).

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introduced into the common lexicon the term transsexuality; crucially, it simultaneously brought about the professionalization of medical work on transsexuality in Denmark and the United States (the locales of Jorgensen's cultural identity as a Danish-American who underwent treatment with Christian Hamburger in Denmark).[19] While the diagnosis of "psychopathia transsexualis" was formulated in 1949 by Cauldwell, it was the attention given to Jorgensen's case that gave rise to the medico-psychological study of transsexuality as a field. Benjamin's interest in transsexuality was caught and held by Jorgensen's story in that it was a ready-made case history of a transsexual; his work, particularly The Transsexual Phenomenon of 1966, went on to define and delimit the subject, his name lending itself even today to the most professionalized medico-psychological institutions in work on transsexuality (the Harry Benjamin Standards of Care for transsexuals and the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association).

That the publicity of Jorgensen's story calcified this professionalization of medical research into transsexuality is left in no doubt in Jorgensen's autobiography, published in 1967. Benjamin's preface to the autobiography and Jorgensen's own introduction reveal the mutually productive relations between the transsexual subject and this medical field. In her introduction, Jorgensen cites a letter Benjamin wrote to her in 1965: "'Indeed,

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[19] The stigmatization and ridiculing of Jorgensen, not surprisingly since the story followed so soon after the second world war, not infrequently played on the notion of "foreignness." Martino writes that when the Jorgensen story broke, among his father's favorite wisecracks was: "Imagine going abroad and coming back a broad!" (40). The "joke" runs together the "foreignness" of transsexuality, of Jorgensen herself, of the

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Christine,' he wrote, 'without you, probably none of this would have happened; the grant, my publications, lectures, etc.'" (xiii). In its turn, Benjamin's preface works to authorize Jorgensen's transsexuality and thus her autobiography. His name alone, associated with The Transsexual Phenomenon of the year before, would have medicalized Jorgensen's narrative. More significantly, his prefatory note insists that Jorgensen's story presented in her own voice has a "medical value" not fulfilled by the professional medical reports of her transition:

> Here is an autobiography that was long overdue. Christine Jorgensen owed its writing not only to herself and her family but also to a large number of people who similarly are searching for their true identity. Christine almost certainly owed it to science and the medical profession. She was in duty bound to supplement the technical report made by her Danish physicians in the Journal of the American Medical Association in 1953 with her own account of the inner and outer events in her still rather young life. (ix)
>
> In this book Christine has written a human document of great medical value. And she has done so with extraordinarily courageous self-analysis. Her life story should forcefully support all those institutions and individuals who endorse and provide hormonal and surgical help for transsexuals. . . . (xi-xii)

Benjamin's rhetoric of "duty," of what Jorgensen as a transsexual "owes" to the medical institution, suggests that the transsexual's writing of her autobiography is the accomplishment of an unofficial but definitive contract between transsexual subject and medical profession. And in a quite transparent sense it is: Jorgensen seeks to de-sensationalize her life by presenting it stamped with Benjamin's medical explanation and seal of approval; Benjamin shores up the validity of his work by enrolling Jorgensen as

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geographical location of her gender reassignment surgery, and of (man becoming) Woman.

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representative and most importantly, *successful*, transsexual (representative crucially comes to equal successful) -- "Her life story should forcefully support all those institutions and individuals who endorse and provide hormonal and surgical help for transsexuals."[20] Benjamin's remarks frame Jorgensen's autobiography as already a case history, a transsexual *fait accompli*, one that "supplements," and even exceeds medical documents. This exchange at the beginning of Christine Jorgensen: A Personal Autobiography establishes in a published text the inter-constitutive relations between the medical institution and the transsexual subject. It not only presents the transsexual as becoming, though the autobiographical act, both medical object and writing subject, it suggests that these identities are necessarily mutually productive.

For this reason also, and not for the scale of attention surrounding her story alone, Jorgensen's is indisputably the seminal transsexual autobiography. Transsexual autobiographers make a practice of inter(trans)textuality, referring to each other's autobiographies within their own; and Jorgensen's is surely the most cited in the context of other autobiographies, functioning as a universal reference point. Furthermore, the presentation of self as simultaneously writing subject and medical object inaugurated by

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[20] Working with transsexuals was from the beginning and remains one of the most stigmatized fields in medical practice. Many health professionals, from psychoanalysts to surgeons, in their refusal to recognize transsexuality as a non-psychotic condition, continue to hold that gender reassignment is unethical and / or does not constitute proper treatment. In response to his earliest formulation for gender reassignment treatment for instance, Benjamin was accused of corroborating rather than curing psychopathic illness by performing the unthinkable -- amputating healthy tissue. (See Billings and Urban for an essay which describes and then explicitly adopts this kind of critique of gender reassignment.) It is impossible therefore to overestimate how much Benjamin needed (and

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the Jorgensen-Benjamin exchange has been made quite a tradition in transsexual autobiographies, as if, to rephrase Gusdorf here in thinking through the significance of Jorgensen and her intertextual effects, transsexual autobiography is conditional on the subject seizing her- / himself as both subject and medico-discursive object. Subsequent autobiographies have followed Jorgensen in attaching the authorizing medico-psychological preface / introduction / afterword: Thompson, for example, whose narrative doubles up on this by being prefaced by his therapist and afterworded by the director of his Gender Identity Clinic; Martino, whose Emergence is also prefaced by Benjamin. In other autobiographies, this authorizing-authoring other voice is mimicked by the text of the autobiography itself, with the same purpose of legitimating the transsexual as medical identity. Ashley, Cummings and Simmons include, respectively a chapter, pages and paragraphs focusing on the production of the transsexual as discursive identity. As might be expected, the portrait of the self as individualized subject and, simultaneously and interdependently, medico-discursive object can result in a rather split auto/biographical perspective, where the writing subject constructs her subjectivity out of her very status as medico-discursive object. The autobiographies of Conn and Hunt contain the most remarkable illustrations of this paradoxical dynamic: the enabling of the autobiographical subject by her status as medico-discursive object.

The subject as simultaneously speaking subject and discursive object structures the very framework for Conn's Canary: The Story of a Transsexual: a lecture Conn gives on transsexuality at Stanford Medical School organized by her surgeon, Dr. Lopez. The

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his present day colleagues continue to need) the successful transsexual narrative for

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autobiography begins with Conn being wheeled out on the stage in a wheelchair, shaky and queasy, bundled in blankets, still in recovery from the second stage of the procedure in her gender reassignment surgery which took place a few days (!) prior to this medical symposium. We pick up the episode again back in sequence in the penultimate chapter in the autobiography. Both to her immediate audience, the medical community in attendance at the symposium, and to her reader, Conn is positioned immediately on stage and on page as literal medico-discursive object: markedly speaking as a patient, the object of medical attention, a living specimen of the symposium's subject. Insofar as the lecture scene opens the narrative and the reader is addressed in the place of this medical audience, the autobiography redoubles or replays the construction of Conn as Transsexual. At the same time, however, it is precisely Conn's status as medico-discursive specimen that ensures her performance as speaking subject. First, again literally, Conn is invited to speak at the symposium in her capacity as Lopez's patient. Second in a more theoretical sense, Conn's autobiographical narrative is quite dependent on her construction by the medical establishment as a transsexual. When Conn writes of her debt to Lopez -- "If it weren't for a great doctor with a funny accent, I wouldn't have been there at all" -- "there" denotes most obviously her location at the medical symposium but also, the reader is made aware, her place as subject of the autobiographical narrative (317). The medical treatment of her as a transsexual makes possible this life-story, subtitled in that generic mode of so many of these autobiographies that insists on the autobiographer as a category, The Story of a Transsexual. Medical intervention founds the speaking subject of the

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legitimation of their work.

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autobiographical narrative, the "I," which inscribes itself representatively, "as a" transsexual. That Conn's talk at the medical symposium provides the containing frame for her autobiography elucidates how that transaction between medical institution and autobiographical subject -- a later variation on the Benjamin-Jorgensen original theme -- is crucial in underwriting the transsexual autobiographical contract.[21]

The opening of Hunt's book provides an even more dramatic instance of the splitting effect of the transsexual autobiographer seizing on herself as author and authored, subject and object. The scene is an operating room at the University of Virginia Medical Center; the protagonists: Elizabeth Johnson, a male-to-female transsexual, two surgeons and the autobiographer herself; the action, Johnson's gender reassignment surgery. Hunt's description embeds this medical procedure in a network of gazes, entangling these players and the reader in a complex dynamic of subjectivization and objectification. Her anesthetized body laid out on the operating table, her eyes bound closed with tape, Johnson functions as the immediate surgical object, the surgeons its actors. Hunt meanwhile watches the proceedings from within the operating theater. The audience of the scene easily outnumbers its participants, for it also includes ("because of the interest in this bizarre operation"): doctors and residents and medical students; and, adding another textual layer to this complex stage of observation, a medical illustrator producing sketches

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[21]Missing again the two-way dynamic of this transaction and the extent to which the medical practitioner requires authorization him or herself, Hausman is suspicious of the facticity of this scene: "These final comments were ostensibly made by Conn to a group of doctors, *an unlikely situation*, as doctors do not consider transsexuals to be reliable purveyors of medical theory" (234 n. 63). Actually, in this instance as throughout her

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"for possible use in medical journals and textbooks" (2). At one point, Hunt is jostled by up to "sixteen people around the operating table, jockeying for position, craning backs and necks, striving for a peek" (3). And via Hunt's description the reader is constructed as arch observer.

On two levels, the scene lays bare the "true sex" of the transsexual to this collective audience. As he arranges the surgical drapes to leave "only the perineum -- the crotch -- exposed," one surgeon perorates for his audience on the true nature of transsexuality (6). Yet while the transsexual is the object of the discursive gaze, she is at the same time its subject because Johnson functions as Hunt's mirror image, her point of identification, medical object reflecting and securing the latter's autobiographical subjectivity. A dizzying specularity characterizes the scene (Hunt the transsexual watching the surgeons construct the transsexual); this is underscored when Hunt reveals that she underwent the same procedure in the same location with the same surgeon only six months previously. The whole scene is a repeat, with Hunt now in the place of observing subject. Hunt's observation of Johnson's medical procedure might be understood as an ingenious way of making available in her narrative what cannot be documented autobiographically, revealing more of the "truth" of transsexuality than would be otherwise possible: the visual description of the transsexual's own surgery. Hunt circumnavigates the necessary autobiographical absence at the scene of surgery. Most autobiographies skip over the details of the actual surgical procedure; alternatively, some switch from the personal perspective into generic mode: "The operation consists of . . ."

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reading of the autobiographers, it is Hausman who questions the reliability and the

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That Hunt's autobiography opens with this surgery implies that this medical construction is the crucial moment in the making of the transsexual subject -- the very instance of bestowing subjectivity upon her: as Ann Bolin has suggested, the final "rite of passage." Hunt's writing of this moment appears to recognize this key authoring role of the medical institution and yet (via her own positioning at the scene as observer) sustains the transsexual as autobiographical author.

The production of the transsexual as both subject and object gets played out complexly in the passages Hunt intersperses with her description of the surgical scene. As if herself outside the event (which she both is and is not), she cites interviews from clinical authorities on transsexuality and provides a recent history of vaginal (re)construction. This process of embedding the transsexual in the discourse of transsexuality -- clinical, historical, sociocultural and folkloric -- continues as far as chapter four of the autobiography. The effect of this on the autobiographical voice is disruptive and dislocating, producing a shifting between inscribing the transsexual as autobiographical subject in the first person -- "As a transsexual, I . . ." -- and constructing her as discursive object in the third person -- "The transsexual" -- as though Hunt were speaking (like the surgeon in the theater) about an other. Unlike almost all other transsexual autobiographies -- Ashley, Cossey, County, Cummings, Feinberg, Martino, Morris, Richards, Thompson, for instance -- Hunt opens her autobiography not with her transgendered self in childhood. Hunt's story of her own life, her autobiographical narrative *per se*, does not begin until chapter four. The implication of this substantial

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authenticity of the transsexual text. See n. 37

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delay is that the writing of her transsexual autobiography is dependent upon her first approaching herself as already constructed, "as a" transsexual in a discursive context.

Of all the autobiographies, moreover, Hunt's is the most explicitly conscious of the issue of genre -- both of the transsexual as a certain type of medicalized subject and transsexual autobiography as particular kind of narrative. More so than any other autobiography -- and in most it is a common feature -- Mirror Image situates its autobiographical subject intertextually in reference to the autobiographies of other renowned transsexuals: Jorgensen, Richards and Morris for instance. Highlighting the way in which this body of transsexual autobiography both reinscribes itself in and, in a circular dynamic, reproduces the subject as transsexual, Hunt reveals that it is her reading of Morris's autobiography which motivates her seeking out Benjamin for hormones: "Morris had faced this dilemma and solved it, and given the courage and resolution, so could I. Morris had taken hormones and so could I. . . . Morris had gone to Dr. Harry Benjamin in New York, starting down the road that would end on the operating table, and I could do that too (139-140). Previous transsexual autobiographies provide a map: of course for the writing of the autobiography but more significantly for the construction of the subject as transsexual. Mirror Image's consciousness of the (inter)textuality of transsexuality, its narrativity (transtextuality), while acute, is by no means atypical.

Conn's and Hunt's enmeshing of the medical narrative of transsexuality with their respective autobiographies produces the equation of life = case history, although as autobiographical acts they are in truth *re*productions, given that the life has already been shaped into case history in the clinician's study. The case history is pathology as story, the psychiatric case history, psychopathology as story: biographical narratives that equate the

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life with disease / disorder.[22] Case histories organize pathologies into individual stories. The published transsexual autobiography may pointedly rehash the case history within its own narrative form, drawing on the lingo, the tropes, the very shape of the clinical tale to represent the autobiographical subject's own version of his / her life. Martino and Richards are most successful in achieving this. Martino traces through his autobiography an explicitly Oedipal thread, and names it as such ("A bit of Oedipus, you think?" [28]): his desire to be better than his father, to love his mother in a mode in which he sees his father as failing. Yet his borrowing from the psychoanalytic narratives of gender does not seek to legitimate or authorize his account; rather it ironizes psychoanalysis and recycles this to fund the humor in what would otherwise be too painful a story to read as it has been, according to Martino, "a painful life to live, a painful story to write" (xi). The appropriation of psychoanalytic terms and tools occurs precisely at these most "painful" moments in the narrative, introducing sufficient ironic distance to keep us reading, presenting the life provisionally precisely as "a case." For example, when his second phalloplasty starts to go wrong (the first has already been surgically removed as a failure) and the tip of his penis necrotizes, Martino must sit nightly in warm baths and "very slowly, cut away at the dead tissue" (262). In his return to it in his writing, the trauma (physical, emotional) of the act -- this literalization of the loss of the end of his desire -- can be staved off for the sake of the reader with a joke *on* psychoanalysis: "Talk about

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[22] For a discussion of case histories as narrative forms see Epstein chapters 2-3

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castration complex!" (262). The humor works to keep us going past the trauma; and the authoritative psychoanalytic narrative is made ridiculous through its literalization.[23]

In Martino and Richards, with the rescripting of the subject's life in the autobiography into archetypal clinical tale, we see the relations between the transsexual subject and the medical institution transformed. In their narratives, these transsexual autobiographers introduce an ironic space between themselves as transsexual subjects and medical professionals. For Richards, herself a star opthamological surgeon, her father and sister doctors, and most crucially, her mother a psychiatrist, the opposition between deferential transsexual self and medical authoritative other is anyway already false. The medical textbook narrative of sexual "aberrance," in this case Krafft-Ebing's Psychopathia Sexualis, is readily available in her home, there to be discovered in childhood (as by Stephen Gordon in The Well of Loneliness): the case history is already part of her *bios*. In its writing, Richards's autobiography reenacts this conflation between life-story and psychopathological case history, raiding the discourse of the psychosexual case history to give form to her story. Richards's mother, the fearsome "Dr. Bishop," is a caricature of the overbearing phallic mother, seeking to compensate for not being the son her own father wanted by becoming "more of a man" than the men she scorns. Richards's

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[23]Incredibly, Hausman also discusses this scene from Emergence in the context of humor although, as she misses Martino's play on psychoanalysis, she doesn't really get the joke: the image of Martino in the bath working on his penis remains in her mind "horrifying," a horror "only partially alleviated by his humorous comment" (168). Her response is symptomatic of her reading of the autobiographers' relation to the medical institution throughout: she doesn't find any of the ironic distance that I'm suggesting becomes possible and indeed inevitable.

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narrative portrays Dr. Bishop as in her turn responsible for transforming her daughter into a son, naming her "Michael," and emasculating her son, Dick, inaugurating his cross-dressing with an episode in which she sends him to a Halloween party as a convincing pretty little girl: "When I was a girl, Mommy loved me" (16). Mommy produces a little boy as little girl: the case history shaping Second Serve is that of the archetypal fetishist, its plot turning on such key tropes as the game of the "disappearing penis" that Michael plays on her brother, or as Dick the little boy snuggling up next to Dr. Bishop in bed in the mornings and then watching her dress, transforming herself from the "warm, soft" Mommy to the austere Dr. Bishop (7): "Every morning I experienced my mother's naked body as she softly went through her cycle. The slight sag of her breasts, the shape and color of her nipples, the soft muff of dark fur between her legs, these were as familiar to me as any of her dark flannel suits" (20).

Yet Richards's autobiography makes clear that this narrative of fetishism is only supplied retroactively, during her nine years of work as the adult Dick with psychoanalyst, Dr. Bak: such childhood memories became conscious "through anguishing sessions of analysis or after my conflicts were resolved surgically" (53). It is Dr. Bak who tells Dick that he's really just "a nice Jewish boy from Queens" who like every other man really loves his penis and cross-dresses because of the relief / pleasure in seeing that he has, after all, still got it: "[Bak] would stand over me like a great prophet and predict utter doom if I ever had my penis done away with. He reminded me constantly that my only purpose in cross-dressing was to achieve the satisfaction of seeing my male member still intact at the end of an episode" (160,139). For Bak, the Freudian, who Dick thinks even resembles Freud with his beard and cigar and Viennese-sounding Hungarian accent (a picture of

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Freud with "eyes . . . ever watchful" even dominates Bak's waiting room), Dick's escapades as Renée are apparently exemplary of Freud's deferred action theory.[24] In crossdressing, Bak seems to think, Dick as fetishist "returns" to those childhood memories of his mother's muff. Sexologist John Money at the Johns Hopkins Gender Clinic later concurs with Bak's interpretation, deciding after various psychological tests that Richards is not transsexual but transvestite. And even Harry Benjamin, in that he discontinues her hormone treatment and refuses to authorize her surgery for fear of ruining Dick's brilliant career, fails to provide an alternative narrative for Richards. This is eventually born only of the sheer strength of Renée's own will to existence.

Richards's skillful redeployment in her autobiography of all this psychoanal-ese allows her to comment on and exceed her psychosexual inscription: the autobiography revisits the case history in order to rewrite it.[25] The official narratives the clinicians devise for Richards do not so much underwrite her life-story, her transsexuality, as they would undermine it, that is, if Richards had not eventually found the means to author her own plot, both as a transsexual and as autobiographer. Richards's revisiting of the form of the case history in her autobiography should be considered not in terms of the mutually

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[24] "Nachträglichkeit": see "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis" in Muriel Gardiner, ed., The Wolf-Man.

[25] Hausman again finds no possibility of ironic distance between the clinical and the autobiographical narrative, and fails to grasp the way in which Second Serve overlays the clinical text. She writes that although "there is much to recommend Richards's autobiography to the general reader -- it is full of descriptive detail, juicy sex scenes and hot sports cars, and contains little overt discussion of medical theory or specific ideas about the transsexual condition[, t]here is, however, a lot of ad hoc psychologizing that Richards undoubtedly learns as her mother's son" (164). Hausman's general reader is not

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legitimating relations between medico-discursive narrative and transsexual autobiography that inaugurate the canon of transsexual autobiography in Jorgensen. There is certainly no sense of constructive exchange, of mutual enablement, here. On the contrary, Richards's autobiography highlights how that "contract" between medical professional and transsexual subject can never be drawn up between equally empowered subjects. For while the transsexual autobiographer gives shape to the published version of his / her life, in order to do so, the transsexual life must first be "authored" in the clinician's office, where only so many plots are stipulated. It is to this setting, the clinician's office, and the theoretical implications of these primary conditions of transsexual autobiography that I now turn.

v. Autobiography as Symptom: Diagnosing Transsexuality

> He leaned back,. "Tell me your story," he said.
>
> My mind spun. "My story." That would take all day. I was nearly fifty. What could he mean, "my story?" How could I condense it? I rambled on in a confused way, as best I could, while the doctor made notes and sometimes asked me to repeat something. I jumped from year to year and decade to decade, talking sometimes about my childhood and sometimes about my recent feelings. I was overwhelmed by the years of misery and the hours and hours of psychiatric sessions.
>
> Erica Rutherford, Nine Lives

Perhaps more than any other condition catalogued by DSM, transsexuality concerns the deliberate transformation of the material body. What most distinguishes the "gender career" of the transsexual is the actual remaking of the sexed body, its physical reshaping via hormones and surgery. Paradoxically, however, while, in its revision as

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only *not* transsexual, s/he is clearly not that concerned with transsexuality as her or his

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"Gender Identity Disorder" in 1994's DSM IV, it remains an illness, transsexuality cannot be systematically diagnosed via the body.[26] Transsexuality may well leave its inscription on the body's surface in the form of dress, hair, comportment, make-up, and so forth (those features, it seems to me, Butler intends by "bodily style"-- the "performance" of the body), but it does not manifest itself on a physiological basis. It cannot be diagnosed somatically.[27] Indeed, the presence of what might be thought of as organic transsexed markers excludes the candidate from the classification of Specific Gender Identity Disorder: DSM IV's diagnostic criteria for Specific Gender Identity Disorder insist that it cannot be "concurrent with a physical intersex condition" (538).[28]

Instead, the diagnosis of transsexuality must derive solely from the patient's narrative, from what s/he has to say about her / his sense of gender identity over time: the autobiography of the gender career. As many have noted, transsexuality must be first self-diagnosed: the subject fits his / her own life into the narrative of transsexuality; and this

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subject.

[26] Eating disorders, particularly anorexia nervosa, also concern the gendered body and often dramatically transform it but the "will" to physical transformation is the symptom of the disorder rather than the cause of the transformation itself.

I borrow the term "gender career" from psychologist, Tully. I like it because it can denote the diachronic dimension of gender identity: the shape of the entire life lived as an effect of the identity. The application of career to identity derives from the work of Erving Goffman.

I explain the revision of transsexuality in DSM III-R Gender Identity Disorder in DSM IV and comment on its implications in chapter 5.

[27] Although see chapter 3 n.17.

[28] It may be concurrent, however, with the category of "Gender Identity Disorder Not Otherwise Specified." But the point still holds that intersex excludes the candidate from the main category of G. I. D.

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act of self-diagnosis precedes, often motivates, the subject's first presentation to the clinician. Some clinicians, for example Lothstein, suggest that, in addition, the biographies of the patient narrated by significant others -- lovers, parents -- may be used in the formation of the diagnosis. As may be imagined, because such "others" frequently have deeply vested interests in the presenting subject not realizing his / her transsexuality, this stipulation can result in a fraught battle between competing narratives, where autobiography and biography, telling quite different stories about the same subject, struggle to be heard as the truth. Even though one might hope that the clinician would give priority to her patient's narrative, this is by no means always the case. The setting raises the key questions that, from the clinician's point of view, undergird the whole situation of diagnosis: how to be assured of the authenticity of the patient's autobiography? How to know via the story that s/he is really transsexual? Insofar as there are no external stable symptoms of transsexuality, no somatic markers, the presenting subject's speech, the story s/he tells of her- / him-self, constitutes the very site on which the diagnosis must depend. The autobiography itself must render up the symptoms of the disorder.

The process of diagnosing transsexuality might be represented in narratological terms. The clinician listens to the life-story for a recognizable transsexual plot, or at least some incidents that characterize the transsexual plot; she listens also for recognizable themes and tropes or rhetoric: these discursive features all constitute the symptoms of the disorder. As a kind of narratologist, the clinician analyzes the multiple life-stories with which her patients present against the backdrop of an archetypal story of transsexuality. This archetypal or master narrative is derived from DSM; perhaps it is supplemented by

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other "expert" professional narratives; hopefully, it is opened to the possibility of variation by the clinician's own sensitive intelligence and her experience (and acceptance) of difference among transsexual identities and narrative styles.[29] Most probably, however, the clinician still envisions her central task as one of attempting to map the individual autobiographies according to the "narratemes" of the master narrative.

To figure the clinician as narratologist is not to suggest that the transsexual subject has had no say in the scripting of this narrative. Both in the case of Michael Dillon in my chapter 2, and of Jorgensen in this chapter, I sought to elucidate the ways in which, historically speaking, the transsexual subject informed the shaping of sexology's original narrative. Most significantly, there is evidence to suggest that s/he has at least in part effected its revision. To take just one key instance: the difference among presenting transsexuals forced clinicians to rethink their premise of the transsexual's exclusive heterosexuality. Benjamin's original diagnostic criteria categorically barred homosexuality from transsexuality and instead figured heterosexuality as foundational to transsexuality; by contrast, the new DSM allows that transsexual desire can be homosexual (sometimes now referred to as transhomosexual), heterosexual, bisexual or asexual.[30] Intervening

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[29] Particularly in the United States, some clinicians are clearly concerned with the need to multiply the plots of transsexuality. I have found those working in New York City's Montefiore Gender Group to be exemplary. Schaefer and Wheeler, for instance, argue that the psychotherapist needs to hold at bay her preconceptualizations about presenting transgendered clients, and, most importantly, to "tailor" her therapeutic treatment according to clients' different needs ("Treatment of Gender Identity Disorders (Transsexualism)" 27 and *passim)*. See also Barbara Warren.

[30] The terms heterosexuality and homosexuality become confusing in the context of transsexuality. Benjamin used them to denote sexual desire in reference to the

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between the monolithic first narrative and the proliferation in the revised version were such individual presentations as Richards whose transsexual history did *not* include homosexual desire or practices. In her autobiography, Richards depicts Benjamin as citing her apparent "failure" to desire men as an additional reason for his withdrawal of his sponsorship from her transition. That Richards nonetheless went ahead and transitioned anyway effectively required professionals such as Benjamin to rethink first, their assumption of the incompatibility of a heterosexual past with a transsexual future; and, second, the theoretical implications of this assumption: the belief that (homo)sexuality may be used as a yardstick for measuring (trans)gender identity. Surely crucial to the official revision was the transsexual autobiographers' going public with these possible variations in the plot of transsexuality. Published autobiographies such as Second Serve provided and continue to provide clinicians with accessible and detailed personal accounts of transsexual gender careers.

Particularly since the development in the seventies of "ethogenic" approaches in psychology and sociology which read the personal account as authoritative text, the published autobiographies have been reevaluated as useful psychosocial material. Psychologist Bryan Tully defines the ethogenic approach as that in which "individuals are authorities on themselves, and can be called to account for actions which have specific social meanings" (17). His own work on transsexuality incorporates the ethogenic

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transsexual's genetic sex: many professionals have continued this tradition. Most transsexuals, however, will deploy homosexuality and heterosexuality in a way that describes the direction of their sexual desire with their gender identity as origin. The two usages thus produce antithetical meanings. Whereas the professional might term a pre-

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approach, testimony to its privileging of the autobiographical account. Accounting for Transsexuality and Transhomosexuality strings together large blocks of autobiographical narrative culled from interviews conducted with transsexuals at the Gender Identity Clinic at London's Charing Cross Hospital. Tully's analyses of these accounts are minimal, his role appearing more as that of editor than author. From Tully's listing of a number of published transsexual autobiographies into a separate bibliography at the end of his book, the reader infers that the published autobiography in addition constitutes an authoritative text: perhaps in a way intermediary between the oral accounts and those professional published sources that follow in the general bibliography.

Jane Fry's transsexual autobiography is exemplary in illustrating this kind of professional faith in the value of autobiography to the psychosocial study of transsexuality. Published in the mid-seventies at the beginning of this interdisciplinary shift toward ethogenic work, Being Different: The Autobiography of Jane Fry is transsexual autobiography framed as sociological document: Fry's autobiography is, as its title page informs the reader, "collected, compiled and edited with an introduction and conclusion by [sociologist] Robert Bogdan." In his framing comments, Bogdan underscores the insight provided by Fry's personal account into her condition. It brings into stark relief the blind incomprehension of the outsider professionals who punctuate her life-story. Following on this privileging of emic or insider knowledge, Bogdan argues insistently for a broader appreciation of the genre of autobiography as a rich and reliable source of information for sociologists and the "common reader":

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transition male-to-female's desire for a male, homosexual, the transsexual would likely

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> The autobiography, as a form of data and a source of understanding permits us to know a "deviant" intimately, and by sharing his or her life we can approach the subject matter closely and see it in its more human dimensions rather than as a scientific category. It is through this intimacy that how the subject views himself and what he [sic] has in common with all of us becomes clear, and his [sic] differences take on less importance. The autobiography forces us to think of the subjects as people, and categories of all kinds become less relevant. (6)

According to Bogdan's ethogenic scheme, the transsexual autobiography is to be valued precisely in its offering up of a personal, intimate account of the transsexual. As the "knowing" transsexual subject passes on this story of herself, the "intimate knowledge" we attain in the process of reading in theory breaks down the cultural otherness (freakiness) of the transsexual, an otherness the professional perspective -- as outsider -- can only reinforce. Simply put, the autobiography can show the transsexual to be one of us, the personal perspective bridging the gap between our differences.[31]

Despite these reappraisals of the contribution of autobiography, despite the apparent reallocation of subject / object of knowledge positions between professional and transsexual that Tully and Bogdan advocate in theory, in practice, the clinician remains the ultimate authority on the transsexual's narrative and the author of transsexuality as a medical narrative. In the example cited previously of the acceptance of a heterosexual transsexual past and now of a homosexual transsexual future, while doubtless the multiplication of transsexual stories forced this revision, the when and where of the revision, the question of how (or even whether) such a revision informs the individual

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denote it, heterosexual.

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clinician's practices even today, remain fixedly within his control. Authority is his precisely in his role as clinician: the one who is to authorize (or, as the case may be, refuse to authorize) the transsexuality of the subject presenting before him in his office. For without his authority, how is the transsexual to transition?[32]

I come back, therefore, to elaborate on the narratological analogy as most fitting. The clinician is critic of the presenting subject's autobiography, reading her story as the narrative of transsexual predicament, his interpretation functioning as his diagnosis. The transsexual symptoms are to be found in the plot, themes, and tropes or rhetoric of the subject's autobiographical account. Boys playing with Barbie and hiding their penises between their legs; girls refusing to urinate sitting down and wanting to be Batman; adults seeking to pass in the "chosen" gender identity: these episodes find their place in what we might understand as the classic plot of transsexuality as written under the "Diagnostic Features" of Gender Identity Disorder in DSM. Among the themes of the narrative, we might include: feelings of not belonging, of not fitting in, brought into relief by an intense desire to belong, to become "unremarkable" or assimilate.[33] Finally, the narrative is

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[31]The transsexual autobiography sandwiched between Bogdan's idealism achieves no such thing. Fry's is by far the most depressing, the most raving, the most alienating of transsexual autobiographies.

[32] Alternative routes (black market hormones and plastic surgery outside the US and Europe) to transition beyond the medically authorized ones are available but they are notoriously hazardous.

[33] The theme of becoming "unremarkable" is described by Tully (156 and *passim*). Demonstrating that the clinician may demand gender conformity of the transsexual before authorizing his / her transition, Don Montgomery reads the ability of transsexuals to "blend[s] unremarkably into society in their chosen gender" as the sign of the "'true,' 'primary,' or 'core' transsexual" (314). This required "blending" or passing, in that it

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characterized by its own tropes or rhetoric: most famously, the assertion of being caught in the "wrong body," the image of the body as an imprisoning skin to be shed or peeled off like an extra layer of clothing.

The clinician's role as authoritative critic may be seen as both silencing the subject and speaking her as transsexual -- sometimes at once, as is illustrated in Second Serve in the episode of Richards's intake interview with Benjamin. Richards writes of the clinician's knowledge of her narrative as enabling her to relate it, his familiarity with her story indicative of his sympathy for her transsexuality. Yet the scene also suggests that Benjamin's role simultaneously includes the silencing of Richards's own rendition of her transsexual story:

> As [Benjamin] listened to me reviewing my history, he tilted his head first one way and then another, sometimes nodding agreeably. Occasionally, when I would grope for words, he would supply them so casually that I didn't notice at first. Then I began to realize that the old man really did understand, so much so that *he could probably have told the story without my help*. The childish exploits, the futile years of psychotherapy, the driving compulsion, the skulking around -- all these constituted *a familiar refrain* that accompanied his daily work. He listened intelligently, and he understood almost as well as I did. I began to gain respect for this little man. (164-165; my emphasis)

In both senses, Benjamin relieves Richards of the need to detail her autobiography, anticipating themes and turns of plot, providing appropriate phraseology. As primary author(ity) on transsexuality at the time of their meeting, Benjamin could indeed have told Richards "the story without [her] help." And although Richards portrays Benjamin's "intimate knowledge" of this narrative as, here, reassuring, a sign of his understanding,

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necessitates the subject erasing her / his transsexual history, is being resisted under the sign of transgender: see chapter 5

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when wielded to write her out of this narrative because of her difference, this same authority produces a traumatic interruption of the progress of her transition, forcing her to discontinue hormones and refusing to authorize surgery. Richards is required to look abroad for the continuation of her treatment: to Jorgensen's former endocrinologist, Hamburger, in Copenhagen for hormones, and to renowned reassignment surgeon, Burou, in Casablanca for surgery.[34]

The way in which the clinical narrative functions as the authorized text against which individual life-stories are to be read can prove both violently delimiting and constructively empowering for the speaking transsexual subject. On the one hand, the clinician's authority-authorship sets limitations on the number of possible legitimate transsexual tales. What if the subject has a different story to tell, one that doesn't fit the requisites of the clinical genre? On the other hand, the professional's authoritative-authoring role creates a situation in which the Transsexual Story is always already understood, not bizarre and foreign but familiar, anticipated: expected. Moreover, as transsexuality has become reified into this relatively monolithic clinical narrative and transsexuals themselves have become familiar with the professional belief that diagnosis requires the production of transsexuality as a very specific story, transsexuals have been

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[34] Although Richards returns from Casablanca unreassigned to have her reassignment surgery eventually performed at home: the Physicians' Hospital in Queens, New York.

Citing exactly the same passage from Richards (significantly, however, cutting the citation short before the last sentence about Richards's respect for Benjamin, thus glossing over the fact that this moment is also enabling of the transsexual), Hausman remarks on Benjamin's "ability to construct (or at least facilitate the construction of) the self-representation of his clients" (165-166). Again though, Hausman does not read the passage in terms of the transsexual's narrative or authorial construction.

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able to develop narrative strategies to court the diagnosis they desire. Transsexual folklore tells of the circulation among transsexuals of those narrative features which make an autobiography successful (that is, in the clinician's eyes, that of a "true" transsexual). The published transsexual autobiographies frequently comment on -- and participate in -- this system of autobiographical (re)production. As Hunt puts it, "Knowing that he must have the psychiatrist's permission to attain the salvation of surgery, the patient often resorts to devious means. Most have read the literature of transsexualism and know what symptoms they should present, and these they will recite by rote" (28).[35] And in that they make accessible legitimated transsexual autobiographical narratives to transsexual communities, the published autobiographies play a crucial part in this process of circulation, as Hunt's reading of Morris suggested earlier.

However, the strategy of circulating successful accounts in order to satisfy the clinician can backfire on transsexual subjects. Professionals have in their turn become wise to the dynamic, and have used this knowledge to rethink their role as audience / readers of these accounts. A number of professionals urge in response a strengthening of their position as critical authority. In order to weed out the "automated" or plagiarized narrative, individual autobiographies clearly require a more cautious, a more suspicious

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[35] "Information about caretaker expectations is gleaned and spread through transsexual interaction, and this information becomes part of transsexual lore. . . . This lore consists of 'recipes' for dealing with caretakers and the management of information that they know would discredit them in the eyes of their caretakers should it be revealed. They *necessarily* exploit caretakers' expectations for their own ends by presenting a transsexual identity in conformity with caretakers' conceptions of classic transsexualism" (Bolin 64; my emphasis). For an ethnographic critique of how the "inequity in power relations"

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hearing by the clinician. Tully, for instance, encourages the clinician to consider using "authenticity checks," deploying the tactics of legal cross-examination or police interrogation:

> Two qualifications in particular need to be made concerning any faith put in transsexuals' accounts. One concerns the [clinician's] recognition of deliberate and skillful deception contrived to achieve hormones and surgery. It is very difficult [for transsexuals] to sustain complex cover stories over a long time in the face of extended cross-examination. As police and espionage interrogators know full well, some 'leakage' of what is being covered up is almost impossible to prevent. (23)

The extremism of his proposal to enlist models from the police and judicial systems would be risible if one did not remember that he is urging the application of these law-criminal models to a caretaker-patient relationship and that, most crucially, the patient's very life may depend on the manner in which his story is heard and interpreted.[36] In a sense though, the call for such models highlights the degree of violence that anyway inhabits the clinician's official critical position: as much if not more is at stake for the transsexual as for the police suspect in his interactions with the respective authorities.

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between transsexual client and professional caretaker informs what can be said, see this entire chapter in Bolin, "Transsexuals and Medical-Mental Health Caretakers" (51).

[36] For a discussion of the autobiography critic as policeman, chapter 5. Sympathetic to the transsexual as always, Schaefer and Wheeler suggest the clinician keep at the fore her role as health*carer* and consider why the transsexual should feel the need to "falsify histories," instead of penalizing him for it: "[I]t behooves the practitioner to have sympathy for such desperate and mistrusting feelings since gender dysphoric patients have so frequently been misunderstood by the medical community and others and do not expect to be understood or treated with sympathy" ("Treatment of Gender Identity Disorders (Transsexualism)" 17). Transsexual narrative, like transsexuality itself, appears consistently to raise the problem of authenticity: how to be sure of the truth of the account, the truth of the sex, the truth of the subject? Hausman's book demonstrates that, even by the non-medical professional, this position of suspicion is taken for granted as *the* way to approach the transsexual text / as a text.

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Inherent in the clinician's anxieties about how to "detect" "suspect" transsexual autobiographies in her office is the assumption that autobiography can and should reveal the truth about its subject. The clinician would have the autobiography embody the true identity of the subject, as if the story itself could metonymize transsexuality, or function as its pure reflection, narrative mirror to transsexual nature. While she fears the artifice of the transsexual narrator, the clinician appears quite ignorant of the ways in which, as characteristic of its genre, the autobiography itself is inevitably fundamentally constructed, its form contingent on the context of its telling, its effect not to reflect but to produce its teller as a subject in narrative. The clinician's ignorance in this regard itself serves as a source of critical violence toward the transsexual. Her diagnosis is as much informed by the form of the autobiography, the way in which the story is told, as it is the content, although these demands remain unarticulated, unconscious even, and herein lies the violence: in the fact that none of this is acknowledged in the encounter, and the autobiography is read at once as the truth of its teller. The diagnosis of "true" or "primary" or "core" transsexualism is to a very disturbing extent derived not simply from a certain plot classified as transsexual but on a coherent account that renders up this plot clearly: a strong, convincing avowal of transsexuality, carefully supported by appropriate episodes presented in an orderly manner, sufficiently, but not overwhelmingly detailed. In effect, the transsexual must be a skilled advocate of his own cause, and his ability as narrator of his life, as autobiographer, is definitive of that role. Tell the story convincingly enough, and you're likely to get your hormones and surgery; falter, repeat, disorder, omit, digress, and you've pretty much had it. (As an ironic aside to this cruel and absurd system: Perhaps it is because only those transsexuals who are arch storytellers get to be

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transsexual, that published transsexual autobiographies are, typically anyway, so crafted and engaging.)

Even the requirement that the transsexual tell his autobiography to the clinician might be understood as a violent demand. The subject needs to speak her most intimate concerns about her body, her childhood, her fantasies, to speak the "secret" of her "sex," in order to shape her life as she needs, as she desires. As Foucault would surely remark here, some of the violence resides in the therapeutic / psychoanalytic relation itself -- a violence of antithesis, of polarity -- in which the patient's position is to confess, and the professional's, half-priest holding the key to his patient's salvation, half cabalist elected to decode this clinical narrative, to listen, to take note, *to read*. In this specific context of transsexual "therapy," the subject's speech, confession, narration, is compelled by the knowledge that the future of her body, the future of her sex, the very future of her life, is to be determined by what she has to say for herself. Has there ever been so much at stake in oral autobiography? In his published autobiography, Thompson returns to the clinical scene of this first autobiography and underlines precisely these ways in which it is a compelled performance and a traumatizing experience. He contrasts his own inclinations to keep silent about his transsexuality, a condition he represents as too painful to put into words ("I didn't have the capacity, or the desire to talk about myself or specifically about my condition. I never described myself or my condition in any way and I could only express myself in monosyllables, never saying a word over and above what was necessary to anyone" [98]), with the psychiatrist's demands that he speak: "Soon however, I was going to have to talk about myself and my condition, in order to ask for the help that I needed. . . . in order to get help, I had to speak" (98).

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Thompson's recognition of what is at stake in his self-articulation does not (unsurprisingly) loosen his tongue. It appears to have the contrary effect of making him choke on his own words. At the psychiatrist's request, he remains unable to speak his birth name, choking on the materiality of the feminine sound, a psychosomatic rejection of its reality. Fascinatingly in this case, it is Thompson's very delimiting of this name as unspeakable -- his faltering, his choking, his silence -- that catches the clinician's attention and begins his authorization of Thompson's transsexuality:

> [The psychiatrist] was looking at his notes a lot while he was talking to me, but his interest picked up when I was unable to say the name given to me at birth. He had asked me matter-of-factly what the name was, and no matter how I tried to press it out of my lips, I just choked on it. I simply couldn't say it. I was struggling because there seemed to be a reason why I should say it. I finally agreed to write it down. He looked at the piece of paper for a minute and took in the name which I so detested, then looked at me and said, "You could have fooled me." I breathed a sigh of relief. Hearing him say that seemed a definite act of recognition. (99)

The scene is startling for suggesting that what is not said in the clinician's office can be subject to the same kind of careful reading, the same critical scrutiny, as that which is. Dr. Randall becomes interested in Thompson (presumably looks up from his notes at this point), begins to *read* him specifically, only when Thompson cannot speak. It is precisely Thompson's inability to speak his (female) name that brings about the psychiatrist's "act of recognition." Randall's comment ("You could have fooled me") affirms Thompson's own disavowal of that (female) identity and signals his initial clinical approval of Thompson's "true" transsexuality. The psychiatrist concurs with the transsexual subject on the unspeakability of the female name, its unspeakability symptomizing the very unthinkability of the female identity of the subject before him. Not only the subject's speech, but his ellipses, is fodder for the clinician-critic's interpretation of the subject as

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text. As with the oral narrative itself, the silence is diagnosed in terms of a medical condition.

What actually prompts Randall's disavowal of the name is its transcription, its appearance as actual text on the note that Thompson hands him. In a sense, Randall's remark, "You could have fooled me," shows that he chooses Thompson's silence over the writing. His conclusion apparently is that, in this case, the silence speaks the truth of transsexuality louder than the written word. If this is so, what is this scene doing *written* in Thompson's autobiography? For that matter, what is Thompson's life doing written as autobiography? And what (the larger question of this chapter) is *transsexuality* doing in published autobiography? If we go back to the scene of the original clinical autobiography above: that Thompson can write the name in the clinician's office where he can't speak it, suggests that writing does not make the name present to the same unbearable extent that speech does. It suggests a certain absence or distance (of the subject) at the heart of the written text, an absence produced by the writing itself, one not possible through speech. The distinction is not so simple however, even in the case of Thompson's autobiography. While he writes his female name in the clinician's office, he can't write it in his published autobiography. Thompson does not reveal his birth name to his readers -- a glaring unwritten-ness -- although he hints at it: we know him only as, of course, "I," Ray, or, very occasionally, Joe. It is the latter actually that provides the clue to Thompson's birth name. He reveals that Joe is "a masculine version of my name by birth" (64). Yet even here, in my chapter, in another scene of writing twice removed from Raymond Thompson's life, it's startling how it still feels like too much of a violation to name this

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name, to spell it out for *my* reader -- as if this naming itself would bring back to life a dead self, would make present a past the transsexual would will into forgotten absence.

Thompson's autobiography begins on a point of tension between naming / remembering and not naming / forgetting. After a wonderfully bald introduction via his adopted name and autobiographical signature -- "My name is Raymond" -- he goes on to allude to a fairy tale centered on the "other" name: "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 even 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" (1). The other name belongs to and stands for a past willed into the texture of fantasy, a fairy tale ("Once upon a time") by forgetting. Actually, the forgetting is willed ("I don't care to remember it"), possibly accidental ("perhaps I don't even really remember it"), but certainly a process to be defensively obscure about ("*perhaps*"). While Thompson's begins with this gesture of forgetting the past, autobiography is, ostensibly, the written act of remembering the past. Yet in practice, it is also as much about forgetting, for memory and the act of writing edit the life, omit some events, imagine others, and reconstruct all from a point always in the present, always in the physical absence of the past, though one which centers on its re-presentation. Autobiography is based on this tension between remembering and forgetting, the absence and the presence of the past -- as indeed is Thompson's gesture toward his past life. Although he claims that this past "life . . . is no longer a part of me," in the rest of the book that follows this opening vignette, in the very act of autobiography, his recalling makes it present again. For the transsexual whose life has centered on remaking and forgetting the past, the autobiographical act is extremely complex, founded on an

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impossible paradox about time: recalling and making present in writing a past self one would cut off. It is to the paradox of transsexual autobiographical time that I turn in my final section in this chapter in an attempt to answer the question I posed above: what is transsexuality doing in published autobiography?

vi. Conclusion. Transsexual Time: Autobiography as Surgery

> The prophet Tiresias was a postoperative, male-to-female transsexual, the surgery having been performed by the gods as a punishment. But Tiresias was a two-time loser because, having decided he liked it better as a woman, the gods turned him back into a man.
> Nancy Hunt, Mirror Image
>
> To look backward is to be urged forward.
> Mario Martino. Emergence

There is in Raymond Thompson's gesture of forgetting his pre-transition self a characteristically transsexual syntax. This syntax governs both transsexuality and transsexual autobiography. It is the syntax of retroactive reconstruction: the revision of the past life to form a stable present and the promise of a stable future: "I have always really been a (gender)." This syntax can be thought of as structuring transsexuality in that the clinician requires the subject to assert a coherently gendered self across time: a gendered self that is felt or experienced as fixed and permanent in the face of a sexed body that is not. The avowal of this diachronic coherent "inner" self and its narration in the clinical oral autobiography is key to opening the gates of salvation to hormones and surgery. Written transsexual autobiographies, in retelling the story of the transsexual self, repeat its reconstructive dynamic in order to posit a coherent self across time. The autobiographies, always written from a point post-transition, trace back two central

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interwoven identity threads: gender identification and transgendered subjectivity -- "I have always felt like a man / woman," and "I have always been a transsexual." These threads in the written autobiography attempt to form an integral narrative self. In the face of such radical shifts in the life lived -- the dramatic change in gendered plots -- the writing allows for the creation of a holistic subject. It draws together the two fragments of the pre- and post- transition life, of female and male, into a single autobiographical plot: the story of a transsexual (as so many of the autobiographies are subtitled).[37] As Martino can write from that point of post-transition, "We, as sex-changed persons, are what we've always wanted to be" (270).

A key reason why the transsexual is so often drawn to write her / his autobiography appears to be this desire to produce a continuous self through the dramatic rupture; the form of autobiography can fulfill this desire for continuity of self. The autobiographical form would heal the split transsexual subject, meld the fragments together into a single, fluent narrative. In this sense, the autobiography might function as a kind of psychotherapy, in which the healing of that split is sought through the telling of one's story. Thompson's autobiography is quite explicitly also his psychotherapy. His What Took You so Long? A Girl's Journey Into Manhood was co-written with his

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[37] Two texts not written from a post-transition moment, the two transsexual diaries -- Paul Hewitt's A Self-Made Man and Jerry/Jerri McClain's To Be a Woman -- do not have this holistic effect. As diaries rather than autobiographies, the moment of writing does not appear as single and stable. As a consequence, both emphasize the transsexual as a self in transition, in the process of change: both document different early stages of transition of, respectively, an FTM and an MTF. As a postmodern transsexual ("posttranssexual") autobiography, Kate Bornstein's Gender Outlaw also refuses the integral transsexual subject.

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psychotherapist Kitty Sewell. Sewell's introduction relates how Thompson was referred to her as a client for counseling just after his phalloplasty when "he was struggling to put together the pieces of his fragmented life" (vii). Sewell claims to have enabled him to have achieved this by combining the process of therapy with the writing of his life; Sewell mentions her "background in journalism" (viii). According to Sewell, the auto/biography-psychotherapy combination is successful, and the project satisfies both collaborators, and the tasks both of psychotherapy and of auto/biographical writing:

> We both found this to be a purposeful way of us working together. Indeed, the remembering and the telling of his life's events proved as cathartic as any therapy.
>
> It was the first time he had looked at his life willingly and tried to make sense of it. At first his story came pouring out in a jumbled and fragmented fashion, but as we journeyed through this life the memory of events, feelings and conversations sharpened. (viii)

At first the story was little more than fragments. The structure of narrative gradually arranged these fragments into a single *bios*, a coherent autobiography. And the autobiographical act itself is represented as healing the broken subject.

Transsexual autobiography promises to produce wholeness, integrity, coherence in the transsexual subject; rather like the surgical procedures that transsexuals undergo. Both are about healing the gendered split of transsexuality. Like transsexual surgical procedures, autobiography enables the removal of unwanted "parts" of the subject (body / life), the refashioning of others, and the prosthetic addition of yet others. What is removed in the retroactive reconstructive syntax of autobiography, as in the operating room, are those gendered parts deemed not to belong: the past life that would disharmonize the coherence of the present. What is added stems from the work (conscious and unconscious) of the autobiographer's imagination. A transsexual who

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claims to have transitioned with no recourse to hormones or surgery, Allen uses a surgical image to articulate his removal of / from his past. He writes of waiting for that moment when he might "amputate the past cleanly and in a single surgical sweep" (77). The metaphor of autobiography as surgery represents the transsexual life and the transsexual body as isomorphic aggregates of ablative parts or fragments.

The act of forgetting in autobiography might be thought of as a kind of surgical cut and removal of the unwanted parts / past. In relating his feelings after his traumatic but eventually successful phalloplasty, Thompson actually collapses the two levels of the metaphor -- autobiography into surgery:

> I was ecstatic about the way I now looked and the way it made me feel, and I was profoundly grateful to the system that had allowed me the chance to become whole. Free movement, being able to go anywhere and never having to think about my limitations, was going to be the biggest release. I could forget how I was born. I was and had always been a man; that fact was unalterable. (309)

Thompson collapses the levels of the metaphor because surgery makes possible the new feeling of "wholeness" and the forgetting of his past life as female. With the excision of the unwanted body parts (here, hysterectomy and vaginectomy) and the construction of the desired part (phalloplasty), Thompson feels he can excise his female past ("I could forget how I was born") and reconstruct it as male ("I was and had always been a man"). The life appears as reconstructible in some way comparable to the body, and the life is reconstructible because the body is: the relation between transsexual body and the transsexual *bios* is both analogous and cause-effect.

It's a striking paradox how much the excised past (in spite of all this talk of its forgetting) makes its presence felt in the autobiographies, particularly once the narrative

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has reached post-transition, has reached a point after the transsexual subject's surgery / surgeries: precisely when the past (pre-transition) self could be forgotten and the transsexual history erased, when passing makes possible the detaching of the past. The close of Cowell's autobiography illustrates this contradiction. After the account of her surgical transition (simultaneous with her social transition from male to female), her narrative brings the reader up to the present moment, switching for the first time from past to present tense. Cowell addresses herself (before a mirror) to calm herself before making her entrance to her first ball as a woman: "In a few moments the dream of your life is coming true. No jerkiness, hands flowing from the wrist, perfect poise. Just behave as though you were quite used to all this. . . . I've dreamed of this moment for so long, but in its realisation it is even better than its anticipation . . . . The past is forgotten" (154). The arrival of the autobiographical narrative into the present tense coincides with, and signifies, Cowell's "arrival" as a woman. The forgetting in "the past is forgotten" is performed on the same two levels: grammatical and thematic. The past tense is forgotten as Cowell articulates that willful forgetting of her past as male. Yet in writing of this forgetting, and, indeed, closing her autobiography with these words, Cowell re-presents that past in her autobiography; she makes it present again. She reminds the reader of the (male) past constituting the autobiography we have been reading, the very same past that she would here forget. Thematizing her forgetting of it makes her past ever more present in the narrative. And this is the case with all the autobiographies. However potent the autobiographer's will to forget the past, the form of autobiography itself depends on its remembering. And this re-membering reveals again the (once) fragmented parts of the transsexual *bios* / body: a pre-integral subject. Like the look in the mirror at the pre-

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transition body, autobiography's remembering of the past reveals the *bios* / body in bits and pieces (again).

While the "I" of transsexual autobiography might hope to solder the split of transsexuality, it also, inevitably so it seems, reopens it. It seems that transsexual autobiography, like Rheims's photographs, cannot sustain the representation of the transsexual as an integrally gendered subject. Transsexual self-representation disturbingly repeats that splitting. The autobiographer's desire might be to trace continuity of identity in the face of dramatic change, to retrace a single thread, but the change, the shift, the switch, the trans-sexing, remains at the center of the story. This trans-sexing, this transition between two social identities, two bodies, two names, must be narrated, must be negotiated in the life and the writing of it. Indeed, this negotiation is the very subject of transsexual autobiography. Although the autobiographical signature would appear to be single and the "I" of the narrative would seem to refer to a stable and continuous subject, the autobiographical reproduction of transsexuality reintroduces division and lability into subject.[38] The *autos* must appear to refer to both man and woman, Raymond and Jo..., Caroline and Barry, April and George, Roberta and Robert, Mario and Marie, and so forth. And if transsexuality insists on one of these genders as the subject's "true" identity, if it would re-member one identity, and will into forgotten absence the other, to whom does this other refer if not also that "I"? Yet the "I" that writes would claim only the "true" gender as self, and discard the other. Transsexual autobiography plots the

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vanquishing of the other by this "true" self: the other is a mask to be ripped off, a prison to be escaped -- precisely that which is other to the self. So how can the "I" tell the story of this other within the terms of *auto*biography -- the self's story of the self?

This dizzying paradox at the center of the project of transsexual autobiography is frozen neatly in the captions that appear underneath the photographs in April Ashley's Odyssey. Pictured as a woman, April, Ashley's captions summarize the situation of the photograph: "Modelling Thea Porter for the Sunday Times, photographed by David Bailey, 1969" (26); "July 1960, just after the operation, with a friend in Juan" (18). There is no perceived need to name the subject of the photographs. Ashley (and the reader after her) assumes an identity between their represented subject, the "I" of the autobiographical narrative, and the autobiographical signature. All refer to, and cohere, April Ashley. This is pointedly not the case with photographs of Ashley's male "self," each of which is referred to as "George Jamieson," disrupting the coherence of April Ashley: "V.E. Day, May 1945, George Jamieson at St. Theresa's Primary School, Liverpool" (2); "George Jamieson, aged fourteen, playing Bassiano in The Merchant of Venice at St. Theresa's," and so on (4). The full name is doggedly repeated as though George Jamieson were another subject from the "I" of the narrative, as though this self were an other. All of the autobiographies to some degree manifest this rupturing of the autobiographical subject, a rupturing which occurs along the gendered divide in language. How can "I" be both (even if successively rather than simultaneously) he and she? Transsexuality at some point -- at

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[38] Jerry / Jerri McClain's diary, To Be a Woman, is the exception to the unified transsexual autobiographical signature: appropriately so, for the book, as a diary, takes as its subject the transition between two identities.

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the point of transition? -- produces an impossible crack in the subject in language, one that the autobiographies cannot paper over, in spite of their "I have always been a (gender)" syntax. Conn captures this succinctly in her chapter title: "A Little Boy Discovers Herself."

Instead of attempting to mask this difference in the subject of transsexual autobiography, Renée Richards ingeniously organizes it as a drama between two characters, Dick and Renée, and places their battle center stage in her autobiography. Her writing "I" appears less the director of the drama between Dick and Renée, for no conventional transsexual plot is discernible, its script appears to have been abandoned as Dick and Renée see-saw maniacally in the struggle for the part of protagonist. Rather, "I" slips in and out of two roles: taking on the voice of passive observer of this drama, as if another member of the audience (as if this autobiography told the story of three subjects); and identifying with, alternatively, Dick and Renée. In the main, "I" transfers her allegiance and her referent from Dick to Renée during Richards's (Raskind's) transatlantic passage to Europe on her (his) way to Burou in Casablanca for gender reassignment surgery. Although Richards (Raskind) will even then return from Casablanca as Raskind (Richards), unreassigned, dick / Dick intact, marry a woman, have a child and attempt one more time to live as a man, the transatlantic crossing from New York to Genoa nevertheless serves as the point of Richards's (Raskind's) gender *crossing* in the narrative. It is on this ship that Richards (Raskind) gives free rein to Renée, feels herself (himself) to be no longer acting a woman but to be one: "As the *Michaelangelo* steamed through the quiet Mediterranean waters, I felt myself sinking more and more into the persona of Renée. It was not a role anymore. I felt myself to be a woman, and except for the much

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atrophied genitals between my legs I really was one" (222). Brilliantly punning on the notion of passage and crossing, Richards writes: "The *Michaelangelo* was my transitional vehicle" (219). The "I" would appear to transfer its identity from Dick to Renée on this "passage."

Yet, while this passage marks the central turning point in the drama between Dick and Renée, the narrative structure is in practice not so neat. The autobiographical "I" has already identified with Renée in some of her attempts to seduce Dick pre-"transition," and will do so with Dick during his moments of resurgence post-"transition." This autobiographical de-rangement is most dramatically played out in an episode in which the author has her (his) first sexual encounter as Renée while still Dick (with dick). The seventeen-year old Richards (Raskind) is supposed to be auditioning for a part in a transvestite show in New York, the Satin Slipper Revue. The "audition" takes place at the house of the club's owner, Jimmy, a gay man, and involves Renée (Dick's) seduction. While Jimmy is apparently interested in Dick / dick in a dress, the autobiographical "I" relates her desire to be the object of desire for Jimmy as Renée. Indeed, Renée manages to sustain her dominance during the first movements in her seduction, related by the autobiographer as though an event that that took place to a third party (how many subjects in this autobiography?):

> [Jimmy] stroked her thigh and feeling no resistance moved his hand higher. He ran his fingers between her legs. A warm flush suffused Renée's person, and she opened her legs a little. . . . All seemed to glow as she gazed at him and then felt his lips pressed urgently against hers. His tongue found its way gently into her mouth, and they remained so for what seemed like a long time. This was the culmination of all Renée's fantasies. (73-74)

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The "I" then joins in identification with Renée as the seducer gets down to business: "Jimmy suggested we go upstairs. I agreed, and he led me to his room. When he removed his kimono he revealed a well-kept body, completely nude. I was still in my dress, and he came to me with another languorous kiss. I said I was a virgin" (74). As Jimmy undresses Renée, the narrative slips back into the third person and Dick / dick threatens to disrupt the realization of Renée's (hetero)sexual fantasy: "Off came the dress, and with it went some of the dewiness of Renée's perspective. The bra was next and she began to feel much less secure. . . . Deprived of her accouterments, Renée began to fade, and Dick, who had been sent on vacation to parts unknown, came snapping back" (74). It is finally the (homo)sex that brings Dick back firmly onto the stage and sends Renée scurrying off into the wings: "[Dick] didn't like what he found. He was taking a homosexual's penis in his mouth. Renée, however, was not completely gone, and it was she who insisted that Jimmy penetrate her face-to-face as a man would a woman. Jimmy [,] kindly agreed to this ungainly setup. Dick lay in absolute horror as he felt his anus invaded" (74). At the moment of penetration, Renée can no longer keep up the performance: it is Dick's anus, and not Renée's vagina (as of this moment a futural part) that receives Jimmy's dick.

The remarkable splitting of the subject in this scene, the shifting referent of the autobiographical "I," heightens the dramatic contradiction of the split subject of all transsexual autobiography. This split is both that of transsexuality (a gendered split) and that of autobiography (the author as both subject and object, the latter brought into gendered relief by transsexual autobiography). While the autobiographical project, like transsexuality, would seek to suture that split, the representation of "sex change" in the

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autobiographical form foregrounds that very same split: for the transformation from not-me to me, from man to woman or vice versa must be related, indeed, is the very subject of transsexual autobiography. If transitioning, according to Jan Morris's figure of herself saying goodbye to her pre-transitional self before the mirror, allows the transsexual to pass through the looking glass and attain gendered integrity, the autobiographical act, in the clinician's office and in the published book, both underwrites and undoes that integrity. The integration promised the subject by transsexuality cannot occur without the autobiographical narrative, yet it is the same autobiographical narrative that jeopardizes this integration. The continuing dizzying relations between transsexuality and autobiography, inter-productive and contradictory, are both necessary and fraught. Like Narcissus frozen by the sight of his own reflection, the transsexual autobiographer can neither fully merge with, nor move away from, the represented image of the self.

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Chapter Five

No Place Like Home: Transgender and Trans-Genre in Leslie Feinberg's Stone Butch Blues

Strange to be exiled from your own sex to borders that will never be home.
Leslie Feinberg, Stone Butch Blues

'Being home' refers to the place where one lives within familiar safe, protected boundaries; 'not being home' is a matter of realizing that home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance, the repression of differences even within oneself.
Biddy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Feminist Politics: What's Home Got to Do with It?"

"It's a bit like going to another country, to become a naturalised citizen. You don't know how you will blend in but you must plan to provide yourself with all the accoutrements from the land you are coming from, or else you will end up in a defective state . . . Rather than being an immigrant, one is returning home like a Jew . . . You can divide up transsexuals into the immigrants who see the new world ahead rather like El Dorado, the refugees who get bundled into that new state without good preparations, and the defectors who have tried very hard to be good citizens, even pretend that they are, but deep inside they are yearning and waiting for a bolt-hole opportunity."
Anonymous transsexual woman cited in Tully

A homeless life has no storyline.
Lars Eighner, Travels with Lizbeth: Three Years on the Road and on the Streets

Keep Ithaka always in your mind.
Arriving there is what you're destined for.
C.P. Cavafy, "Ithaka," Collected Poems

i Introduction

If home is an almost universal lure, it is not simply because of the familiarity and safety that it connotes. It is because of its symbolic intersection with very powerful notions of belonging. As a cultural myth, home is the place where we belong and which,

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in a sense that has nothing to do with the details of legal proprietorship, belongs to us. A place of our own, a location we conceive as ours, home belongs to us because we long to belong somewhere; we make home our own through this desire for an own in the world. This idea of home bounds space in terms of subjectivity, enclosing it with borders, separating home from not-home, keeping likeness in and disruptive difference out. Leaving home, crossing the borders, as is suggested by the Martin and Mohanty epigraph to this chapter, is tantamount to recognizing the exclusions that we have enacted in order to construct home as ours, what we have coded as foreign in the process of territorializing space -- precisely the costs, psychic and social, of mapping out space in terms of self. Not-home is seeing home for what it is, a construct, a place we have made up. Yet the recognition that home is a myth does not detract from its potency as a signifier of belonging. On the contrary, it increases the desire to belong. For if home is an illusion or a fantasy that carries great symbolic weight, it does so because of its distance from the actuality, from home the real place. Whenever the coherence and belonging promised by home are revealed to be unreal or unrealizable, our fantasies and desires for such resolution are fortified. The fictionality of home fuels its mythic lure.

This chapter sets up home as a metaphor for thinking through questions of transsexual belonging -- genderic and sexual, generic and textual; belonging in the context of the body, the social and textuality -- in reading Leslie Feinberg's Stone Butch Blues. While Stone Butch Blues follows the narrative line of going home shared by transsexual autobiography up to a certain point, it is exceptional in veering from this. Like the subjects of transsexual narratives, Feinberg's Jess does not feel at home in h/er female body in the world and attempts to remake it with hormones and surgery. Like transsexual

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autobiographies, the text is a self-narrative which presents the real sexed body as most *unheimlich*, disturbing any assumptions about the natural body being home for the subject. Unlike transsexual autobiographers, however, Jess turns back in h/er transition, refusing the refuge of fully becoming the other sex and the closure promised by the transsexual plot. S/he chooses an incoherently sexed body, ending up in an uneasy borderlands in between man and woman in which s/he fails to pass as either. H/er semi-transition leaves h/er a gender transient in the world, belonging nowhere, making h/er relation to community problematic. Beginning a transsexual journey takes Jess from the lesbian and gay community, but its incompletion, h/er refusal to identify or pass as a man, leaves assimilation into heterosexuality undesirable and anyway impossible. In the real of the narrative, Jess ends up not at home, unsafe, both in body and in community.

Even though the narrative is about leaving home on several levels -- the family home, the home of the body, and the home of community, home is a rich metaphor through which to read Stone Butch Blues. The story is driven by the myth of home as belonging precisely as it charts these acts of leaving home. In representing Jess's story as a remarkable moving away from real familial, corporeal and community homes, Stone Butch Blues pays tribute to the lure of home and belonging. Leaving home does not detract from the desire for home, the desire to belong, but rather feeds it. Resisting the claims that the narrative makes about h/er reasons, I will suggest instead that Jess begins h/er transition because of a specifically transsexual desire to feel at home in the sexed body. Yet fully realizing this desire -- becoming a man -- ironically threatens to deprive Jess of community, a collective home organized around h/er specificity: gendered assimilation means disappearance, invisibility. S/he therefore breaks off h/er transitioning

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while still able to imagine belonging in a community that centers on h/er difference, a transgendered community which, because it does not exist in the text, holds great sway in h/er fantasy. Although Jess ends up without belonging in a community, at odds with the queer community, h/er dreams describe a home which is specifically transgendered, where sexuality is not the definitive criterion for belonging but an embodied transgenderism is.

These dreams are pivotal in positioning Stone Butch Blues against the queer narrative of gender crossing documented elsewhere in this dissertation. Feinberg's representation of transgender is not queer because it is embodied and deeply painful and because it takes as its definitive categories gender and sex, not gender through sexuality. Whereas queerness has written of transgender in terms of queer performativity, tropes intended to denaturalize the sexed body, Feinberg's transgender foregrounds the pain of gender-crossing, its costs, its limits, above all, its embodiment. Whereas the transgender of queerness loosens the narrative of gender through sexuality, Feinberg's transgender affirms the materiality of gender, its essential place in the narrative of this identity. In these senses, Feinberg's transgender overlaps more with transsexuality than with queerness; hence Stone Butch Blues demands to be read in the context of transsexual rather than homosexual / lesbian / queer narratives: stories of sex and gender, not sexuality, of the complex struggle for sexed embodiment, for gendered becoming, not for their denaturalization. At an angle to queerness which has inscribed gendered unbelonging and mobility as subversive and celebratory, Stone Butch Blues recognizes the power of the lure of an albeit illusory home, corporeal and communal, even though home is not realized as it is in transsexual autobiographies. If the transsexual's journey can be compared, as it is by the transsexual woman in one of my epigraphs, to "returning home,

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like a Jew," it is because that final belonging or becoming fully one sex is mythicized as rightful and crucially inextricable from transsexual identity. In spite of the difference of its story-line, Stone Butch Blues participates in this transsexual version of the narrative of gendered belonging.

The metaphors of home thread through the politics of these different subjectivities: transgendered, transsexual and queer. In chapter one I demonstrated how the reclaiming of queerness, in particular in the work of Judith Butler, has depended upon the transgendered figure. Butler fails to provide a specific theoretical place -- a categorical home -- for Venus Xtravaganza as a transsexual subject, reading her instead as ambivalently split along the hetero-homo binary her transsexual body disrupts. Venus demands a new discursive space. I develop my critique of queer theory's failure to represent the specificity of transsexuality in the first section of this chapter, now in dialogue with an essay by Judith Halberstam on female-to-male transsexuals: subjects who overlap with Feinberg's Jess in the direction of their gender careers. For Halberstam, the concept of queerness enables a revision of lesbian and gay positions on transgender and transsexuality, but only by figuring "trans" as an archetypal queer movement. This queer cooption evacuates specific (trans)sexed embodiment.

Operating on a thematics of home and territory, the discursive shift from lesbian and gay into queer in the nineties has allowed for a change in the designated location of transsexuals in actual queer places: from troublesome outsiders to necessary insiders. Whereas lesbian space in particular was constructed and maintained as a mythic home that insisted on a certain shared sameness which kept transsexuals out, queerness celebrates homelessness, infinite difference, abandoning home and the fantasy of it. The insistence on

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a certain "trans" presence is part of this new configuration of homosexual identity as queer. The gendered "trans" has been taken up now because it is seen to symbolize what queerness most privileges: unfixed identity, mobile trajectory, unceasing movement, never stopping long enough in order to make home. There is a conflict between the queer and the transgendered / transsexual representation of the significance of the "trans" movement, a conflict that I will read as staged over the value home.

The second section of this chapter reads Feinberg's Stone Butch Blues against the queer narrative of transgender. Two sets of paradoxes set the transgendered narrative of Stone Butch Blues apart: leaving a bodily home stems from the desire to be at home in the body, and leaving the home of one community (lesbian), from the desire to imagine a different one (transgendered). Whereas queerness deploys transgender as a trope to reduce and deconstruct sexual difference, to refuse sex as the home of gender, Feinberg's transgender, in the very act of crossing, suggests that there is an irreducibility to sexual difference.

In the third section of this chapter I take up the question of the genre of Stone Butch Blues in relation to its representation of sex and gender difference. While the text suggests that they are ineluctable, it transgresses both the rules of gender and genre. As fictional autobiography, the text situates itself between genres, refusing a generic home as its protagonist refuses a genderic home. What is the significance of such a correspondence? What do these transgressions demonstrate? I consider whether it is possible to read inter- or trans-generically, whether it is possible to read in a transitional state that mirrors the protagonist's own.

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Lesbians, gays, transsexuals and transgendered folk are among those who challenge the assumption that home is always a familiar, safe place. For these subjects, the family home in all its heterosexuality and gendered normalization is often an acutely uncomfortable place which highlights their difference and feelings of not belonging: the place where one feels paradoxically and painfully most not at home. Coming out as lesbian, gay and / or transsexual risks making this first home physically out of bounds, might well necessitate the giving up of home and family. While, in order to compensate for this possible loss, lesbians and gays have remade home in the form of lesbian and gay spaces (community centers, clubs, bars, festivals, parades), transsexuals are only just beginning to do so under a new sign, that of transgender. As a banner, transgender enables transsexuals and transgenderists to form community and political homes; it is an umbrella term that allows the transsexual to refuse the assimilation into the larger genetically-gendered world and generic queerness, the price of this assimilation being invisibility and the loss of specific community. In the final section of this chapter, I consider how Feinberg's text figures in the context of this new politics of transgender, a politics which, although it may overlap with queer politics, has as its foundation another identity category that cannot be subsumed under even the queerest formulation of infinitely plural sexualities. The politics of transgender returns us to gender as base, crossable but solid ground, and gender, not sexuality, is rendered definitive.

ii. Transsexuality, Queerness and the Poetics and Politics of Home

> Traitors to our sex, or spies and explorers across the boundaries of what is man, what is woman?
>
> Minnie Bruce Pratt, S/he

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The reclaiming of queerness has proven a crucial stage in the production of a lesbian, gay and multisexual politics for the nineties. The nineties have been marked by a shift in the meaning of the term queer: no longer abject object but in-your-hetero-face activist subject. My concern here is how this rescription of queerness has been responsible for an overturning of a particular set of lesbian and gay myths and politics (or myths as politics) on transsexuality. The revision of lesbian and gay representations of transsexuality and their dependent policies on including actual transsexuals has operated on a transformation of the significance -- literal and metaphoric -- of home.

In transitioning, the transsexual risks being rejected or distanced by family, of birth and acquired. Home is threatened with deliteralization and the transsexual must plan on remaking home elsewhere: community. The past five years or so have seen a gradual increase in the number of transsexual groups and projects operating within lesbian and gay community centers in the United States. An exemplary resource for transsexuals in New York City, the Gender Identity Project, was established in the Lesbian and Gay Community Center on 13th Street in 1991.[1] Prior to such inclusion, lesbian and gay community centers commonly refused to house petitioning transsexual groups, the premise being that transsexuals fell outside the lesbian and gay community's boundaries, the lesbian and gay community imagined here as a virtual space to be bounded. Historically speaking, lesbians and gays have invested in arguing not only the differences between homosexuality and transsexuality, but their fundamental opposition. Publicly, they have been quick to underline their distance from a sexual / gender identity even more socially unacceptable

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than homosexual. At the same time, the most popular gay myth of the transsexual is that s/he is a "sell-out" homosexual who aligns his / her body and desires according to compulsory heterosexuality, that transsexuality is an identity constructed by a homophobic medical establishment. Even among "radical" lesbians and gays, this assumption has not altogether disappeared.[2] According to this contradictory logic in which transsexuals were not thought to constitute a discrete community, making lesbian and gay social and political places a home for transsexuals would have been equivalent to inviting in heterosexuals. The metaphorics of the space of the closet, and the lesbian and gay political agenda's emphasis in the seventies and eighties on coming out of the closet, played a role in this lesbian and gay construction of transsexuality. While lesbian and gay politics urged the coming out of subjects from a sexual space constructed as private to a public, politicized space, transsexuality was perceived as a perverse, eccentric means of staying inside. As Judith Shapiro notes, terming this the transsexuality-as-an-"epiphenomenon of homosexuality"-theory, "some gays and lesbians view transsexuals as homosexuals who have found a particularly desperate and insidious way of staying in the closet" (252).[3] If

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[1]See Barbara Warren.

[2] For a lesbian feminist version of this myth originally published in 1980 and republished in 1989, see eds., Julia Penelope and Susan Wolfe, The Original Coming Out Stories, in particular, Penelope's own contribution in which transsexuality is marked as the site of disidentification in order for the author to "come out" as a lesbian feminist. The author disidentifies with Christine Jorgensen and The Well of Loneliness's Stephen Gordon, her identity (and her coming out narrative) secured by what she is not: we might write this as the formula: "Thank goodness I am not a transsexual!"

[3] Lesbians and gays appear now to be recognizing as false this configuration of transsexuality and homosexuality as mutually exclusive. Male-to-female transsexuals can be (are quite commonly) lesbian and bisexual as female-to-males can be gay or bisexual.

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the act of entering a lesbian and gay community center signifies coming out of the closet, making this community space available to transsexuals-as-closeted-homosexuals seemed a politically impossible contradiction in terms.

Lesbians in particular (in the name of women) have invested in territorializing space, again both literally and metaphorically, surrounding it by borders rigorously policed to keep out transsexuals as representative of the foreign / enemy: men. Policies of exclusion have been crucial to establishing women-only spaces. The "home ground" has been figured as genetic femaleness -- "womyn-born womyn." Such a definition of woman cannot contain the male-to-female transsexual who is by default still and always a man, nor, in its palindromic repetition, the female-to-male transsexual who is born genetically female but who in appearance does not "work" as a woman. This biologistic definition of woman has been in place most famously at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival where the exclusionary policy toward transsexuals had been enforced since 1991 when Nancy Burkholder, a post-operative transsexual woman, was escorted off the Festival's land. The metaphorization of femaleness as nation or home territory which must be constantly surveilled for trespassing others has worked to legitimate policies of exclusion from real or literal grounds. As Gayle Rubin points out, this ideology is deeply xenophobic.[4]

Katie Brown's article on transsexual lesbians appearing in a lesbian publication exemplifies such a corrective view in queer thinking. See also my discussion of Tully's term transhomosexuality in chapters 2 and 4.

[4] "Despite theoretically embracing diversity, contemporary lesbian culture has a deep streak of xenophobia. When confronted with phenomena that do not neatly fit our categories, lesbians have been known to respond with hysteria, bigotry, and a desire to stamp out the offending messy realities. A 'country club syndrome' sometimes prevails in which the lesbian community is treated as an exclusive enclave from which the riffraff

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The most prominent representation in feminist theory of the transsexual is Janice Raymond's The Transsexual Empire, a text published originally in 1979, the heyday of lesbian separatism, but frighteningly (for it suggests currency) reissued in 1994 with a new introduction by Raymond extending her original vitriolic attack on transsexuals to transgenderists[5]. The "empire" in Raymond is the medical establishment, a systematically evil enterprise which uses the male-to-female transsexual to "colonize" the female body. The most pernicious effect of this imperialism is the "transsexually constructed lesbian-feminist," whom transsexuals term the transsexual lesbian (the transsexual woman who loves women), for "he" acts not simply as colonizer or invader but as spy, disguised by the cloak of "his" lesbian desire and feminist politics. The "transsexually constructed lesbian-feminist" is the most marked "boundary violater"; he cuts off "his" penis to transform "his" whole body into a "'member' invading women's presence and dividing us once more from

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must be systematically expunged. . . . Over the years, lesbian groups have gone through periodic attempts to purge male-to-female transsexuals, sadomasochists, butch-femme lesbians, bisexuals, and even lesbians who are not separatists. FTMs are another witch-hunt waiting to happen" ("Of Catamites and Kings: Reflections on Butch, Gender, and Boundaries" 474). I would add that in these exclusions lesbians have sought to keep out gendered difference -- the evidence of gender itself.

[5] This centers on Feinberg's Stone Butch Blues. Under the heading, "The Transgendered Lesbian," Raymond faults the text for "its failure to extend these *personal insights* ["into the world of gender dogmatism"] into a *political analysis* of gender" (xxx). Raymond discovers in Jess's transgenderism the refusal of womanhood: "In fact, Jess' final transformation is *from being woman-identified to being other-identified.* And Jess's most intimate and personal relationships are no longer with women especially lesbians, but with men who are cross dressers and who, like herself, presumably have undertaken hormones and / or surgery. Jess's ultimate identification with otherness -- in essence her disavowal of womanhood, not simply the disowning of a rigid femininity that society has reduced womanhood to -- is at the heart of Feinberg's final version and vision of transgenderism" (xxxii; emphasis in original in all citations). From the perspective of Raymond's separatist lesbian feminism, masculinity is unambivalently other.

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each other" (108, 104). Women's space is figured as vaginal, the real female body providing the metaphoric map for the lesbian community, the transsexual's "intrusion," a heterosexual rape. The literal and symbolic fate of the female-to-male transsexual in feminist and lesbian feminist arenas in the seventies and eighties was markedly similar. He was excluded from women only physical spaces: his crossing over made him not a spy but a deserter of a primary motherland.[6] In the representations of both types of transsexuals, femaleness is imaged as a physical territory to be guarded, a land or nation where the other must be kept out and the insider in, a home that can be invaded or abandoned.[7] This metaphorization played a fundamental role in structuring early lesbian politics.

Given the inextricability of the metaphoric and literal status of home in the lesbian feminist narrative of transsexuality, it is apt that the shift in lesbian / feminist politics on transsexuality is most pronounced in the events surrounding the overturning of the womyn-born-womyn only policy at the 1994 Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. Camp

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[6] "In spite of the overlap and kinship between some areas of lesbian and transsexual experience, many lesbians are antagonistic toward transsexuals, treating male-to-female transsexuals as menacing intruders and female-to-male transsexuals as treasonous deserters" (Rubin, "Of Catamites and King," 474).

[7] Shapiro attempts to find in the multiple meanings of "naturalization" a new metaphorics of trajectory for thinking about transsexual transitioning: "(1) a status acquired in the way foreigners acquire citizenship, (2) a change in gender that entails a change in the body, which we associate with the domain of nature, and (3) a recognition of the transsexuals' own experience of sex change as validating what they believe to be their true nature" (260). I am particularly drawn to the first sense of naturalization as a way of describing the transsexual journey (see one of the epigraphs to this chapter). However, Shapiro's footnote citation of a feminist conference member's suggestion that we trade in Raymond's formulation of male-to-female transsexuals as invaders for that of "'defectors' from the male status (that is, as people seeking asylum from an oppressive regime)" positions

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Trans, the ad hoc activist coalition of transsexual activist groups, individuals and supporters who forced the policy's overturning, operated in accordance with the available ideological terms for the transsexual as invader of home grounds, simultaneously challenging its metaphorics and its literal function. Staging the struggle as one over physical territory, Camp Trans set up camp directly opposite the site of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, and requested entry into the Festival land. The Festival's organizers were maneuvered into confrontation, and in response to pressure from the women at the Festival, they were forced to discard the policy. In the literal act of entering the Festival's land, Camp Trans challenged the organizers' definition of and their right to define woman. The moment of transformation is richly catachretic (necessarily so given the reliance of the politics of exclusion on the metaphorics of home and outside): symbolic and literal borders are simultaneously challenged, the metaphorics of femaleness as territory and the physical space of the Festival itself together opened up by the activists. The binary between inside and outside, between home and what is foreign to it is confused, both in respect to the land itself and the conceptual terrain of femaleness. Through its contestation of physical territory, Camp Trans intervened in the politics which invokes womanhood as a space to be bounded, guarded, policed.[8]

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female-to-male transsexuals in an antifeminist place -- maleness still as enemy territory -- thus perpetuating the lesbian feminist stereotype (275).

[8] The presence of Leslie Feinberg and a few transsexual men in Michigan proved crucial to deconstructing the Festival's womyn-born-womyn policy. "On Saturday morning, in an attempt to obtain clarification of the 'womyn born womyn' policy, protesters requested to meet with [Festival] Communications coordinators Lucy Tatman and Sue Doerfer. They were asked whether Leslie Feinberg, James Green, and Kodi Hendrix [two self-identified transsexual men] would be permitted to buy tickets without violating festival policy.

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This moment of transformation in the lesbian / feminist line on transsexuality captured in the events at Michigan encapsulates the shift from lesbian-feminist to queer (I substitute the bar for the hyphen between lesbian and feminist to suggest the unyoking of sexuality from femaleness and the possibilities of a politics of sexuality not coextensive with a sexual politics). As I argued in chapter 1, queerness has constituted itself in part through deploying (homo)sexuality to "trouble" gender. Interrogating and refiguring the relations between genders and between sex and gender, representing lesbian and gay identity as queer identity, has become characteristic of nineties lesbian and gay cultures. All about mobility, queerness has effected an opening up of the borders between genders, has disturbed the discrete categories of lesbian, gay, man, woman -- undoing their identity

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Leslie Feinberg introduced herself as a person who was born anatomically female but who passes and lives as a man and has a driver's license showing her sex as male. She asked whether she would be welcome to enter the festival. Ms Tatman said that 'the festival would prefer not,' a statement she retracted after Ms. Feinberg declared that she would tell audiences on her upcoming book tour that she had received confirmation that she 'is not welcome at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival.'

Kodi Hendrix then informed Ms. Tatman and Ms. Doerfer that he was born with both male and female genitalia and asked whether 'only half of [him] could come in.' James Green stated that he had no desire to enter the festival, and was only there in support of [his] transsexual sisters, but he wanted to know if he would be considered a woman by the festival owners using the same logic by which they consider male-to-female transsexuals to be men even after sex change surgery. Ms Tatman and Ms. Doerfer were unable to provide answers to either of these questions. Protesters then requested that they receive clarification of the policy regarding these three individuals from festival owners Lisa Vogel and Barbara Price.

Less than an hour later, Ms. Tatman and Ms. Doerfer delivered a message from the festival owners declining to further clarify the term 'womyn born womyn" and stating that it is up to each individual to decide whether or not she is included in that definition" (Janice Walworth, Cross-Talk: The Gender Community's News & Information Monthly, cited in James Green, "Camp Trans." See also "Border" in S/he for Minnie Bruce Pratt's vignette of her experience of this moment with Feinberg; it is from Pratt -- Feinberg's lover, to whom S/he is dedicated -- that I borrow the slashed pronoun to sustain Feinberg's transgender.

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narratives -- and, as a result, has enabled the formation of new political, cultural and social coalitions. Affiliations between lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and sadomasochists, made possible under the sign of an expansive notion of queer sexuality, suggest that the space between these specific groups can be traversed. Not only is the home of the body to be abandoned but a home of a community founded on the body. If border-crossing has become a queer motif, it is surely because of what queerness has positioned itself against: the homeliness of identity politics (lesbian feminism for example), in which the subjects starts out with where she "comes from," her narrative of returning / rediscovering home grounding her identity and her politics. As a coalitionary term, queerness celebrates unbelonging, leaving this home ground of identity for the mobility of (crossing) identifications.[9]

Queer's critique of border patrolling between identity categories explains why women at the Michigan Festival supported letting in the transsexual women: the category of woman is opened up by the transsexual; simultaneously this opening up legitimates and makes necessary the inclusion of transsexual women. Queerness is shaping a narrative which finds in the transsexual's crossing, that "trans" movement, an archetype of the border-crossing, home-leaving practices it apotheosizes. The "trans" journey is being taken up in poststructuralist theories of gender and sexuality precisely as a vehicle which moves us away from what are perceived as nostalgic and confining notions of belonging -- the natural body, identity, community. The discourse of queerness is recuperating the

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transsexual from the (bad) outsider to a lesbian and gay space to (good) queer representative. This seems particularly the case with the female-to-male transsexual or the transsexual man, perhaps because of the nineties popularization of butch-femme erotics and the domestication of butch: the female-to-male transsexual is constructed as an extension of the lesbian, her queerer manifestation.

Such a recuperation is effected by Halberstam's recent "F2M: The Making of Female Masculinity." Halberstam's purpose is to rescript one kind of transgendered story, the female-to-male transsexual narrative, into a postmodern queer text. She positions the F2M or transsexual man as epitomizing queerness; in its turn, queerness, an identity category so fluid, fragmented and artificial it evidences the impossibility of identity categories, is taken to be conceptually equivalent to postmodernism. Although untheorized, the essay prefers "F2M" as a term over transsexual man or the more common FTM perhaps because it recasts the identity as a postmodern code, the "2" a pun encapsulating what Halberstam takes to be the gender duplicity of the identity of the transsexual man. The transsexual man finds his place in Halberstam's scheme alongside other "queer identities," queer implying a sustained and manifest contradiction or ambiguity: "guys with pussies, dykes with dicks, queer butches, aggressive femmes, F2Ms, lesbians who like men, daddy boys, gender queens, drag kings, pomo afro homos [according to Halberstam's list, the only racial identity that, paired with homosexuality, counts as queer], bull daggers, women who fuck like boys." (212). In figuring the

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[9] In her call for coalitions across difference, primarily racial and sexual, Bernice Johnson Reagon insists on the necessity of "leaving home": "Coalition work is not work done in your home. Coalition work has to be done in the streets" (359).

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transsexual man as queer, it would at first seem that Halberstam's desire is to dislocate queer from its homosexual referent. With regards to both representations of the transsexual men she conjures, the sexual orientation of the men is toward women; if men indeed these transsexuals would surely be classified as heterosexual. Yet Halberstam holds on to queer's homosexual referent by categorizing the transsexual man as a lesbian; she describes the female-to-male transsexual or F2M as a "transsexual lesbian," a term which, Halberstam is apparently unaware, transsexuals already use to describe a transsexual woman (a male-to-female) whose desire is for women (212). As a lesbian, the transsexual man represents the transgressive and postmodern in lesbianism. The essay enlists the transsexual man -- the F2M -- to render lesbianism postmodern and transgressive: a task that requires the undoing of the very category of transsexual.

What is postmodern or queer about the transsexual man, or transsexual lesbian to use Halberstam's terms, is predictably that "trans": the act of crossing over from one sex or gender to the other. Paradoxically, it undoes the difference both between each sex and between sex and gender. The transsexual subject collapses the divisions, requiring us to dispense with "the constrictive terminology of crossing," the very difference between stasis and mobility (216). After the F2M / transsexual lesbian, there is no sex, gender or sexual difference, only a universal queerness in which all categories are hybrids, in which borders are irremediably eroded and distinct plots untraceable. In this postmodern vision of generalized celebratory gender and sexual confusion, the specificity of the transsexual subject disappears; originary sites or homes are meaningless. Halberstam claims both that "we are all transsexuals" and that "there are no transsexuals," for "[w]e are all cross-dressers but where are we crossing from and to what? There is no 'other' side, no

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'opposite' sex, no natural divide to be spanned by surgery, by disguise, by passing. We all pass or we don't, we all wear our drag, and we all derive a different degree of pleasure -- sexual or otherwise -- from our costumes" (212). A kind of deconstructive trope, a marker of *différance*, the movement of the transsexual destabilizes the stasis of difference, shifting us all (and keeping us mobile) in a space of happy non-belonging beyond difference: "All gender should be transgender, all desire is transgendered, movement is all" (226). Although Halberstam does not play with her terms, her essay recodes the "trans" in transsexual from "crossing" to "beyond," the "trans" or crossing of the transsexual subject setting us off on trajectories "trans" as in beyond, trans-sex and trans-gender: beyond the confines of home. Universal gender performativity takes the place of differentiated structured narratives.[10]

Nevertheless, in spite of her vision of all genders and sexualities as transgendered and transsexual, in spite of her claims that that "trans" mobilizes and deconstructs difference, Halberstam's lesbian postmodern leaves unwrecked the identity homes of female and lesbian. Even though it is an identity that loosens up the definition, the F2M in Halberstam's representation is "still" lesbian, not male but, according to her title, "female masculinity." The F2M is femaleness which doubles as masculinity ("2"), one sex which masquerades as the gendered other. He is, in effect, remarkably similar to that old lesbian feminist nemesis, the male-identified woman, except in this queer narrative the masquerade

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[10] Halberstam's emphasis on drag to illustrate performativity symptomizes the way in which Butler's theory of gendering has been domesticated in queer theory. For Halberstam, performativity invokes the theatrical in a way that simplifies Butler's attempts to describe gendering in terms borrowed from speech act theory

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is coded "good." As with the strap-on dildo, the implication is that (masculine) gender is a mask that can be taken off, that "underneath," there remains a reassuringly manifest, immutable femaleness.[11] This disavowal of the maleness of the transsexual man under the sign of queerness is remarkably fetishistic (a kind of reverse fetishism for it is maleness which is not seen). What is disavowed is the difference (between queer critic and transsexual male subjects, between queerness and transsexuality) of sex and sexuality, and, above all, of the particular history of the transsexual's body. As in the classic psychoanalytic scene of fetishism, the real sexual body is to be defended against, the difference of the flesh neutralized through an imaginary sameness. Queerness in this version leaves intact what the vast majority of transsexual men, to different degrees, determine not to -- the female body. Halberstam fails to read the transsexual man's story -- his narrative of becoming -- in its specificity, to recognize its origins in painful wrong embodiment, its end in the reconstruction of the material body.[12]

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[11] James Green, editor of the FTM Newsletter, responds to a letter from Halberstam notifying the newsletter of the publication of her essay: "You say that gender is a fiction and our lives are fictions while you claim to open up the possibilities for a wider variety of gender expression. I think that in this essay you may do us more harm than good. Our gender and our lives are not fiction: we struggle with the realities of legal and medical identities that we cannot take off like strap-on dildos" (FTM 28: 12). Halberstam's essay has become infamous in the transsexual men's community. At the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Studies Conference in Iowa in November 1994, transsexual men walked out of Halberstam's presentation. I have been told that Halberstam is now rethinking her claims. Thanks to Henry Rubin and Heather Findlay for the gossip.

[12]A similar reading of the transsexual man as transgressive lesbian can be seen in the reports of the gay press on the death of female-to-male transsexual, Brandon Teena. The gay press refigures Teena as a female martyr to the queer cause, a lesbian who was raped (precisely the punishment deemed appropriate for a transgressive woman according to the National Lesbian and Gay Task Force) and killed in Humboldt, Nebraska where to be a

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Queer theory and politics embraces the transsexual only while s/he is read as dehom(e)ogenizing sexual and gender identities in keeping with queer's foundational project. This reading fails to approach transsexual stories as narratives with plots centered on embodied becoming. Transsexual subjects themselves have traditionally figured their

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lesbian is in itself transgressive. From the point of view of the transsexual press (and my point of view), the gay press disturbingly replicates the mainstream press's misreading of Teena, identifying him not as a transsexual man he was but as the queer woman he sought not to be. For mainstream press coverage, see New York Times Jan. 4, 1994, A, 11: 1. For gay press, see San Francisco Bay Times Jan. 13, and especially Donna Minkowitz's article in New York's Village Voice, April 19, 1994: "Love Hurts. Brandon Teena Was a Woman Who Lived and Loved As a Man. She Was Killed For Carrying It Off," which is typical of the gay press's elision of the role of transsexuality from the story. In spite of its intention to lesbianize Teena, Minkowitz's piece inadvertently provides the reader with the classic markers of female-to-male transsexual experience: Teena's declarations of his disidentification with lesbianism and of his desire to have a "sex change"; his suicide attempt; the incredible lengths to which he goes in order to pass full time; his girlfriends' insistence to the cynical Minkowitz that he was not really a woman, that he loved "'the way a man loves a woman,'" that "'Brandon was a man on the inside where it counts.'" Even though her research uncovers and conveys to the reader such loaded material, Minkowitz fails to read its transsexual significance. The article does not even mention transsexual or transgendered as possible descriptives for Teena and does not begin to explore the place of such terms in his story. Instead Minkowitz's writing romanticizes Teena as an irresistibly seductive butch dyke: "the wonder boychik," "the handsomest butch item in history -- not just good-looking but arrogant, audacious, cocky -- everything they, and I, look for in lovers." The stance of the article is epitomized in its treatment of Teena's "stoneness." That Teena would not let himself be touched strikes Minkowitz not as symptomatic of the painful dissociation from his own female body that Teena clearly felt as a transsexual but as "sexy and alluring," yet simultaneously a peculiarity that poor self-hating Teena should have got over: "Maybe if Brandon had let herself discover how good *she* could be treated, she wouldn't have had to push the women she loved so far away."

The week after Minkowitz's article appeared, the Transexual [sic] Menace, a recently-formed New York based group of transsexual activists, protested the offices of the Village Voice. The anger among many transsexuals over the lesbian and gay evacuation of Teena's transsexuality often felt greater than that over the killing of Teena, perhaps in part because it could be more effectively directed, but also, I want to suggest, because of transsexual anxieties about the co-option of transsexuality by queerness, the glossing over of its different narrative. For the transsexual press's critique of the gay

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transition as a final going home, a trajectory that is only worth its risks, complications and pain because it will allow one to arrive at where one should have always been: the destination (being able to live in one's "true gender identity") is all. Gender is not so much undone as queerness would have it as redone, that is, done up differently; there is a plot to be traced, by the transsexual subject in his / her life and the telling of it, and by the reader of this story. The period of transition valorized in Halberstam's queer version -- the actual crossing -- is a means to an end rather than an end in itself. It poses the most difficult time for the transsexual, the uninhabitable space -- the borderlands in between, where passing as either gender might prove a challenge, when both bathrooms are outlaw zones. The subjective experience of this period is quite different from the way in which queer theory translates it into discourse. In their transsexual autobiographies, Jan Morris describes this "precarious condition" (110) as a time when she was a "a kind of nonhuman, a sprite or monster" (114), Kate Cummings, as a time when she had no name as she "was living a totally secret existence and did not need a name" (xi). Nameless, monstrous, unlocatable: this is a no-place through which one travels because of the promise of home on the other side. This notion of reaching home as goal is emphasized by the narrative structure of transsexual autobiographies which typically close when that destination -- finally becoming a woman or a man -- is arrived at. As the subtitle of Nancy Hunt's autobiography makes clear, "The Odyssey of a Male-to-Female Transsexual," the whole point of the transsexual journey -- of the life and life-story -- is, like Odysseus, to return home.

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press's reception of Teena, see FTM [Female-to-Male Transsexual] Newsletter 26

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iii. Feeling Out of Place: Feinberg's *Unheimlich* Body and the Dream of a Transgendered Home

> Begin, though, not with the continent or country or a house but with the geography closest in -- the body.
>
> Adrienne Rich, "Notes Toward a Politics of Location"

> While transsexualism reveals that a society's gender system is a trick done with mirrors, those mirrors are the walls of our species' very real and only home.
>
> Judith Shapiro, "Transsexualism: Reflections on the Persistence of Gender and the Mutability of Sex"

Stone Butch Blues performs a disturbing intervention into the narrative of transsexual autobiography for it is neither -- neither strictly a transsexual story nor strictly autobiography -- but rather a fictional autobiography whose subject and author are transsexuals who turn back, who refuse final becoming and belonging, both becoming a sex and belonging to a community. The unsituatedness of the subject's and author's gender (reflected by the unsituatedness of the text's form as in between the genres of fiction and autobiography) complicates the task of reading Stone Butch Blues. The pull toward incoherence and hybridity, manifest both in the form of sex and text, seemingly urges that we read this story as exemplarily queer: a postmodern trans-fictional illustration of Halberstam's theory of female-to-male transsexuality in which the transitional / transitioning does away with the fixed points and homogenous categories of gender and sexual identities, in which the journey -- the act of leaving home or the familiar -- brings with it the recognition that home (the body / identity) is made up, a construct, and thus, along with the narrative of gendering, to be relinquished. In spite of its

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(February 1994): 3 and TNT [Transsexual News Telegraph] Winter 1994.

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resistance to taking up a recognizable textual and sexual place, however, there threads through Stone Butch Blues a distinctly unqueer yearning for home, home both in the body and in community. While the trajectory is the same as Halberstam's, its meaning is radically different, its narrative point of view an insider's, its grounds not a theoretical premise but subjective experience. The tension or ambivalence between leaving and desiring home is the structuring principle of the plot, thematics and form of Stone Butch Blues: as the real of home is left, the fantasy of it, the desire to belong, is empowered.

Rich's politics of location presses us to begin with the body as "the geography closest in" as that which is most familiar, closest to home in the subject. Stone Butch Blues represents Jess Goldberg experiencing h/er female body as that which is most *unheimlich* in herself: the familiar felt as most strange. Jess's sexual untouchability -- and this is what is primarily meant by the "stoneness" of the stone butch -- stems from this feeling of needing to signal h/er difference, h/er displacement (to h/er femme lover and herself) from h/er female body.[13] Through hormones and mastectomy, Jess goes on to translate this difference somatically, to rehouse this feeling of not being a woman. The

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[13] On the overlap between stone butch and transsexual man, see Rubin's "Of Catamites and Kings." "Although important discontinuities separate lesbian butch experience and female-to male transsexual experience, there are also significant points of connection. Some butches are psychologically indistinguishable from female-to-male transsexuals, except for the identities they choose and the extent to which they are willing or able to alter their bodies. Many FTMs live as butches before adopting transsexual or male identities. Some individuals explore each identity before choosing one that is more meaningful for them, and others use both categories to interpret and organize their experience. *The boundaries between the categories of butch and transsexual are permeable* (473; my emphasis). See also Zachary I Nataf; and Heather Findlay, "Modern Stone: What is Stone Butch Now?"

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unfamiliarity with the sexed body, this feeling of not belonging in the body sexed in this way, is a crucial element in the narrative's overlap with transsexual autobiography and Jess's investment in transsexual identity. Even though Jess disidentifies with transsexuality in h/er narrative, marshaling a representation s/he admits s/he received from TV -- "I don't feel like a man trapped in a woman's body. I just feel trapped" -- h/er fictional autobiography shares with transsexual autobiography a narrative trajectory that centers on the sexed body, driven by the subject's sense of not being at home in his / her body, promising to reach closure once the body is hormonally and surgically reconstructed (159). The feeling is resolved, the story concluded, only through its literal dis-placing to another gendered morphology, a somatic reshaping in line with inner gender identity in which the body is finally made into home

As with transsexual autobiography, Feinberg's text represents the experience of what is now medically diagnosed as gender identity disorder. In 1994, DSM IV (the fourth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the psychiatric handbook) rewrote transsexuality as "Gender Identity Disorder," in part in order to produce a more generic category to include degrees of gender identity confusion resolvable by means other than transsexuality (for example, psychotherapy); and in part in response to increasing pressure from transsexual activists who seek the total de-pathologizing of transsexuality. Their activism has as its goal the acceptance of transsexuality as an identity. In the supposed upgrading from its status as a mental or medical condition, they naively risk losing access to the medical technology that makes transsexuality possible: medical treatment responds to illnesses, not identities. The queer movement has also shunned the psychiatrizing of gender and sexual identities, refiguring

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mental disorders into difference or (de)constructive "trouble," subjects (not conditions) that elucidate how gendered normality inevitably fails, how its plot is an unrealizable ideal. Both of Halberstam's contradictory statements that "we are all transsexuals" and that "there are no transsexuals" erase the difference between the coherently and incoherently gendered and unravel the specific narrative of transsexuality which differentiates what feels natural from what doesn't.

Where Stone Butch Blues most clearly differs from queer and joins company with transsexual autobiography is in its representation of the experience of being differently gendered as embodied, natural, deeply psychically painful and shameful: hence a disorder to be reordered. Gender identity disorder is experienced by the subject as an embodied disembodiment, a feeling of not belonging in one's body: the gender that one feels oneself to be seems as though it does not belong in one's body. While this experience is bodily, it is not a- or pre-cultural, although it is often felt by the subject to be natural, innate. Yet only once this discrepancy between feeling and being is inflected through the cultural insistence on belonging, on continuity between body and identity (particularly gender and race identity; hence the reason why bodies that pass as what they are "really" not in these categories are culturally disconcerting) and the subject internalizes this socially constructed need to belong, does the subject attach significance to not belonging. One of the key markers of consciousness is bodily shame. Shame is the recognition or feeling of being out of place, of not being at home in a given situation combined with the desire to be at home: hence that wish that often accompanies shame for a hole in the floor so that one can escape from that place where one feels out of place. In the gender dysphoric subject, the shame felt is specifically over the body; in Feinberg and in lesbian folklore, the

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stone butch remains at least partially clothed when making love because of her shame over her female body, her sense of a mismatch between her masculine desire and her female physicality. Her unspeakable wish (unspeakable as part of her lesbian unconscious, for it would be vehemently denied by most) is to bring these into alignment. While I might seem here to be merely restating the interlocking between butch and transsexual identities, I do so from a perspective that inverts Halberstam's. Halberstam discovers the queer lesbian in the transsexual; I want to underline the transsexual possibilities of the stone butch.[14]

Shame is crucial in structuring all degrees of gender identity disorder. Its presence reveals the discrepancy between the unreconciled desire to belong in the sexed body and the consciousness of not belonging in it. Shame often functions to set in motion the transsexual trajectory which becomes a means to alleviate shame through realigning the body to reflect the desire. The interconnections between shame and the body might be quite fundamental, shame being a feeling often expressed somatically (blushing, lowered face for example) but perhaps finding its very origins in the body: psychologist Donald L. Nathanson has suggested that adult shame is a repetition of infantile genital shame.[15] In

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[14] Heather Findlay's "Lesbian Fetishism and the Dildo Debates," on lesbian fetishism and butch-femme erotics hints at the painful investment of the stone butch in transsexual body dysphoria. In a section subtitled "The cunt we both wish did not exist," Findlay writes that "the [butch's] dildo allows lesbians to circumvent the question of the cunt" (571).

[15] Quoted in Sedgwick (12) Sedgwick's own recent work explores the productive possibilities of shame. "Queer Performativity" imbricates shame with queerness, suggesting a way in which queerness might be thought in terms of shaming, and might, in its own turn, transform the stigma of shame. "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold" (co-authored with Adam Frank) represents shame through the work of Silvan Tomkins as a vehicle for recovering affect from anti-essentialist Theory's "Theorization" (here voiding or flattening out) of affect. While Sedgwick's attention to differentiated feelings is clearly important to me here, she does not write about a) shame specifically over the body, or b)

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this sense, shame returns us to our earliest feelings about those parts of our body constructed as most private through the mechanism of shame; we can locate in its presence cultural representations of gender and the body, the real body, and the subject's negotiation of these. The shame of gender identity disorder is not, as is more implied by guilt, a result of something one has done but of simply who or what one is. It lies at the formative root of transsexual identity. As Leah Cahan Schaefer and Connie Christine Wheeler have suggested, gender dysphoric shame is existential.[16]

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non-productive shame that impairs the subject's sexual and social functioning -- ways that I am suggesting are foundational to gender identity disorder.

[16] Schaefer, Director of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, writes with fellow psychotherapist, Christine Wheeler, on the etiology of the guilt (used interchangeably with shame) in the transgendered / transsexual condition: "The recognition, or manifestation of guilt appears and becomes known to gender disordered children as they become aware (between ages 3-9) that they are not like other boys or other girls. Since children *fear* being 'different' (with implications of separation, rejection, and possible banishment from any social group, family, or friends) they are led to believe and think of themselves, 'There's something *wrong* with me.' With this recognition, a sense of secretiveness takes over -- 'Nobody must know,' but also wondering, 'Does anything show?' Then comes shame because this secret does not imply something to be proud of or to tell others. Accompanying shame, is blame. Whose fault is this? When something is wrong there must be a culprit -- someone must be blamed. Since the emotion emanates internally, the child can blame no one but itself -- 'It must be me. I must have done something bad or wrong or sinful to be this way -- so different from others.' The emotional focus is on *wrong* and *punishment*. This belief irrevocably establishes and solidifies guilt. . . .

It is essential to understand that in the development of this phenomen[on] of guilt *no* ACT was committed -- they've *done* nothing wrong. They are fundamentally guilty of BEING, guilty of being the way they are. It seems, therefore, in the final analysis, one might call this an existential guilt resulting from an existential 'crime' (the self perceived crime of existence)" ("Guilt and Cross Gender Identity Conditions: Understanding, Recognizing, Diagnosing, and Its Treatments" 5, 6; emphasis in original; thanks to Dr. Schafer for permission to quote).

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While the queer textualization of transgender views gender displacement as positive and empowering -- gendered contradiction has played a key role in making visible queer pride -- in their own stories, transgendered and transsexual subjects themselves represent this displacement is a source of acute discomfort, most obviously experienced as shame, an affect to be resolved. The significance of gendered contradiction in these two different discourses could not be more neatly antithetical: pride versus shame. In this regard, Feinberg's Stone Butch Blues is no exception. Stone Butch Blues, especially in its accounts of Jess's childhood and early adult life, is steeped in an almost insufferable shame. In its inscription of h/er masculinity, Jess repeatedly claims to be out of touch with h/er feelings, unable to express them; yet shame is h/er frequently articulated feeling. Jess's gendered difference (from h/er own body in conjunction with h/er difference from others around h/er) is situated clearly as the origin of this shame. Although the social reading of h/er embodied gender ambivalence, of h/er not belonging in a recognizable gendered place, inscribes this sense of shame -- the recurring question of Jess's life, "[a]re you a boy or a girl?" (16) -- Jess's gendered difference is already visibly embodied, corporeally legible to those around h/er, and in fact invites this reading. Stone Butch Blues does not suggest that h/er gendered difference is a construct, produced by a culturally determined way of looking; rather, especially in its accounts of Jess's alignment with nature in childhood -- an alignment which returns in h/er transgendered dreams -- the text naturalizes Jess's difference: "Nature held me close and seemed to find no fault with me" (17).

Cultural anxieties about gender raised by h/er ambivalence as a child and an adult generate and are seen as rationalizing the sexual violence against h/er, a sexual violence which in a circular fashion reinscribes h/er shame. In the first instance, Jess is stripped

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down and locked in a coal bin by a gang of neighborhood boys: "'Let's see how you tinkle,' one of the boys said as he knocked me down and two of the others struggled to pull off my pants and my underpants. I was filled with horror. I couldn't make them stop. The shame of being half-naked before them -- the important half -- took all the steam out of me" (18). H/er naked body on public display is itself the source of shame; that "half" is important for it reveals h/er sexed difference both from the boys and from what s/he herself appears not to be. Similarly, on both occasions when s/he is raped, first by school boys and then by the police, and when men urinate on h/er bed in the psychiatric ward, the sexual violence is intended against Jess as shaming and punitive, both caused by and reinforcing h/er shameful difference. These incidents centralize and subjugate Jess's body, serving to exacerbate h/er shame over its abjection and h/er identificatory distance from it. During the second rape, for instance, Jess displaces the real event and leaves h/er body behind by focusing on an imaginary place, a desert surrounded by mountains.

While the shame of gender identity disorder may be broken down into the feeling of not being at home in the body unreconciled with the desire to be at home, these feelings are underwritten by and only make sense in a world that places value on gendered belonging. Jess's difference is shameful in this context, in this normalization of being in place. Next to h/er "normal" feminine sister whose "dream was a felt skirt and an appliqué poodle and rhinestone-studded plastic shoes," Jess feels out of place and longs to belong: "I wished I could find a way to be good. Shame suffocated me" (19). Likewise h/er failure to fit in to charm school serves to highlight h/er "shameful differences" (23). And while working in the bindery, Jess fears starting the round of singing because of h/er difference from the native women workers, ashamed of the difference h/er voice will

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make: "I realized I felt ashamed of my own voice" (79). When fired from this plant, s/he confesses that s/he is "embarrassed," that "my shame rekindled as I realized the foremen probably heard my voice rising alone in song" (80). In childhood, the shaming of this difference -- the figuring of gendered difference as something in itself to be ashamed of -- is reinforced by Jess's mother who confesses her own feelings of shame over Jess's refusal to wear a dress to temple. And this in spite of the narrative making clear that 1950s Buffalo renders all kinds of difference shameful, in the Goldbergs' case, their working-class Jewishness: Shabbas candles are lit behind closed curtains, an ethnic and religious difference which, like Jess's different desires, is shamed into secrecy; Jess claims "Everyone in my family knew about shame" (19). But unlike Jess's gender dysphoric shame, h/er family's shame does not originate in or increase the abjection of the body.

These moments in the text illustrate that the concepts of being at home and not being at home in one's sexed body only take on meaning in the cultural context of gendered belonging; change the context -- which is what Jess does in seeking out a place within the butch-femme community of Buffalo as a stone butch -- and the meaning also changes. H/er gendered difference is in this space h/er passport to belonging, and correlated to this new sense of belonging, shame is generalized or institutionalized. Butch-femme code expects butches to conceal the femaleness of their bodies, bind their breasts, wear men's clothes, and remain untouchable in bed: the female body as something to be ashamed of is to be hidden. At moments, the community manages to go so far as to invert the values of dominant culture, resulting in scenes such as Butch Ro's funeral which are among the most powerful in the text, for here the shame lies in the butches wearing dresses and not concealing their sex:

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> These were burly, big-shouldered he-shes who carried their womanhood in work-roughened hands. They could playfully slap you on the back and send you halfway across the room. Their forearms and biceps were covered with tattoos. These powerful butch women were comfortable in work chinos. Their spirit roared to life when they wore double-breasted suits.
>
> Wearing dresses was an excruciating humiliation for them. Many of their dresses were old, from another era when occasional retreats were still necessary. The dresses were outdated, white, frilly, lace, low-cut, plain. The shoes were old or borrowed: patent leather, loafers, sandals. This clothing degraded their spirit, ridiculed who they were. Yet it was in this painful drag they were forced to say their last goodbye to the friend they loved so much. (117)

Even so, the home offered by this community proves transitory and unstable and, in the seventies, Jess finds herself again displaced. The end of the Vietnam War brings men back to their jobs in Buffalo, putting Jess and the other butches out of work in the plants and factories. Lesbian feminism rewrites butch-femme erotics as heterosexual / -sexist role play, coming to replace Jess's community in the bars with evenly gendered lesbian couples and performing acts of exclusion that were part of the real historical process of reshaping and redefining the lesbian community as feminist. While the butch-femme community allowed, indeed, valued and required the gendered contradiction and bodily shame presented in the figure of the stone butch, the new lesbian feminist ideology has no place for the non-woman-identified woman.[17]

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[17] During this historical shift, the narrative underlines that Jess's identification as butch overrides h/er identity as a woman:

"'It was a picture of two naked women wrapped in each other's arms. I read the words out loud: *Sisterhood -- make it real.* What does it mean?'

Theresa smiled. 'Think about it, Jess. It means women need to stick together. Can we put it up on the wall?'

I shrugged. 'Sure, I guess. You're really getting into this women's lib stuff, aren't you?'

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Once more Jess is not at home, out of place, and s/he represents this social unbelonging as the reason for h/er decision to pass as a man. H/er narrative ostensibly externalizes h/er motivation for beginning hormone treatment, suggesting that h/er transition is economic and political, a historical rather than a psychic necessity. S/he represents transitioning as simply a politically meaningful act, the only thing to do for a stone butch at this particular cultural moment; it is apparently h/er means to being at home in the world, not in h/er body. Yet such a constructionist explanation is not convincing; it represents Jess's displacement of body to world, of desire to history. Jess's depersonalization of transsexuality is radically contradicted by h/er transsexual desire: the yearning to resolve the feeling of displacement from the sexed body, the desire for home. Then as now, the space of butch-femme erotics, itself unconsciously enabled and authorized by this transsexual desire, may temporarily contain it. Once this community becomes inaccessible, Jess must find an alternate system for channeling this desire: somatic transitioning. The desire for a different body (a gendered home) has been there all along, as the narrative of discomforting shame suggests, at least since childhood; the shift is in the literalization of this desire on the body.[18]

Theresa sat me on a kitchen chair and plopped down on my lap. She pushed the hair out of my eyes. 'Yeah,' she said, 'I am. I'm realizing a lot of things about my own life -- about being a woman -- that I never even thought about until the women's movement.'

I listened to her. 'I don't feel it so much,' I told her. 'Maybe cause I'm a butch.'

She kissed my forehead. 'Butches need women's liberation, too.'

I laughed. 'We do?'" (138).

And again:

"'You're a woman!' Theresa shouted at breakfast. . .

'No I'm not,' I yelled back at her. 'I'm a he-she. That's different'"(147).

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Jess's transsexual desire is most evident in h/er response to the physical changes h/er body undergoes. S/he takes great pleasure in them, and not simply because they allow h/er to pass but because they provide h/er with a body s/he feels to be more appropriately h/ers. Hormones and surgery provide the means for Jess to reconcile h/er gendered identification with h/er somatic presentation, h/er body image with h/er sexed body. Once the hormones have substantially transformed h/er body, h/er sense of being out of place in it disappears, h/er pleasure and relief at being reconciled in it are powerfully evident through the metaphorics of home:

> As I brushed my teeth, I glanced in the mirror and had to look a second time. Beard stubble roughed my cheeks. My face looked slimmer and more angular. I stripped off my T-shirt and my BVD's. My body was lean and hard. My hips had melted away. I could actually see muscles in my thighs and arms I never knew I had. . . . I took a hot soapy shower, enjoying the feel of my hands on my skin. It had been so long since I'd been at home in my body. (171)

Similarly, Jess figures h/er double mastectomy as "a gift to myself, a coming home to my body" (224). Jess's transitioning is clearly not a case of butch going under cover as man out of economic necessity; h/er narrative fails to sublimate the subject's desire and pleasure

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[18] As for the question of why Jess's narrative does not even acknowledge its transsexual investment, we might look to Feinberg's critique of the provision of medical resources to transsexual men in Buffalo in the seventies. Reading a political subtext, Feinberg suggests transsexuals were used as surgical guinea pigs for returning Vietnam veterans: "Now, at the time, I believed that one of the motivations for those who were conducting experimentation with the FTM community in Buffalo was that there was so much genital damage during the war in Vietnam, and there was no field of phalloplasty at that time, no way to create erectile tissue, or get a urethra through erectile tissue without infection. So, really, a great deal of the sex change program in Buffalo was geared at experimenting with phalloplasty on the FTM community. A lot of us went through that program and I don't think given the definitions of transsexuals . . . I knew that I wasn't a transsexual" (Kevin Horwitz, "Politics & Gender: An Interview with Leslie Feinberg," FTM Newsletter 23: 2-3).

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in h/er constructionist explanation of necessity. The mirror / shower scene marks the first moment in which Jess tells of looking at h/er naked body, let alone taking pleasure in it. In contrast to the body-concealing strategies of Jess as stone butch (painful breast-binding, wearing suits), this stands as a moment of dis-covery, of revelation, and Jess stands naked and remarkably without shame; clearly it is the transsexuality of this body that finally makes it both a site of enjoyment for Jess, even a pleasure for her to touch (a dramatic departure from Jess's untouchability as a stone butch). While Jess would have the reader believe that h/er sex crossing is circumstantially motivated, the text suggests otherwise, revealing the embodiment of desire (or desire for embodiment) at points where it exceeds history and geography. Contrary to the claims of her own narrative, Jess's desire to reconstruct h/er body as home is not simply an effect of the absence of a cultural place for h/er as a stone butch in the early seventies.

If Jess achieves such happiness at being at home in h/er body, why does she leave it? Why does s/he stop taking hormones, giving up the protection provided h/er by passing as a man, the security of having a definitive, culturally acceptable place (a place to go to the bathroom, a place to get h/er hair cut), for the dangerous nowhere of the gender ambivalent, the in-between? As soon as the effects of testosterone begin to wear off, Jess's beard grows wispy, h/er hips widen, h/er face softens, and the cycle of violence against h/er kicks in again. If, in beginning testosterone treatment, Jess states: "the hormones are like the looking glass for me. If I pass through it, my world could open up," in ending h/er hormone treatment, Jess goes back through the looking glass to a gendered

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borderlands (151). Why this return, this doubling back in and of the narrative? This is a crucial turning point: the story splits off from the linear plot of transsexual autobiography in which one does finally become embodied as a man / woman. Jess's return marks Stone Butch Blues as a transsexual autobiography that is not one, and, concomitantly, Jess herself as a sex that, in the most literal sense, is not one. Where does this not-being leave both Jess and h/er story? Does this refusal of the narrative goal or home of transsexuality make Jess's sex and the text queer?

Even though Stone Butch Blues departs form the transsexual story line, Jess and her narrative do not belong in a queer context. At this point, Stone Butch Blues splinters away from both narratives, transsexual and queer, outlining instead a third representation of transgendered subjectivity. The differences between these subjectivities turns on the significance of passing for each. For the transsexual, passing is a step toward home, a relief and a release: it aligns inner gender identity with social identity; one is "taken" in the world for who one feels oneself to be psychically, internally. The transsexual takes hormones and undergoes surgery in order to reconcile inside and outside. In contrast, queer theory has made passing its central mechanism for deontologizing sex and gender, for illustrating that gender is performative, not about being at all but doing. One is the gender one "does" repeatedly, but the recognition of this purportedly undoes the stability and founding of that "is." Gender and sex for all of us, to return to Halberstam's scheme, are constituted by the act of passing alone: we all pass or we do not. Appearance comes to stand for identity, the signifier for the referent; the thing-in-itself to which transsexuals are anchored (their inner / true gender identity), the realization of which is the goal of their narrative, is displaced in the queer theory of passing.

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Although Feinberg's representation of the experience of passing for Jess, like the transsexual narrative, keeps separate the feeling of being gendered from the world's perception of this gendering, Stone Butch Blues differs in its interpretation of the subjective experience of passing. Ultimately, passing reopens in Jess a painful split between inner and social identity and undoes the initial relief the hormones brought, stalling the transsexual narrative in Stone Butch Blues. This split is reflected in the peculiar "double consciousness" (as s/he quotes Du Bois)[19] that Jess develops: a feeling of entrapment again in the wrong body. Feinberg examines the costs and limits of gender-crossing / transgression, the pain and confusion on the part of the subject involved in the experience of passing. S/he counters the tendency in queer theory, in its translation of this experience into discourse, to fantasize transgender as playful, subversive crossing. If the figure of Jess might be said to pose trouble, this trouble overwhelmingly targets h/er own psychic stability.

The split or double consciousness that passing develops in Jess is articulated through the series of mirror scenes in the text. The transsexual autobiographer sees in the mirror an/other, a body / face that is not me, not the gender I imagine myself to be /

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[19] From The Souls of Black Folks given to Jess by h/er friend Edwin. Jess does not read the page Edwin marks until after Edwin's suicide: "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness -- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (cited in Stone Butch Blues 178). Feinberg's / Jess's citation of Du Bois and Edwin's suicide underline the complexity of different kinds of passing. Passing for most blacks is simply not possible. Unlike gendered passing, moreover, racial passing is certainly not assumed by contemporary theory to be *ipso facto* transgressive.

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already am; the mirror lies about my gender. In altering my body, I correct the mirror image, project the truthful image of who I am. While the mirror in Stone Butch Blues recurs, it functions in its different significance from the mirror in transsexual autobiography to explain why the narrative doubles back and Jess transitions back, how passing does not resolve but reintroduces the double consciousness, driving h/er away from the home promised the gender-displaced by transsexuality to a transgendered borderlands. Jess does not see reflected in the mirror what the subject of transsexual autobiography sees, the not-me; before h/er transition, Jess invariably sees herself, a woman looking back at a woman. The split gendered subject of transsexual autobiography staged in the mirror scene is in Feinberg absent. As a child cross-dressing in h/er father's suit, Jess sees reflected not a man but an "uncatalogued" woman, the woman s/he expects to become. After giving herself h/er first shot of testosterone, Jess reassures herself that in the mirror s/he still sees "me, looking back at me" (164). Even after having sex with Annie, a heterosexual woman who takes h/er (in both senses) as a man, while trading dildo for sock in h/er BVDs (hard on and off again) in Annie's bathroom, Jess sees "me looking back at me" in the bathroom mirror (192). During this most schizophrenic moment in the text ("She put her hand gently between my thighs and squeezed the sock. 'I got a lot of pleasure out of this tonight, she said'"[192]), when what Jess passes for is most divorced from what s/he feels herself to be, the mirror makes clear that Jess has maintained to herself while passing as a man the stability of h/er identity *as a masculine woman* -- "It's one thing for the magician to reveal the art of illusion. It's another thing to tell a straight woman that the man she slept with was a woman" (195). What Jess sees in the mirror is now gendered -- not simply me looking back at me -- and

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this gendering is clearly not male although neither it is unambiguously female; it is instead a transgendering. This is crucial. Passing for Jess has involved the production of an illusion -- a projection, not a reflection -- of being a man; it is not a stage in the process to becoming one as it is transsexual narratives. At the same time, and now in contradistinction to the queer version of transgender, Jess's inner (trans)gender identity is determining h/er sense of herself, not h/er passing, h/er "performance" -- sexual and social -- as a man. The masquerade does not constitute h/er identity; it is simply that, a masquerade concealing h/er sense of h/er real self. It is this distinction which finally shapes her story.

Once Jess reaches the point where h/er passing is so successful that s/he no longer sees "me looking back at me" in the mirror, once the contradiction between what s/he appears to be and what s/he feels herself to be has reopened (this time on the other side), Jess decides to end h/er testosterone injections. Jess's "me," after h/er experience with hormones, turns out to be the space of gendered contradiction and ambiguity in between the departure and the destination of h/er transsexual journey, neither woman nor man or perhaps both. In describing the moment of h/er return, Jess displays the double consciousness engendered by passing that effects h/er doubling back:

> I drew one cc of hormones into a syringe, lifted it above my naked thigh -- and then paused. My arm felt restrained by an unseen hand. No matter how I tried I could not sink that needle into my quadriceps as I'd done hundreds of times before. I stood up and looked in the bathroom mirror. The depth of sadness in my eyes frightened me. I lathered my morning beard stubble, scraped it clean with a razor, and splashed cold water on my face. The stubble still felt rough. As much as I loved my beard as part of my body, I felt trapped behind it. What I saw reflected in the mirror was not a man, but I couldn't recognize the he-she. My face no longer revealed the contrasts of my gender. I could see my passing self, but even I could no longer see the more complicated me beneath my surface. . . . I hadn't

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> just believed that passing would hide me. I hoped that it would allow me to express the part of myself that didn't seem to be woman. I didn't get to explore being a he-she though. I simply became a he -- a man without a past.
>
> Who was I now -- woman or man? . . . What if the real me could emerge, changed by the journey? Who would I be? . . . I searched the apartment for a cigarette, but as I picked up the pack I watched my hand crush it. (221-222)

In this scene a gendered contradiction reopens in Jess and h/er disidentification with h/er body is at its most powerful. Not only does Jess for the first time in the narrative not recognize h/er reflected self in the mirror, the "real me" now concealed "beneath my [reflected] surface," a mask of passing, h/er bodily gestures contest each other in a complex embodiment of this split subjectivity. Watching herself crush the pack even though s/he had wanted a cigarette, unable to inject the testosterone in spite of habit (restrained by a seemingly external force), Jess experiences h/er desires as multiple and contradictory: a sign of this double consciousness that passing has installed, a disjunction between psyche and body again. In these careful details, Feinberg demonstrates how Jess's body negates itself to a point of stasis, necessitating the end of h/er transsexual trajectory: after this s/he can go no further. The moment is the embodiment of negation in Jess's story; what has been negated in h/er passing are "the contrasts of [Jess's sense of h/er] gender," h/er gendered difference, h/er embodied ambivalence.

Not only can Jess not reverse the narrative and return to a body before surgery and hormones, she has no desire to do so: h/er lowered voice, h/er masculinized facial structure, h/er body without breasts -- these are irreversible stages in FTM somatic transitioning. This now is the body in which s/he feels at home; the "real me" emerges only after this leg of the transsexual journey. Yet, as coming off testosterone does

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refeminize h/er, restarting h/er period, thinning h/er beard -- "blending gender characteristics," Jess refuses the places at either end of this journey, occupying instead a dangerous middle ground (224). If, as s/he poignantly suggests, passing is a journey and femaleness a familiar place that is left in the process of transition -- "No matter how painful it was to be a he-she, I wondered what kind of courage was required to leave the sex you'd always known" -- Jess ends h/er passing before s/he reaches an home as a man in the world (95). Although the hormones and surgery enable h/er to come home to h/er body, Jess ends up in the world in "borders that will never be home," a place of neither-nor / both, h/er cultural unbelonging literalized by h/er being unable to ride h/er Norton motorbike into Canada with h/er driving license listing h/er sex as female. Unlike Halberstam, Feinberg does not present gender-crossing as a fantasy of freedom and mobility for the subject, productive of a haven beyond sex and gender. Stone Butch Blues rather exemplifies how the transgendered subject's movements are severely restricted by gender surveillance structured into culture. That Jess continues to be monitored and punished by those around h/er -- stared at, beaten up, chased, fired, taunted -- even after h/er move to New York City, underlines the materiality of sex and gender binaries; crossing them (passing), neither makes the "sides" disappear in a puff of poststructuralist smoke nor situates the transgendered beyond them. Showing not the subversive potential but the cultural limitations of gender transgression, Feinberg's representation incorporates the agony involved in acts of transgression, the cost of crossing, the feelings of unsafety that are part of the subject's experience; in so doing she counters the prevailing tendency to idealize and dematerialize such trajectories.

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While Jess does not come home to one sex / gender and occupies instead this zone of unsafety in between, the final chapter of Stone Butch Blues apparently wants to resolve this cultural unbelonging, and to provide the text with some kind of narrative resolution or return home. It figures Jess's return to the lesbian and gay community through h/er taking the mike at a Christopher Street rally in New York City and her emergence into the rally from the subway stairs stands as an attempt to symbolize h/er re-emergence in the lesbian and gay world. Jess attempts to find a home in queerness, where the concept of home might be loosened to allow for affiliations across difference, where the "we [might be] bigger," as s/he suggests to h/er lesbian and gay audience (296). Yet this real place of the West Village and the apparent acceptance that Jess receives here from lesbians and gays is subverted and displaced by the location with which the text closes: the mythic transgendered place of Jess's final dream. This dream echoes two preceding dreams; read together as a staggered narrative within the text, the dreams stage the fantasy of creating another home, specifically transgendered, one not defined or contained by queer symbolized in the West Village.

The first dream is a daydream which Jess produces during h/er rape by the police. It figures Jess alone and apparently lost in the desert, heading toward mountains, "seeking sanctuary" (63). The second dream occurs immediately before Jess's decision to transition. The landscape is still mythic, now a deserted town from which Jess is walking away, significantly looking for people -- a community. Following a trail of smoke to a hut in a clearing in a forest, Jess finds inside the drag queens, Justine, Peaches and Georgetta, the butches, Al and Edwin, and Jess's mentor, Rocco, who had taken hormones and had breast surgery before h/er. While in the real of h/er narrative at this point Jess has not yet

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begun to transition somatically, in h/er dream, h/er body is already transformed: "I touched my own face. I felt the rough stubble of beard. I ran my hand across the flat of my chest. I felt happy in my body, comfortable among friends" (142). On waking, Jess describes h/er sense of h/er relation to the people in the dream: "'I felt like I belonged with them, you know?'" (142). S/he specifies a different configuration of gender as the criterion for belonging among the characters of h/er dream: "'But in the dream it wasn't about being gay. It was about being a man or a woman,'" claiming, "I didn't feel like a woman or a man, and I liked how I was different'"(143).

In the third and final dream, Jess returns to the hut in the field, discovering inside a circle of people. Now it is clear that it is transgenderism that links these people, that enables them to form this circle: "There were people who were different like me inside. We could all see our reflections in the faces of those who sat in this circle. I looked around. It was hard to say who was a woman, who was a man. Their faces radiated a different kind of beauty than I'd grown up seeing celebrated on television or in magazines" (300). Haunting this space are the Dineh women who, in raising Jess, give h/er origins a mythic dimension; in h/er dream, Jess finds the ring given h/er by the Dineh women at h/er birth as a sign of h/er difference. The ring was taken from h/er during the police rape, the incident that precipitated the first dream of being lost in the desert. The woman / man who beckons Jess shows h/er how the ring as object is now refigured in the circle of transgendered people surrounding h/er. The final dream neatly returns what belonged to h/er and was taken from h/er during the first dream, this belonging now serving as a recovery of that loss. Looking around the circle, Jess is urged by h/er guide to acknowledge that the circle of people around h/er is as "real" as the ring.

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Jess's dreams chart the finding of a home in fantasy, one quite different from the real queer community of the West Village. Strung together, the dreams suggest Jess's yearning for a home not only more bounded and more specific than the queer community, but with different criteria for belonging. Whereas in the queer community, Jess's gender matters -- "'Good for you, sister," she whispered in my ear. No one had ever called me that before" -- in the transgendered space of h/er dreams, Jess imagines a home where the question of what s/he is, "woman or man?" must remain precisely a question (297). The text implies that the queer space of Christopher Street that Jess discovers during the rally is only a kind of community stop-gap, that h/er "real" home in this transgendered space -- as of the moment only representable in h/er dreams -- is the true aim of h/er desire.

A political subtext might be read in the dream-representation if we turn to recent discussions of the thematics of home and belonging in lesbian autobiographies, particularly those by women of color.[20] In their explanation for the prominence of this theme, Biddy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty suggest that women of color invest in home in their autobiographies precisely because they "cannot easily assume 'home' within feminist [and we might add lesbian] communities as they have been constituted" (192). Along these lines, Feinberg's engagement with home speaks to the real historical construction of the lesbian and gay community through the exclusion of the transgendered and transsexual, and to what is at stake in the current inclusion of transgendered and transsexual folk in queerness -- the loss of specificity and difference. Through Jess's dreams, Stone Butch

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[20] Biddy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty; Leigh Gilmore and Marcia Aldrich; Julia Watson; Caren Kaplan.

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Blues proposes a specifically transgendered albeit mythic home, much as Audre Lorde's lesbian autobiography, Zami, imagines Carricou as an originary site for black lesbian sexuality. Lorde's Carricou initially exists off the map of the real; after repeated failed attempts Lorde eventually finds the real place on a map long after her imagining it to be there. The mythic or imaginary place preexists the real and comes to shape it. Insofar as the figure of home might be understood to stand in for the concept of community (and community is surely what the ring of transgendered people around Jess signifies), following the trajectory of Zami, Stone Butch Blues in its final pages insists on the importance of holding on to specificity and difference -- here transgendered -- within a coalitionary politics of queerness.

iv. Generic Displacements: Stone Butch Blues as Fictional Autobiography

> The question of the literary genre is not a formal one: it covers the motif of the law in general, of generation in the natural and symbolic senses, of birth in the natural and symbolic senses, of the generation difference, sexual difference between the feminine and masculine genre / gender, of the hymen between the two, of a relationless relation between the two, of an identity and difference between the feminine and masculine.
>
> Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre"

As fictional autobiography, Stone Butch Blues positions itself in a generic borderlands in between autobiography and fiction, the text enacting its protagonist's homelessness in a generic space; fictional autobiography is not a single stable genre but in between genres. In Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation, Leigh Gilmore makes a similar point about the intermediate generic space of autobiographical fiction: "Of course, autobiographical fiction is situated at a boundary and calls attention to its hybrid form by lacking a distinct generic name: autobiographical

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fiction depends for its coherence on the license of fiction to underwrite the contract of autobiography" (96). By autobiographical fiction, Gilmore intends autobiographical texts which deploy fictional practices.[21] The difference between fictional autobiography and autobiographical fiction might be grasped through the positioning of descriptive and noun: in the adjective is signaled the dominant form or frame of the text. Thus autobiographical fiction is autobiography which includes fictional methods, fictional autobiography, fiction which borrows from autobiography.

In the practical writing and reading of texts, such generic distinctions prove neither clear-cut nor consistent. One of the effects of these "hybrid" texts is to elucidate the messiness surrounding genre and the policing practices of readers and critics necessary for maintaining the conceptual distinctiveness of genres. This is particularly the case with autobiography, the genre most defined by contradiction and conflict as Paul de Man has pointed out. My questions here concern the issue of inter- or trans-genre, the practices of writing and reading Stone Butch Blues as an intermediate text. How does Stone Butch Blues rewrite the autobiographical contract through fictionality? What is the significance of the text's genre crossing in the light of the narrative of gender crossing? How does such a cross-genred text position its reader? And to what extent does Feinberg's construction of h/er reader shape the text's trans-generic form?

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[21] Gilmore's examples include Sandra Cisneros's The House on Mango Street and Gloria Anzaldúa's Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza; perhaps the most well known would be Maxine Hong Kingston's Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts which Gilmore addresses in a later chapter of her book.

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Stone Butch Blues is fictional autobiography in two senses: both a first person narrative fiction -- a fictional character's autobiography -- and a novel based on Feinberg's own life -- the author's autobiography in fictionalized form. Like Jess Goldberg, Feinberg grew up working-class Jewish in the fifties, came out as butch in the butch-femme community in Buffalo, worked in the factories until they closed in the seventies when s/he began testosterone treatment in order to pass as a man. And like Goldberg, Feinberg came off testosterone after four years, feeling trapped in h/er passing, never identifying comfortably as a man, and came to New York to become a prominent speaker in the lesbian, gay, transgender and transsexual communities.[22] The outline of the narratives, the fictional one of Stone Butch Blues and the real one of Feinberg's life are apparently identical. The key question regarding genre is why Feinberg did not simply frame h/er story as h/er autobiography. The subtitle of Stone Butch Blues, "A Novel," and the inside cover disclaimer ("This is a work of fiction. Any similarity between characters and people, dead or alive, is a coincidence") attempt to fix the text's status unambiguously as fiction (n.p.). In not giving h/er narrator-protagonist h/er own name, Feinberg would seem to further ground the text in fiction. Manifestly the life recounted is not that of the real author, Leslie Feinberg but the fictional character, Jess Goldberg. According to Philippe Lejeune's first formulation of the "autobiographical pact," the key means for the writer to ensure that the reader approach a text as autobiography, indeed, the primary requisite of autobiography, is identity between author's and narrator-protagonist's name. Lejeune

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argues that even if, as is the case with Feinberg, the plot of the story can be proven through reference to other texts to be identical to the author's life, if the authorial and narrator-protagonist's name are different, the text cannot be categorized as autobiography.[23] While he acknowledges that, in its internal form, fictional autobiography is no different from autobiography (both are first person narratives in which the narrator is the protagonist), Lejeune claims that the absence of identity between the proper names inside and outside the cover will entirely change the way in which we read the text, that is not as autobiography but as fiction. Autobiography cannot involve degrees of truth or identity: "it is all or nothing" (13); identity equals absolute truth, non-identity equals fiction. In his structuralist chart laying out how the difference or identity between author's and narrator-protagonist's names formulaically determines the genres of fiction and autobiography and the reader's approach to the text (autobiographical or fictional pact), Lejeune blacks out the square for the case in which the story is based on the author's life but the narrator-protagonist's name is not identical to h/er author's: the case of Stone Butch Blues. There is literally no place for fictional autobiography, for a trans-genred text; there is no place for telling one's story without baring all.

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[22] Feinberg's life can be gleaned both from h/er Journal of a Transsexual and from the following reviews and interviews: Victoria A. Brownworth, Diane Anderson, and Horwitz's excellent and revealing three part interview with Feinberg.

[23] "In the case of the fictitious name (i.e., different from that of the author) given to a character who tells his life story, the reader has reason to think that the story lived by the character is precisely that of the author: by cross-checking with other texts, or be delving into external news items, or even by reading the narrative whose fictional appearance rings false (as when someone tells you: 'What happened to a very good friend of mine was . . . ' and proceeds to tell you the story of this friend with a completely personal conviction).

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Yet, as Lejeune was to realize brilliantly in his return nearly a decade later to this 1973 essay, "The Autobiographical Pact (Bis)" -- the later deconstructive moment problematizing the investment in ordering and controlling genres that characterizes the earlier piece as structuralist -- his chart ends up demonstrating "the existence of ambiguities and degrees" involved in autobiography (125). It does so precisely through the blackened squares or empty spaces. In order to define and differentiate autobiography and the novel, the 1973 Lejeune must work according to a process of exclusion, leaving out those texts which fall between the crack of his binary formula, autobiography versus fiction. The empty spaces in the chart lay bare to Lejeune's reader his exclusion, indicating the supplement that challenges not only the comprehensivity and accuracy of his theory but its very basis. Feinberg's Stone Butch Blues is such a supplemental text that disturbs both Lejeune's initial generic distinctions and his concomitant conceptualization of identity and difference.

The proper name in Stone Butch Blues functions according to neither identity nor difference but resemblance. In the ambivalent gendering of the first name and the implicit Jewishness of the last, the narrator-protagonist's proper name, Jess Goldberg, resembles the authorial signature, Leslie Feinberg, repeats it not differently or identically but similarly. According to Lejeune's autobiographical contract, the absence of absolute identity between proper names stamps the text's status as fiction. Yet Feinberg's naming h/er narrator-protagonist Jess Goldberg demands that the reader notice a relation of resemblance. The narrator-protagonist's name is clearly an intentionally "bad" pseudonym

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We would have all the reasons in the world to think that the story is exactly the same;

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for the author's: it reveals more than it conceals the relation This resemblance between names breaks both autobiographical and fictional contracts; the text requires the reader to keep in mind this relation and situate the text somewhere in between these genres (although how to put in practice such an approach is another problem). Feinberg's acknowledgments further destabilize the subtitle's and inside cover's declaration of the text's fictionality. S/he concedes a mirroring relation between h/er life and the text and suggests the equivalence between them: "There were times, surrounded by bashers, when I thought I would not live long enough to explain my own life. There were moments when I feared I would not be allowed to live long enough to finish writing this book" (n.p.). In part because of the meaning of the statements and in part because "my own life" and "this book" occupy identical positions in each sentence, the syntax of which is almost identical, it is strongly implied that "this book" is the explanation of "my own life," that the two are interchangeable. The packaging or context of the narrative (authorial signature and narrator-protagonist's name, text's subtitle, inside disclaimer and acknowledgments) provides a contradictory picture about the text's generic belonging; *pace* Lejeune, it discourages the reader from taking an either-or stance. Even the front and rear cover photographs create this effect of ambivalence, of generic irreducibility. The faces they represent obviously "belong" to the same person: as written under the rear cover photograph is a blurb about Feinberg's life, clearly to Feinberg. Yet, although the inside publication information page states that the illustration on the front cover is a photograph, this photograph has been colored and retouched to the extent that its

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nonetheless, the text produced in this way is not an autobiography" (13).

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photographic realness is concealed and it looks more like a drawing. Mirroring the narrator-protagonist's name then, the cover photograph is apparently fictionalized, yet simultaneously reveals again a relation of resemblance between fictional subject and real author that subverts both absolute fictionality and absolute autobiographic realness.[24]

What is the significance of Stone Butch Blues occupying such an equivocal generic position and how do we read such a trans- or inter-generic text? Given the correspondence between the narrative's theme of sexed borderlands and its own textual borderlands, in addressing these questions, it is useful to resume the discussion of gender and genre in feminist autobiography criticism. Showing how the construction of autobiography as a genre was informed by phallocentric assumptions about gender difference was surely the most significant accomplishment of early feminist autobiography criticism. In 1980, in one of the first anthologies of feminist autobiography criticism, Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism, Estelle Jelinek documented how the autobiographical canon had been defined according to textual features that characterized men's autobiographies -- a stable and singular "I" who is a hero, a continuous narrative. Women's autobiographies had slipped through the canon because of their difference from

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[24] Nevertheless, undergraduate students in an introductory gender studies class at Hunter College, CUNY, found in this front cover photograph justification for reading Stone Butch Blues as strictly autobiographical. They insisted that they could see a scar above Feinberg's eyebrow, correlating this with a scar in the same place that the fictional Jess acquires (see p. 57). In the absence of an identity between authorial and protagonist's names, the apparent identity of the markings of the scar functioned as "proof" for these readers that the text was autobiographical, the "true story" of Feinberg's own life. They created an alternative autobiographical pact, one appropriately depending on the face (a striking literalization of de Man's autobiography as defacement!). The students absolutely

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this, typified as they were thought to be by a fragmented subject constructed in relation to others and an interrupted narrative: textual features thought to reflect the fragmentation of women's real life conditions. Much of early feminist criticism on autobiography involved recouping exiled texts of women's autobiographies, and strengthening the links between gender and genre proved a crucial method for revising the canon of autobiography and mapping out the territory of feminist autobiography studies. In an essay originally published in 1984, Domna Stanton, proposing that "the generic, as the French *genre* suggested, was inextricably linked to the genderic," analyzed how this imbrication had operated in the canonical writings of autobiography criticism (8). Stanton noted that Lejeune's privileging of the identity of authorial and narrator-protagonist's proper names as definitive of autobiography was inseparable from patriarchal conceptualizations of author and authority: "'author' spelled the phallic myth of authority, not to speak of the patriarchal institutions of property and law" (10). Lejeune's fixing of autobiographical truth-telling in the identity of proper names of protagonist, narrator and author came to be read as underwritten by phallogocentric beliefs.

Even if current work tends to seek to loosen the ties between sex and text that early feminist work like Jelinek's strengthened for strategic reasons, unpacking the relations between gender and genre remains an ongoing project in contemporary autobiography studies. Importing Butler's critique of the naturalization of gender into the domain of autobiography criticism, Gilmore invents an "autobiographics" to examine the specificity of women's self-representation not constructed as oppositional to men's and to

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resisted discussing the fictionality of the text, even its fictionality as autobiography.

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denaturalize sexual-textual difference. She suggests that, "[a]s useful as more monolithic claims about 'men's' and 'women's' autobiography have been to feminists during this crucial period of institutionalization of feminism, generalizations about gender and genre in autobiography naturalize how men, women, and the activity of writing an autobiography are bound together within the changing philosophies of the self and history" (13). With a similar theoretical gesture, Nancy K. Miller questions the cost of differentiating between women's and men's autobiographies through "maintain[ing] paradigms of gender polarities that oppose relatedness to separateness" ("Representing Others" 17). Miller demonstrates how some men's autobiographies in their representation of the autobiographical subject in relation can be read as exceptions to such a binary gendered-genred thinking; her essay charts a gender-genre crossing (a crossing between the polarized frameworks for reading men's and women's autobiographies) that destabilizes the binary's rigidity. Her call for the development of "a way of thinking flexible enough to accommodate styles of self-production that cross the lines of the models we have established" resonates in the context of reading transsexual autobiography, particularly Stone Butch Blues (17).

In examining the uncertain generic belonging of Stone Butch Blues, it therefore seems necessary to reexamine simultaneously the uncertain gender belonging of its narrator-protagonist-author. What is remarkably identical, indeed satisfyingly identical for the critic about Feinberg's response both to gender and genre is h/er resistance to going home to either side of either binary, h/er attempts to position h/er protagonist's gendered subjectivity, h/er text's generic form, and h/er own body, in an almost impossible locale in

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between: to opt on every count for a relation of resemblance. The text refuses full autobiographical or fictional belonging as Goldberg / Feinberg refuses full transsexual becoming: the either / or of genre and gender -- fiction or autobiography, woman or man -- remains either an unmade "choice," or a both. This coincidence between gender and genre sites is brought into relief when the key function autobiography plays in the construction of transsexuality is taken into consideration. This function is basically twofold. The transsexual subject needs to narrate his / her autobiography for his therapeutic / psychiatric listener in order to receive the authorization for hormone therapy and gender reassignment surgery necessary for somatic sex crossing. In addition, transsexual autobiographies, oral but primarily published texts, often circulate among transsexuals as an important source of information about transsexuality; they have a central place in what Sandy Stone has named the "Obligatory Transsexual File" that transsexuals tend to keep as they accumulate newspaper clippings, articles, photographs, any information they can find on transsexuality ("Empire Strikes Back" 285). Many transsexual autobiographies even display a consciousness of this function by listing support group / medical help telephone numbers.[25] In these senses, the genre of autobiography can be considered at least partially to engineer transsexual subjectivity. Recognizing the role of reading transsexual autobiography in the reproduction of transsexual subjects, British psychiatrist Bryan Tully remarks that "autobiographies of

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[25] This is particularly the case in British autobiographies I suggest because transsexual resources in Britain are institutionalized and thus are both more scarce and more rigid in their admission and authorization criteria. In the United States, this "gate keeping" role

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those who might have been transsexuals, but did not become so, are not usually written" (254).[26] Feinberg is the exception, and it is therefore richly appropriate that s/he coincides the genre of Stone Butch Blues with the gender of its author-narrator-protagonist, that s/he writes a text in between genres as s/he represents h/er subject in between genders. In order to tell the story of a sex that is not one, Feinberg writes an autobiography that is not one: woman or man, fiction or autobiography, the question remains precisely a question.

Such crossing, such hybridization, does not undo or displace either gender or generic binary; Feinberg does not create a boundary-free utopia. On the contrary, Feinberg's discursive effect, the reason why h/er notion of "trans" is important at this particular moment, lies not so much in a destabilization of either binary of gender or genre as in h/er affirmation that such binaries really do matter. It is as impossible to read a text without the rules of genre in mind, as it is to not gender ourselves or each other as subjects.[27] Gender and genre have an ineluctable materiality in the world. This materiality

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has been subject to much criticism over the past ten years, and has been largely abandoned by medical professions in the field as gender clinics have been disbanded.

[26] From Tully's perspective, this absence is regrettable, for he argues against what he represents as the mainstreaming of transsexuality; autobiographies written by those who "resist" transsexuality, Tully implies hopefully, would perhaps help divert the gender dysphoric from transsexual solutions. I don't share Tully's concerns about this transsexual conveyor belt (it resembles all too closely Raymond's evil empire). I think it time that transsexuals be attributed by theorists and medical professionals alike with the agency that both Tully and Raymond fail to recognize. The proliferation of transsexual autobiographies evidences both the power of this agency and the recognition of the need to declare it.

[27] Jacques Derrida makes this point about genre: "To formulate it in the scantiest manner -- the simplest but most apodictic -- I submit for your consideration the following hypothesis: a text cannot belong to no genre, it cannot be without or less a genre. Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text; there is always a genre

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lies behind the current fascination with figures of transgression (of the borders, boundaries and limits of identities and institutions) shared by academic theory and popular culture alike. The reality of the powerful policing that sustains difference produces equally powerful fantasies of transgressing difference.

Derrida's "The Law of Genre" suggests that in crossing demarcations, one risks "impurity, anomaly, monstrosity," an image that returns us to the transsexual's figure for herself during transition -- "a kind of nonhuman, a sprite or monster" ("The Law of Genre" 57; Morris, op.cit.). Derrida's evocation of genre as a law relays something of the policing that constructs categories as discrete, that prohibits crossing: "As soon as the word 'genre' is sounded, as soon as it is heard, as soon as one attempts to conceive it, a limit is drawn. And when a limit is established, norms and interdictions are not far behind: 'Do,' or 'Do not' says 'genre,' the word 'genre,' the figure, the voice, or the law of genre" (56). This law declares that "[g]enres are not be mixed," mixing transgresses their limits, their difference (55). In the context of identity, we might gloss this: be one thing or the other, but do not resemble, do not pass. Indeed, Derrida allows genre to refer not only to the typology of literature but to those of gender and race also. The interdiction on mixing, on resembling, contains a powerful ideological valence. If resemblance is a figure for transgender (as for other kinds of passing), the interdiction is on unfixing being and seeming. Reading Maurice Blanchot's La Folie du Jour and turning the law in on itself, Derrida's essay isolates and celebrates a moment of mixing in which the masculine "I" apparently shifts into or passes for a feminine subject: a display of grammatical, genderic

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and genres, *yet such participation never amounts to belonging*" ("The Law of Genre" 65;

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and generic translation which Derrida refers to metaphorically as "transsexuality" (76). Like mine of Feinberg, Derrida's reading of Blanchot highlights the coincidence of genre and gender crossing through transsexuality to reveal the foundational imbrication of their laws. What Derrida does not go on to explore are the policing mechanisms that seek to uphold these laws.

Perhaps more than any other literary genre, autobiography, like the figure of the transsexual, raises anxieties about genre, about belonging; the trope of home signifies generically. What is "it"? How shall we categorize "it"? Kaplan claims that "most contemporary discourse around autobiography centers on the problematic nature of generic definition"; it is dominated by "the preoccupation with [in the words of Georges Gusdorf] 'conditions and limits'" (115). Autobiography criticism has attempted to reinforce genre boundaries; as her enlisting of Derrida's "The Law of Genre" and her documentation of what she terms "outlaw genres" indicate, this reinforcement has operated on legal or policing metaphors. Lejeune's autobiographical pact depends on a contract between author and reader to define autobiography, yet, as "Bis" makes clear, Lejeune later recognizes the one-sidedness of this contract: "it is evident that the real reader can adopt modes of reading different from the one that is suggested to him" by the author (126). Lejeune's image of the reader as a detective as he looks for clues in the text to determine genre, to weigh the autobiographical truth of the text ("the reader often tends to think of himself as a detective") is more appropriate than the juridical metaphor: it articulates the practical imbalance of power in this theoretically "contractual" scheme (14).

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emphasis mine).

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Feminist critics have elucidated and critiqued the policing drama that shapes Lejeune's conceptualization of the scene of reading autobiography. Stanton criticizes Lejeune's authoritarian empowering of the reader: "Lejeune transformed the reader into a transcendent authority, a kind of policing force who could purportedly verify the fulfillment of the contract or pronounce the work a fraud" (10). Gilmore represents Lejeune himself, in his obsessive attempts to demarcate the boundaries of autobiography, as the policing reader -- albeit a rather benign and befuddled one -- validating policing practices among other autobiography readers:

> As a "policing" critic, Philippe Lejeune would be a rather obvious autobiography gendarme. But perhaps this is the wrong word. Lejeune's autobiography cops belong to a liberal state imaginary in which the police lack preventive and interdictive powers. Rather, Lejeune's policing of the autobiographical pact authorizes a mobile readership of detectives who concern themselves with verifying the facts. One imagines them running credit checks rather than knocking on doors and demanding documentation, gathering and generating more paper as they track the facts to the truth. (126)

That the law produces the desire to transgress it is true of Lejeune's laying down the generic laws of autobiography. Transgressing the law of the structuralist autobiography critic father, feminist work such as Kaplan's and Gilmore's foregrounds texts in which genderic and generic limits are pushed passed because the real reader adopts different modes of reading -- in these cases, feminist. Both Gilmore and Kaplan cite Lorde's Zami as such a gender / genre transgressive text. Yet in spite of these transgressive critical responses to Lejeune's "law," one aspect of his original formulation still resonates: his representation of the scene of reading autobiography as one of detection, policing. We can indeed adopt different modes of reading autobiography, but the law of genre that speaks the writer and reader of autobiography insists that we keep in mind truth, the

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literal, the referential. Even if we no longer believe (or claim to believe) in such concepts in this poststructuralist moment, we nevertheless -- to echo the fetishistic cross-eyed formulation that crowns Lejeune's return to his pact in "Bis" -- on some level write and read autobiography as if we did.[28] As Derrida writes, no text is genreless (as no subject is genderless). In other words, no act of reading (of text or sex) is without a set of practices, rules, assumptions. We do attribute to autobiography a dimension of the real that we do not to fiction.

Even though Feinberg's text is situated in a borderlands of genre as Jess and Feinberg herself end up in a gendered borderlands, it is impossible to read Stone Butch Blues without considering generic belonging. In spite of Feinberg's refusal to sign the Lejeunian autobiographical contract, in spite of the resemblance and not identity of narrator-protagonist's and author's proper names, on a base level we do read the text as autobiographical. This is surely because we have in mind for it a particular informative function. Knowing that it is the only representation so far of this gendered experience (both a transsexual who turns back and a stone butch), our desire -- and perhaps this is as readers foremost, and not critics -- is to read Stone Butch Blues as truthful, authentic,

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[28] "I believe we can promise to tell the truth; I believe in the transparency of language, and in the existence of a complete subject who expresses himself though it; I believe that my proper name guarantees my autonomy and my singularity (even though I have crossed several Philippe Lejeunes in my life); I believe that when I say 'I,' it is I who am speaking: I believe in the Holy Ghost of the first person. And who doesn't believe in it? But of course it also happens that I believe the contrary, or at least claim to believe it. . . . 'In the field of the subject, there is no referent.' . . . We *indeed know* all this; we are not so dumb, but once this precaution has been taken, we go on as if we did not know it. Telling the truth about the self, constituting the self as complete subject -- it is a fantasy. In spite of

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authoritative, and on some level, representative: all of the values we expect from autobiography (although of course we also no longer do) and not necessarily from fiction. It is for this reason that the text is being approached in the university primarily in courses on autobiography, feminist theory, gender studies and women's studies where it is read above all as a document of the experience of a transgendered subject: it speaks for an emergent community. And especially outside the academy, readers take great interest in what the story has to say about Feinberg's own life, how it "relates."[29] In this sense, Feinberg's reader does operate as a cop, albeit the proverbial friendly one, valuing truth, the real, the exceptional and the representative at the same time.[30]

I can now finally address the question of why Feinberg writes h/er autobiography under the translucent guise of fiction -- both why fiction and why translucent. Stone Butch Blues passes as fiction in the same way that Jess finally passes as a man: neither really does, both intentionally fall short, both refuse full cover. Feinberg refrains from signing the Lejeunian contract, fails to coincide h/er narrator's proper name with h/er own, opting instead for this resemblance. Signing this autobiographical contract may not have been so clearly an option for Feinberg, for h/er text slips through the net of usual criteria

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the fact that autobiography is impossible, this in no way prevents it from existing" (131-132).

[29] As evidenced by audience questions at various readings of parts of the text given by Feinberg in New York City from 1992 (when the work was in progress) to 1994.

[30] Such policing tactics are exemplified by the Hunter College students' correlation of front cover photograph and textual narrative (see above, n.24). So invested were these students in reading Stone Butch Blues as autobiography (precisely because they were deeply moved and won over by its story and wanted to believe it true), that they used the

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for autobiography. Certainly not famous, s/he was and remains an unknown figure outside urban butch-femme, transgendered and transsexual cultures. Further, as a consequence of Goldberg's / Feinberg's turning away form transsexuality, the text would not have been able to take up a clear-cut place within the commodification of transsexual autobiography. How would Stone Butch Blues have announced itself as autobiography: "Not a Transsexual Autobiography"? Nor could the text unproblematically join the canon of lesbian autobiography: it is not simply or even a lesbian story. As autobiography, Stone Butch Blues would have evaded categorization. That Feinberg does not sign Lejeune's contract implicitly raises a critique of the contract's significance for autobiographers. Not all potential autobiographers approach the autobiographical contract from an equal place; not all autobiographers *can* sign the contract. Yet the relation of resemblance between Goldberg and Feinberg established by the proper names and the packaging of the text allows us to read it as autobiography anyway. The text cleverly bypasses the interdiction on mixing pronounced by the law of genre, reconfiguring the alternatives of autobiographical and fictional pact into a fictional autobiographical pact in which the reader can have it both ways.

On the subject of the "limits and conditions" of the Lejeunian autobiographical contract, its relativity, it is of interest to note that Feinberg has suggested that autobiography holds its own set of concerns and dangers for the transgendered writing subject. Perhaps because s/he finds with h/er interviewer, a transsexual man, Kevin Horwitz, a safe place to do so, Feinberg admits that Stone Butch Blues is "a very thinly

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photograph of Feinberg as a kind of mug shot, finding "proof" of identity in the apparent

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disguised autobiography" (26:13). S/he claims s/he chose fiction as the frame because fiction allows for a more truthful telling of the story. Paraphrasing Dorothy Allison, Feinberg defines fiction as

> less than autobiography but more than lies. In other words using fiction gives you the ability to tell a very painful story that's filled with all the shame of growing up different in this society. I felt, by telling it autobiographically, that I would pull back in a lot of places. I also felt, as transgendered people, that we're always being told who we are, either physically or emotionally -- strip or be stripped, you know? There's a way that we get dehumanized. "Let's see your body. We'll find out who you are. Let's hear what your innermost thoughts and feelings [are]." I feel we've each found our own boundaries of dignity which we will not go beyond; that we deserve. I really felt that by fictionalizing the story, that I would be able to tell more of the truth; be more brutally honest than I would if I were telling my own story. (26:13)

In weighing fiction against autobiography (it's "less than autobiography but more than lies") Feinberg suggests that fiction and autobiography might be understood on a kind of scale of truth. Fiction is less factual than autobiography but truer, for truth and facts here are not identical. This is of course the old cliché that fiction is truer than fact (Lejeune calls this the phantasmatic pact), but Feinberg enlists it only to overturn it. Fiction allows h/er to recount "more of the truth" precisely because of its concealing or disguising effect. To spin out h/er striking image, fiction clothes the naked body of the transgendered subject in a kind of truth while autobiography strips it down to the facts. Autobiography, or perhaps the reader of autobiography -- echoing here the work of the pre-Stonewall police in Stone Butch Blues as they strip down Jess and other butches in the name of a law which insists that they must be wearing at least three items of "correctly-gendered" clothing -- seeks to "find out who you are," to reveal the naked body as a fact. As with

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scar.

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the police strip searches, the undressing effect of writing / reading autobiography is dehumanizing and undignifying. In the text the police's stripping is always the threshold to greater physical and sexual violence and humiliation, although the removal of clothes is represented in and of itself as a violent act and shaming act: "The cops picked out the most stone butch of them all to destroy with humiliation, a woman everyone said 'wore a raincoat in the shower.' We heard they stripped her, slow, in front of everyone in the bar, and laughed at her trying to cover up her nakedness. Later she went mad, they said. Later she hung herself" (8).[31] Like their violence, the police's stripping attempts to re-feminize the butch, to reveal (more to the subject than to her onlookers) the "true sex" of the transgendered subject. Through Feinberg's analogy, autobiography's capacity to reveal the innermost thoughts of the transgendered self can be seen as extremely dangerous and violent, an act of invasion. Some transsexual autobiographies are certainly produced as a result of invasion into the subject's privacy. British transsexuals Caroline Cossey and April Ashley both wrote autobiographies as a result of being outed by the British tabloid press,

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[31] See also the first time Jess sees a butch "naked": "The cops dragged Al in just after Mona left. She was in pretty bad shape. Her shirt was partly open and her pants zipper was down. Her binder was gone, leaving her large breasts free" (35). And Jess's own stripping by the cops:

"C'mon, Jesse," a cop taunted me, "let's have a pretty smile for the camera. You're such a pretty girl. Isn't she pretty, guys? They snapped my mug shot. One of the cops loosened my tie. As he ripped open my new dress shirt, the sky blue buttons bounced and rolled across the floor. He pulled up my T-shirt, exposing my breasts. My hands were cuffed behind my back. . . .

They lifted me and threw me on my back across the desk and handcuffed my hands over my head. As one cop pulled off my trousers I tried to calm the spasms in my stomach so I wouldn't choke to death on my own vomit.

"Aw, ain't that cute, BVD's," one cop called out to another. "Fuckin' pervert" (62).

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their careers as top models shattered by public stigmatization of their transsexuality. Both frame their autobiographies in the mode of "true story" / "my side of the story," counters to the press's scoops; Cossey's second autobiography is entitled My Story. These autobiographies are reactively produced, written because of demand.

Feinberg suggests that transgendered subjects are subject to curiosity about their bodies which is almost inevitably invasive. Doubtless, the fascination with the otherness of the transsexual's body -- the freakiness of his / her sex change -- is the major reason why transsexual autobiographies are read by non-transsexuals (as opposed to the self-help / information function that transsexuals discover in the autobiographies). Many transsexual autobiographies are marketed in a manner that explicitly courts this desire. Subtitled "an extraordinary story," "an amazing account," "the life of an extraordinary woman," the packaging of these texts situates the transsexual subject as prodigious other. This thread threatens to desubjectivize the transsexual and subvert the very work of the autobiographical recounting -- constructing the transsexual subject. Feinberg's metaphor implies that s/he sees in fiction precisely a means to deflect this fascination with the literal in transsexuality. As Theresa's act of placing clean white underwear out for h/er raped stone butch lover in its repetition takes on the significance of an act of healing in the novel, the BVDs restoring Jess's "true" gender identity, reclothing h/er after the stripping, fiction would also appear to offer some healing touch to the pain and humiliation of Feinberg as subject in framing h/er transgendered story.[32] Fiction interposes a distance

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[32] Feinberg envisions the function of femme identity in relation to butch identity as healing: "You treated my stone self as a wound that needed loving healing" (9). In her "Sexualities

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between the reader and Feinberg as transgendered writing subject, skewing the relation of identity between Feinberg and narrator-protagonist. As the femme can enable h/er butch to put on hold the reality of h/er bodily contours, to imagine a different kind of embodiment, fiction reinscribes the realness of the autobiographic narrative in the imaginary.

v. Conclusion. Gaining Ground, Being Read, Making Home: The New Politics of Transgender

> I am considered queer in a men's or women's bathroom: too feminine to be a man, too masculine to be a woman. There is no escape from contradiction.
>
> Leslie Feinberg, Journal of a Transsexual

> There's always some *liminal* (as opposed to subliminal) space *in between* which is harder to inhabit because it never feels as safe as moving from one extreme to the other.
>
> bell hooks, Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations

Without Genders and Other Queer Utopias" Biddy Martin, commenting on an anthology in which the opening letter to Theresa of Stone Butch Blues was first published, subjects this dynamic to some critique: "In fact, in the autobiographical accounts of The Persistent Desire, femmes are often cast as capable of healing the butch's wounded relation to her body, a role division that makes comfort or defiance seem the two apparent options in relation to gender, and they are distributed in binary oppositions, with femmeness as ease or accession and defiance or nonconformity as phallic" (117). Although I share Martin's concern over this figuration of the butch-femme relation, I do so for different reasons: the woundedness of the butch dephallicizes her and the power to heal phallicizes the femme. The effect is to fix attention on the butch subject, pushing the femme (once again) to the peripheries. There is no femme equivalent of Stone Butch Blues -- that is a book-length narrative of femme identity. The recently published S/he by Feinberg's lover, comes closest, although like Joan Nestle's work, Pratt's autobiographical vignettes approach femme as part of an erotic relation, a subject defined by butch, -- here, Feinberg; Feinberg represents stone butch through transgender as a distinctive and independent identity. The femme narrative has really yet to be written -- a dozen years after Esther Newton first announced that "Mary's story [Stephen Gordon's femme lover from the Well of Loneliness] has yet to be told" ("The Mythic Mannish Lesbian " [25]).

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> There's more and more evidence that transgendered folks are making a place for themselves in the culture. I'm writing this book, for example, and it's getting published because there's been a shift. . . . It's an exciting time, here at the beginning of a movement.
>
> Kate Bornstein, Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and the Rest of Us

In an essay groundbreaking for transsexual theory, "The *Empire* Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto," transsexual theorist Sandy Stone states that "[t]he highest purpose of the transsexual is to erase him / herself, to fade into the 'normal' population as soon as possible. Part of this process is known as *constructing a plausible history* -- learning to lie effectively about one's past" (295; emphasis in original throughout). While autobiography plays a crucial role in the production of the transsexual subject, the genre is also fundamentally at odds with the purpose of that subject as this has been imagined over the past fifty years or so by medical and transsexual communities alike. If the goal of transsexuality is to pass (to varying degrees) by drawing on endocrinological and surgical tools (again in varying degrees) in the "gender of choice," if the narrative of transsexuality is about making a home in the body and the world, fitting in and assimilating with genetic or non-transsexual men and women, then autobiography, telling one's transsexual story, undoes this work. Passing in its very definition requires that the transsexual erase his / her transsexual past, as is suggested poignantly when Jess becomes successful at passing as a man: "I simply became a he -- a man without a past" (221). In the place of the erased past, in order to pass, the transsexual must reconstruct an alternative "autobiography": a fiction, for it must tell the story of a life never lived. Stone argues that this self-erasure, this displacement of the transsexual's true story, has done nothing to challenge, if it has not

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exacerbated, the desubjectivizing representation of transsexual subjects in feminist and medical texts, their tendency to image the transsexual as object or victim of larger cultural forces or institutions (the ideology of compulsory heterosexuality, the experimentalism of science): "It is difficult to generate a counterdiscourse if one is programmed to disappear" (295).

The antithesis of passing is being read: when a transsexual is read, s/he has failed to pass; s/he is perceived as the gender of assignation from which s/he seeks to depart. If the highest ideal of transsexuality is to pass, to be read is disastrous: it is to be taken for what one wishes most strongly not to be. In a clever and daring inversion of the values of passing and being read, Stone suggests that being read be deployed as by the transsexual to counter his / her invisibility instituted by passing and construct a transsexual subject position. Punning on the textual terminology of reading, Stone calls for the transsexual to read and write him / herself into agency, to establish the transsexual "as a *genre* -- a set of embodied texts whose potential for *productive* disruption of structured sexualities and spectra of desire has yet to be explored" (296). This new genre of transsexual who demands to be read and resists passing promises to disturb the very law of genre that interdicts mixing (Stone also draws on Derrida's essay), for "[p]assing means the denial of mixture" (297). In passing, one strives to be a coherently gendered subject; in being read, one embodies gendered incoherence. Stone envisions in the transsexual's refusal to pass not only the means to constructing transsexual subjectivity but a poststructuralist trope for deconstructing the law of gender as genre: "I could not ask a transsexual for anything more inconceivable than to forego passing, to be consciously "read," to read oneself aloud -- and by this troubling and productive reading to begin to *write oneself* into the

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discourses which have been written --- in effect, then, to become (look out -- dare I say it again?) posttranssexual" (299).[33]

Stone's vision is "*post*transsexual" in the sense that it calls for us to move beyond the current inscription of transsexuality with its imperative on passing and the consequent absence of transsexual subjectivity. Insofar as it has been historically figured as a transitional site, a no "man"'s land to be passed through (one is born female, one becomes a man, and in the period of transition in between one is transsexual), transsexual has appeared to be a non-identity. Ironically given the prefix, Stone's "posttranssexual" theory demands that we reclaim transsexuality from a transitional state to a subject position. Thus one might claim to "be" a transsexual in the same sense as one might claim to "be" a man or a woman. I would also propose that one might claim both identities simultaneously (man / woman and transsexual), although Stone's evident commitment to the poststructuralist anti-narrative of gender, in particular the work of Judith Butler, encourages her to figure speaking as a transsexual disruptive of the very categories of man and woman. Stone's debt to Butler's work on the gender-troubling categories of butch-femme is, however, misplaced: in Butler's scheme, the deconstructive potential of butch-femme and drag identities depends on the passing status of these categories -- passing as heterosexual, passing as a man / woman. Stone does not recognize the contradiction, its

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[33] Elsewhere Stone, a former doctoral student of Donna Haraway's, reclaims for herself the monstrous site the mixing of genres produces -- the monstrous in between state that Jan Morris describes: "The author considers herself a Haraway monster who is occasionally more problematic than promising but is nonetheless always ready for a good time" ("Invaginal Imaginal" 12).

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irreconcilability to her critique of transsexual passing and her suggestion that we trade passing for being read.

Indeed, Stone's marshaling of Butler as a precedent in the task of outlining a specifically (post)transsexual theory strikes me as fundamentally mistaken. Because of its focus on embodiment, the transsexual narrative cannot be figured in terms of the performative, an unraveling of gender narratives. For transsexuals who undergo surgery, there is a good deal of bodily distress to be endured in the becoming, much physical discomfort. Even in the case of the transsexual whose transition consists of hormone therapy only, there are changes in the body's chemistry and changes to the body's secondary sex characteristics and contours that are relatively uncontrollable. There is little politically empowering in transsexuals conceding so soon and so completely to genetic folk the categories of man and woman while these categories are still culturally evocative and meaningful. Transsexuals have after all been historically figured in the cultural imagination as not real men / women: why hand over realness while it still holds so much sway? And Stone does not account for our desire for realness. Transsexual transitioning, always at least at some point along the trajectory, stages a yearning for the corporeal and cultural belonging that the categories of man and woman promise and still engender in our world, even if this yearning is ultimately, as in Stone Butch Blues, rerouted. Stone's suggestion that transsexuals "disrupt" "conventional gender discourse" in the mode of drag or butch / femme flattens out the complexities, the contradictions and the differences of the transsexual narrative into generic queerness, re-erasing transsexual specificity in a queer context in the very process of attempting to ground it (296).

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Most persuasive is Stone's argument that transsexuals "read" themselves into agency and representation as subjects. This project necessitates the act of coming out as transsexual, on strategic occasions ignoring the imperative to pass, and speaking "as a" transsexual. At the forefront of such a movement would be the production of transsexual autobiographies, both spoken and written, a politics grounded in subjective truth-telling. The ending of Stone Butch Blues, its bringing its protagonist in the midst of a lesbian and gay rally in Christopher Street, represents this kind of autobiographical act. Jess's trajectory is toward speech, toward telling her story: the text maps h/er journey from being unable to express herself -- literalized when s/he has h/er jaw wired closed -- to h/er public speech on Christopher Street. What drives Jess to speak is h/er history of being silenced as a transgendered person: "And suddenly I felt so sick to death of my own silence that I needed to speak too. It wasn't that there was something in particular I was burning to say. I didn't even know what it would be. I just needed to open my throat for once and hear my own voice. And I was afraid if I let this moment pass, I might never be brave enough to try again" (296). Jess's speech is an act of coming out, beginning by what s/he is not, undoing the effects of h/er passing -- "I am not a gay man" -- and going on to define what s/he is -- "I am a butch, a he-she" (296). It stands as a political beginning for Jess and the text's validation of speaking from the "I."

Feinberg has written an explicitly autobiographical text in which s/he comes out as transsexual. Published in 1980, the pamphlet is entitled Journal of a Transsexual, even though Feinberg tells us in the text that s/he left the sex change program s/he was in and came off hormones in 1974. The pamphlet functions as a day in the (extremely violent) life of a non-passing female-to-male: the violence and bathroom trouble the narrator

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recounts in h/er experiences are products of h/er being read as gender ambivalent, neither a "real" man nor a "real" woman. While entitled Journal of a Transsexual, the pamphlet is published under what is evidently Feinberg's female name, Diane L. Feinberg. The title of the text and the authorial signature enact this gendered contradiction, further refusing any degree of passing. In the text of the pamphlet, Feinberg figures moments when s/he passes as a man as *losing ground.* S/he finds it harder to be read as a masculine woman in the winter when h/er body is concealed under heavy clothing than in the summer when h/er gender ambivalent body is exposed: "In winter, once I'm covered by a coat, I could argue that I'm a woman 'til I'm blue in the face. It gets me nowhere. In winter I lose ground. Territory liberated in the summer is often overturned by bigotry in the winter. It is a time of rest for jangled nerves. As long as I do not argue that I'm a woman, I am treated more like a human being" (6). Being read is equivalent to liberating territory, making new space; passing to losing ground. In a gesture I think Stone would appreciate, Feinberg's Journal of a Transsexual inverts the values of passing and being read and refigures the "trans" in transsexual to an identity in between gender difference rather than the beyond implied in passing. That Feinberg is here a transsexual and a woman emphasizes the "trans" as an ongoing process, not as a necessarily transitional state prior to the resolution of gender ambiguity but an identity site -- a categorical home -- in which the contradictions of the somatic and psychic, both within each and against the other, are sustained painfully, not playfully. Journal of a Transsexual challenges the assumption that the goal of transsexuality is to pass as a genetic / non-transsexual representative of the "chosen" gender identity (to pass *through* transsexuality), and provides instead a

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representation of a transsexual subject whose resistance to passing (as a man) makes h/er clearly a threatening (and threatened) figure.

The reevaluation of passing and reading by current thinkers such as Feinberg, Stone and Kate Bornstein is a galvanizing force behind the new politics of transgender: the gaining of definitive ground for subjects that cross sex and gender borders in some way, our making of a new community home for ourselves. The contradiction underlying this emergent politics is that in order to create this transgendered home, we have to leave the home we reach in passing -- the harbor that the coherently gendered take for granted: gendered realness. In another pamphlet published in 1992, Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come, Feinberg uses "transgender" as a collective term for the wide range of "'gender outlaws': transvestites, transsexuals, drag queens and drag kings, cross-dressers, bull daggers, stone butches, androgynes, diesel dykes or berdache -- a European colonialist term" (5). Feinberg describes the transgendered community as one centered around gender not sexuality, distinguishing it from the queer community (and placing it in an unintentional but significant alliance with feminism): "Not all lesbians and gay men are "cross"-gendered. Not all transgendered women and men are lesbian or gay. Transgendered people are mistakenly viewed as the cusp of the lesbian and gay community. In reality the two huge communities are like circles that only partially overlap" (6). Although Feinberg's simile suggests an intersection and the importance of political affiliation, it also makes clear that the transgender and queer communities are not coextensive. Transgender is the umbrella term that enables the trans person at least on strategic occasions to refuse assimilation into the larger genetically gendered world or generic queerness, the price of assimilation being invisibility and loss of specific

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community. Defining transgender and separating it out from generic queerness is a crucial project: a necessary theoretical stage in the building of a community and the formation of a politics.

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Epilogue

Putting You in the Picture: Transsexuality, Photography, Autobiography

> When I first entered a sex change program a decade ago, in order to avoid embarrassment my parents disposed of all pictures of me, a little girl or young woman growing up with the tenseness of puberty etched on my face. When I later took back control of my body after four years of being on the program, my parents discarded all the pictures of me living as a man.
>
> Leslie Feinberg, Journal of a Transsexual

Below the final photograph in Mario Martino's autobiography, the caption reads: "Emergence accomplished, at last I'm free to live as I wish and to tell my story" (267). Showing a man with full beard and pipe writing at a desk, the photograph illustrates this "emergence" as man and autobiographer, these signifiers of masculinity and authorship substantiating Martino's "freedom" to live and write this life as a transsexual man. Yet the autobiography's preface reveals that the freedom of the transsexual autobiographer is circumscribed. We are informed that "Mario Martino" is a pseudonym, the real authorial subject "clinging to a hope of anonymity" behind it because, as he writes with a flourish, "[t]he merciless shadows of contempt and tragedy still fall on transsexuals" (xii). He conceals his identity in order that he might tell "the truth [of his story] more fully. . . . Too little is yet known about transsexuality. . . . I trust my book will offer . . . authentic firsthand evidence which will be of some use" (xii). As the first female-to-male transsexual autobiographer proper, "Martino" writes under the obligation of what Nancy K. Miller in another context has termed "representativity" (Getting Personal ix-x and *passim*). "As a" transsexual man, the autobiographer constructs himself as representative of that identity, but the pseudonymous signature delimits and conflicts with this laying bare of self. Although it allows more of the life to be told, it detaches the story from the

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referential subject. (Pseudonymous autobiography is intrinsically paradoxical: the revelations of a disguised self.) The autobiographical subject exposes his life without exposing his identity, comes clean without coming out. This tension between self-revelation and concealment is captured succinctly in the same final photograph. Shot from an awkward angle to the rear right of the subject's shoulder, the portrait seeks to conceal Martino's identity as much as to evidence his representative man-ness. In testimony to the truth of the post-transitioned sex of the transsexual (the "sex change" from female to male) that yet doesn't reveal its subject, the photograph places the face markedly out of the reader's line of vision while positioning beard and pipe prominently within it.

Transsexual autobiography is structured around this tension between passing and coming out. On the one hand, the tension is played out between the conventions of transsexuality and those of autobiography. Passing as non-transsexual in opposition to one's assigned sex, as both the goal of the medical narrative of transsexuality and the conventional desire of the transsexual subject, is undone by the act of transsexual autobiography. Whereas transsexuality, in its ideal inscription, passes the transsexual body off as genetically- or "genuinely"- sexed, that is as non-transsexual, autobiography writes it out, undoing that passing precisely as it relates the story of how that body came to be thus sexed. In writing out the transsexual body under the sign of transsexuality, the autobiographer refuses the conventional transitional status of transsexual. On the other hand, the autobiographical act is not only concordant with transsexuality, it makes transsexuality possible. The clinician's diagnosis depends on the subject's production of a convincing transsexual autobiography: for the body to be surgically re-membered, a transgendered past must be remembered in oral autobiographical narrative. This

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intrication of the genre of autobiography in transsexuality can also be read in the Martino photograph. The pipe and the pen serve as synecdoches for the life as a man and the story of it (referenced in the photographic caption) respectively, both equally the *teloi* of the transition. And like the autobiography's title, Emergence: A Transsexual Autobiography, the caption coincides the life and the story: "at last I'm free to live as I wish *and* to tell my story". The "freedom" to live is equivalent to and signified by the "freedom" to write this life; transgendered passing makes possible -- and yet also delimits -- both.

My dissertation has centered on this fretwork of transsexuality and autobiography, on their complex intertwining, and the concomitant tension in the construction of the transsexual as medico-discursive object and writing subject, as authorial subject because subject to the clinician's authorization. By way of conclusion, I want to discuss how the photographs appearing in transsexual autobiographies crystallize these problematics of transsexual autobiography. The process of attending to photographic representations of transsexuals focuses and clarifies what is at stake in transsexual representation: not just how the transsexual can represent his or her transsexuality but how we, as readers, locate these representations -- and the transsexual -- in a gender framework. The photographs demand that we develop a consciousness about our own subject position: where we read the transsexual from, how we look at the subject. More than their written text, the autobiographies' photographs bring into relief our gaze.

The majority of transsexual autobiographies contain photographs. Those that don't tend to be pseudonymous (Jane Fry, Jerry/Jerri McClain for instance; Martino's inclusion of photographs is the exception) or to be autobiographies that lean toward the fictional, that are explicitly less representational in some way. With Leslie Feinberg's

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Stone Butch Blues and Jan Morris's Conundrum: An Extraordinary Narrative of Transsexualism, the only photograph of the author appears in that space conventionally allocated for the authorial face on the rear cover of the book. The absence of photographs within both narratives mirrors the gap between the body of each author and the body of h/er narrative. In Feinberg, this gap is formal: the dis-similarity between authorial signature, Leslie Feinberg, and narrator's name, Jess Goldberg that makes Stone Butch Blues fictional autobiography. In Morris, the gap is explicit in content. Aptly subtitled "An Extraordinary Narrative of Transsexualism," Conundrum is less concerned with detailing the facts of Jan Morris's transsexual transition than refiguring it as a fantastic inner journey, a generic mythical quest for an immaterial grail. In different senses, Conundrum and Stone Butch Blues are non-factual accounts. Their elision of photographic images is in keeping with the less-than-representational status of the narratives.

Conversely, when included in autobiographies, photographs serve to make present, to re-present, the somatic presence of the transsexual autobiographer. This is the real body about which this text speaks, they declare. This function is typical of photographs that appear in autobiographies in general. Photographic images serve to consolidate the representationality of the autobiographical narrative. Their immediate effect is to authenticate the autobiographical story, to substantiate the subject of the *bios*. Photographs deploy the subject's body to further underwrite Philippe Lejeune's "autobiographical contract," that is, the identity between autobiographical signature and the "I" of the narrative; a contract that (in Lejeune's first formulation anyway) binds the reader to accept the fundamental actuality of the text. The autobiographical-photographic

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contract upholds identity in spite of textualization -- both the facticity of identity (its referentiality), and its continuity. Even in the willfully anti-contractual Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes, the photographs of Barthes work to override the shattering and discontinuation of the autobiographical self performed by Barthes's written vignettes. The images underscore the consubstantiality of these Barthesian fragments in this single body. In spite of the writing's antithetical pull, the repetition of photographs establishes Barthes as a continuous, unified, referential subject.

Given that transsexual autobiography takes as its subject the dramatic and much-mythicized alteration of the body that is transsexuality, how does the photographic function of stabilization, integration and realization work in its context? What is the effect of photographs of the body whose subject's stated goal is to abandon its identity in the process of radical (sex) change, to change the corporeal subject? On the surface, photographs in transsexual autobiographies would appear to have a contradictory function: to represent in the visual the radical somatic transformation of transsexuality, to convince the reader of the different bodies on either side of transition; and, at the same time, to ensure that the reader grasp the fundamental identity and continuity of the autobiographical subject they depict. The photographs demand that we both recognize the sexed difference of the transsexual author, heed the significance of the somatic change, and concede that transsexuality makes a thorough difference to identity; and yet discover consistent and continuous identity in that very place of alterity. Although the sexed body of the transsexual is that which, in every sense, is "subject to change," we are expected not to equate this with a total change of subject.

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Four shots that appear on a single page of Katherine Cummings's Katherine's Diary: The Story of a Transsexual clearly perform this double function. The photographs convey the empirical difference between male and female personae, John and Katherine: John stalwart and squinting in the sun in crisp white naval uniform; Katherine, wide-eyed, slinky and seductive in a black dress. And yet, in the way that these differently gendered personae are arranged interspersed on the page (that is Katherine-John, John-Katherine), the photographs insist on continuity in spite of this gender difference. The dates in the captions -- 1952, 1954, 1960, 1961 -- ask us to read the photographs across the page in their chronological order and produce from them a narrative. This narrative organization transforms gender difference into a process of gradual change, enabling us to bridge the split of difference versus identity with the notion of progression. The chronology of dates underneath the photographs encourages us to interpret the differences of detail in the photographs between Katherine in the top left frame (1952) and Katherine in the bottom right (1961) as development of the male-to-female transsexual plot. The captions provide crucial interpretative codes for us to read closely and arrange the photographs into their own visual narrative: Katherine at seventeen "dressing behind locked doors," posing gawkily with rather heavy make-up, "graduates" to "Katherine," the implication of the elision of a descriptive in this final caption being that she is no longer dressing or passing but *being*. Indeed, the low-cut top in the final photograph draws the eye to the beginnings of a breast cleavage, and the later shots in Katherine's Diary reveal a progressively feminizing body by progressively revealing more of this body (via the backless dress to the bikini).

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The apparently contradictory function of the photographs -- to make visible somatic difference and sameness -- is thus smoothed out via the notion of transsexuality as a narrative. The photographs can serve to represent the narrative of transsexuality quite directly. Erica Rutherford's Nine Lives: The Autobiography of Erica Rutherford places a single photograph of Eric-Erica at the beginning of each of its five parts. In their titles, these parts organize the life into chronological blocks of time, stages in the transsexual transition ("Part One, 1923-1944," "Part Two, 1945-1949," and so forth). Each photographic image -- what's really the changing body-image -- comes to stand for the transsexual body / self of that period and of that section of the autobiographical narrative, thoroughly intercalating Rutherford's body into the writing of the life. The photographs demonstrate in the visual the physical transition of the textual narrative, all the while seeking to sustain the coherence of the transsexual autobiographical subject, joining the sexed split between the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the enunciating.

Yet while the purpose of the photographs in the published autobiographies appears to be to cohere the transsexual body narrative for the reader, visually representing this movement in between sexual difference -- providing evidence of the "sex change" -- threatens to reintroduce a splitting in the subject. I suggested in chapter 4 that this rupturing -- where the subject of sexual difference is brought to the surface and autobiographer and reader are confronted with a divide that must be bridged in the single subject -- takes place in the autobiographical writing, in language. As a visual medium, photography heightens this sexed split precisely in its attempt to make the transsexuality visible. The photographs of the subject in transition often push the transsexual up against the limits of gendered representation; or perhaps it is us as viewers who are pushed up

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against those limits: the limits of what we are able to see, to process as identity and gender integrity. The series of photographs from Second Serve charting Dick Raskind's transformation into Renée Richards captures the subject's body in the most transitional moments of her transition, during which the subject's gender is quite indeterminate, when Richards appears, as she writes in her autobiography, as a "man-woman," "a hermaphroditic spirit" (189; 228). There's a precarious androgyny to her body and face in these central images that makes it difficult to read her as either a man or a woman, in fact, that makes it difficult not to read her as only a man *and* a woman. Because they capture her body in its sexed interstices, these shots ask us to think about how we locate the transsexual body in a gender framework. If the photographs before this series represent Richards as a man and those after, as a woman, do these intermediate photographs represent her at her most transsexual? That is to ask, do the intersexual photographs represent transsexuality more fully than those on either side of them when the transsexual presents or can present less ambivalently as a man or a woman? If the conventional goal of the subject is to pass as non-transsexual, to erase the visible markers of transsexuality from the body, how can the photographic medium capture transsexuality? Because transsexuality is about passing and concealing the transsexuality of the body, the task of representing transsexuality in the visual actually appears as an impossible paradox.

Despite the conceptual problems entailed in representing transsexuality, it is clear that, for the transsexual subject as s/he transitions, the visual media often provide a significant therapeutic means for healing the split of sexual difference. Documenting transition as it takes place is a way of managing the body in dramatic and rapid transition, of sustaining the coherently sexed self, of holding the body together. Inasmuch as the

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immediate purpose of hormone and surgical treatment is to transform the material body, the visual media are highly valued, for they promise to capture this materiality and make real (evidence) the transsexual's transgender: transitioning after all is about making visible the felt internal gender. The published autobiographies reveal transsexuals' investment in the visual record, their harnessing of media that represent the changing body with less mediation between signifier and soma, that appear more representational than writing. A self-timing Kodak camera allows Cummings to take photographic self-portraits (Lejeune terms such work the "phauto": photographic autobiography [116]). These photographs, Cummings writes, served to provide "some concrete evidence of my rare moments of femininity" (13); they reflect back at her the sexed subject she wants to see, provide a narrative record of the transition more concrete and permanent than the fleeting look in the mirror. For similar reasons, Rutherford (as Eric) paints self-portraits based on photographs she first takes of herself dressed as a woman. Like Cummings's photographs, these portraits begin as prefigurative, envisioning the woman she wishes to become, and are gradually transformed into a record of that becoming as she transitions. In one photograph that appears in her autobiography, one of these painted self-portraits is situated behind the photographic Rutherford. In the painting, the seated figure is clearly feminized through body contour, posture and clothing, but the face is featureless -- a striking blank space as undetailed by the feminine as the still masculine face of the photographic Rutherford seated before it. Yet the photographic Rutherford repeats the conventionally feminine posture of the pictorial Rutherford (knees jammed, legs tightly crossed, hands clasped up), so that the painted self-portrait (the self triply textualized: a painting within a photograph within the autobiography) appears in turn to become a model

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for the transsexual body featured in the photograph. In both Cummings and Rutherford, the self-portrait functions as a blueprint for the transsexual subject in transition: like the photographs in the autobiographies for us, visual means of making the transsexual's expressed gender identity real.

As a rule, the crucial difference between autobiography and self-portraiture consists in the different duration of time each captures. The self-portrait (whether written or pictorial) appears to represent the subject in the present moment -- although in both this appearance is deceptive, for writing and painting as diachronically- rather than synchronically-produced media can only ever be re-presentations, reproducing the moment in multiple moments after the fact. Photography is surely the most instantaneous medium, freezing the instant of representation at that instant (or the subsequent split second). Autobiography, however, does not even purport to present the present. Its narrative structure makes it explicitly and definitively a recounting of the past, a production of the self over the life lived so far. This retrospective moment of autobiographical production allows the transsexual subject to make coherent sense of the past life, allows the *autos* to shape the *bios*. As the photographs appear within the bounds of autobiography, they take on the formalized narrative structure of the genre: not only conveying the change but making change signify a story. In spite of the instantaneity of their medium, the photographs form a diachronic record. The final photograph in transsexual autobiography often functions to convey closure of the narrative by portraying the now happily transitioned subject, body restored. The final images from Canary Conn's Canary: The Story of a Transsexual and Raymond Thompson's What Took You So Long? A Girl's Journey to Manhood clearly serve this purpose: both depict the autobiographical subject,

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relaxed and smiling. The captions again play a crucial role in transforming the instantaneous image into a narrative and here specifically underscore this satisfactory narrative closure: "A Happy End to the Greatest Voyage" (Conn plate 38); "the end of a journey" (Thompson plate 16). If, classically, transsexual autobiographies begin in loss, absence, and alienation, and reach closure when the subject has arrived "home," that is when she or he has become a gender, and integrity is restored, these photographs are intended to evidence this.

The captions also enable the photographs to take on the reconstructive form of the autobiographical narrative. They reveal the traces of the transsexual autobiographer's attempt not only to reshape the life in its recounting but to refigure the body in the image as well, to enable the body-image to mean in terms of the transsexual narrative. In the case of two photographs from female-to-male Paul Hewitt's A Self-Made Man: The Diary of a Man Born in a Woman's Body, the captions underneath the images code the bodily posture of the female child as masculine: beneath the first which shows Hewitt sitting on a tree stump with "her" arm around twin sister, "protective brother"; beneath the second, showing a child with gardening hose shooting water hard from between "her" legs, "penis envy." The captions enable the autobiographical "I" / eye to return to images from the past to construct a prefigured transsexuality. As with all autobiographical acts, what the subject sees is always and inevitably a re-vision. The caption-photograph combination performs the same work as the transsexual autobiography, both the oral narrative produced in the clinician's office and the published text: that is, the positing of a transgendered subjectivity *ab initio:* "I have always really been a." Being a transsexual

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requires this constant production of a narrative; the captions ensure that the photographs in the published autobiographies are part of this process.

Although this process is one of narrative and I speak of it in terms of "construction" and "revision," I hasten to emphasize that I'm not suggesting that the transsexual finds in the shots of the past body a transgendered subject that clearly (from the reader's perspective) isn't there. When Bernice Hausman uses two photographs from Martino's autobiography to make exactly this argument, she inadvertently but usefully spotlights the particular problematics of *reading* that inhabit the task of processing representations of the transsexual body, both the subject's processing and our own. Hausman finds the captions, through which Martino posits his transgendered subjectivity ("My ambiguity was evident at an early age" and "A boy's face in banana curls"), glaringly unsubstantiated by the images themselves. She writes: "For [Martino], these pictures undeniably document her [sic] childhood masculinity (as the captions confirm), yet both merely offer the reader images of a child whose sex is largely indicated by clothing. A three-year old child with short hair is generally somewhat asexual; that is why children's, even infants', clothes are so conspicuously sex-coded. Some children maintain this sexlessness until puberty. . . ." (154). Hausman's reading fails to take into account how the images acquire their meaning in their narrative context. Martino deploys the captions as autobiographical writing to inscribe the body's meaning through his transsexual narrative: the remembering of his pre-transition body determined by the particular reconstructive structure of autobiography. As in other autobiographies, the captions are a poignant appeal to the reader to read the photographs in keeping with the autobiographer's transsexual narrative. The terms "construction" and "revision" should be

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understood, then, in this narratological sense: not that the subject is making up what is not there (for who is to decide what gender is or is not in the image?), but that generic context inevitably frames what and how life-material is recalled, the ways in which its presentation is occasioned. The captions come under the category of autobiographical recall. Far from insisting on the transparency of the body as Hausman suggests, they remind us that the represented body precisely as a re-presentation acquires meaning through its textual situation.

The textual situation of the autobiographical photograph presents the transsexual autobiographer with an anguishing dilemma. If, as a genre, autobiography ostensibly tells the story of a single subject, how is this "other" self of the transsexual, the gendered self the transsexual would discard through transitioning, to be remembered within the photographic-autobiographical medium? How to represent in the visual the body one is *not*? Martino's captions attempt to incorporate this pre-transition self into the autobiographical subject to sustain its integrity: see, they say, I have been me all along. The alternative is to disown the body as other, a task the captions underneath the photographs in April Ashley's Odyssey suggest,. That Ashley refuses even to attempt cohering the images of her pre-transition male body to the autobiographical "I" (instead she names the subject George Jamieson as if this boy pictured were not her self) makes clear the painful irony inherent in this process of remembering the former body photographically -- a body whose past sexed contours the transsexual would forget. While Martino's captions cope with the pain of the photographic return by incorporating the pre-transition body pictured into the present moment of transsexual autobiographical

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production, Ashley's perform its severing, a cut that mirrors the radical cut of surgery by removing the unwanted parts / past.

In failing to see how the autobiographical location of the photographs informs their presentation, Hausman lets slip this knot of pain and contradiction entailed in the very act of transsexual autobiography, of speaking *as a* transsexual. What she sees in her reading of Martino's two photographs she thinks self-evident, transparent to all: "yet both merely offer the reader images of a child whose sex is largely indicated by clothing. A three-year old child with short hair is generally somewhat asexual. . . ." Through the force of that "merely," Hausman abrogates what Martino sees as the subject of the image and the subject of the autobiography and as a subject of transsexuality. In Hausman's reading, there is no articulated subject positioning; she presents what she sees as *a* reader as what the photographs unambivalently "offer" up to *the* reader, undoing so profoundly the notion that we read from a specific location that it is as if the photographs actively produce a homogeneous and incontestable reading for us, as if texts read themselves, as if reading could take place without a subject. Remarkably in a chapter whose focus is transsexual autobiography, Hausman assumes that there is an objective site from which to look at the transsexual subject, and that she occupies this site in a way that Martino doesn't. Elsewhere, her book suggests that her assumption is made precisely on the grounds that she is *not* transsexual. Changing Sex: Transsexualism, Technology and the Idea of Gender explicitly valorizes the purported "outsider" position as objective and critical. Hausman's preface describes how she "fell into" writing about transsexuality "sideways," inadvertently," while tinkering with the idea of transvestism which was "kicking around feminist literary criticism at the time" (vii). In the library she

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"discovered" transsexualism: her response, "Now *that* was really fascinating" (vii; emphasis in original). Incredibly, "fascination" with the subject of transsexuality from a point outside of its experience is conceived not as one location from which to explore transsexuality (and even this would require explanation) but *the* authoritative site from which to speak. The "critical thinker" or "critical reader" is set up in opposition to "the reader interested in verifying his or her gender confusion" (i.e. the transsexual), and set up precisely in order to critique our technological construction (75, 156); as if transsexuals were not critical thinkers and readers; indeed, as if one couldn't be a transsexual and a critic at the same time.

But -- even assuming the discreteness of these identities -- why assume the critic can see more about sex and gender than the transsexual in the first place? Much as she might use her writing to block it out, Hausman too has a body, a gender, a sex; she too is a situated subject. In her preface, Hausman writes that she was pregnant for most of the year she spent working on the book. Her personal concern of that time was that she might come to bear an unclearly sexed child: "I am perhaps one of few expectant mothers who worry that they will give birth to a hermaphrodite" (x). This confession says more about the positioning of her knowledge than any other moment in the text. Her preoccupation, that her body might contain a body that resembles too closely her object of study, makes crystal clear her critical perspective: that she views the unclearly sexed body with anxiety and alarm because she imagines her own body in a clean, unambivalently sexed location beyond this sexed otherness. The horror in her fantasy derives from its breaking down -- through the imaginary hermaphroditic child -- her antithesis between subject and object, between critic and transsexual.

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What the critic sees in looking at the transsexual is fundamentally informed by how she looks and where she looks from. If Hausman fills the place of subject, she assigns the transsexual the place of the object. Yet, particularly when we look at the transsexual body in photography, while asking what we see in these images, what nuances of gender we read, we need to ask at the same time how do we look -- where look, as Teresa de Lauretis has suggested in the context of lesbian and gay film theory, should be heard as both transitive and intransitive verb. That is, how do we look at the other and what look do our own bodies present to the world? How is our own gendered and sexual subject positioning invested in and produced by our reading? What does what we see tell us about our own identifications and desires?

The positing of an impartial gaze is never innocuous, but in the context of reading the transsexual body, Hausman's veiling of the specific location of the reader, the refiguring of what she as situated subject reads into what is objectively there, is enacts a particular violence. Especially in those most precarious moments of transition, the transsexual experiences his or her body as always already subject to the other's reading, where reading in transsexual lingo means the undoing of transsexual passing, where the other *reads against or reads through* the subject's gendered presentation back to the abjected body. Reading in this context consists in the refusal to allow the transsexual to make his or her body mean what she needs it to. Reading against its grain can quite literally kill, as illustrated by the murder of Venus Xtravaganza. Venus's murder is a result of her trick's reading her transsexuality through her presentation as a woman, an erasure which the subsequent critical readings of Paris is Burning continued to perform on the level of metaphor. Judith Butler fails to take seriously bell hooks's crucial critique of

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the film -- precisely, where is Livingston's body? from where is the look at the filmic subjects cast? again, how do we look? -- reproducing in her own writing the film's displacement of the specific location of the gaze into generality and the transubstantiation of transsexuality into gender performativity.

From within poststructuralism's derogation of the literal, and in particular, its derogation of the sexed body, how can the non-performativity of transsexuality be represented? How can one read the transsexual body, encounter its specific materiality, without reading *through* it? In the visual media as in the autobiographical narratives as, indeed, in life, transsexual representation, representing oneself "as a" transsexual, hinges on the tension between passing and reading, between the safe invisibility of staying in and the dangerous visibility of coming out. If passing by definition keeps hidden the subject's transsexuality, representing it necessitates some degree of reading; but how to accomplish this without undermining the gendered realness that is transsexuality's specific goal, without drawing on the violence that reads *through* the subject's body? Bettina Rheims's photographs of male-to-female transsexual, Kim Harlow, engage this exact problematic yet fail to resolve it. Because Harlow's highly successful passing as a woman (her gendered realness) hides her transsexuality, Rheims's photographs attempt to make legible her transsexual history on her body. But not only does Rheims's performative fictionalization of Kim as Alexandre fail to create a passing woman (that is a woman who passes successfully as a man), the mirror frames the transsexual in a doubled specularity that prevents her from returning our look. She is represented as too caught up in her own narcissistic web: the mirror, a feminizing mechanism ironically precisely at the moment in which Rheims seeks to masculinize her. And while the specular creates Kim as the object

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of our look, it dislocates and confuses its site of production, encouraging a coy voyeurism in the viewer and discouraging us from asking the all-important question: how do I look? As in Hausman, looking at the transsexual as other enables the critical subject to reassert her difference and in turn disables any identification on the part of her reader with the transsexual.

Doubtless the strength of my response to the images of Kim is informed by how *I* look, by my own location as a transsexual man. My "fierce protectiveness" over Kim's body, as one colleague termed it when I presented some of this material at a seminar, is admittedly a product of my identification with Kim (in spite of the odds); ironically, my identification with the "all-woman" Kim, and my corresponding anguish over that figure of the pre-transition boy, my anguish *for* Kim. However, as transgender studies makes its entry into the academy, the question of representation -- of how to represent transsexuality, of *who* is representing transsexuality -- is of massive general significance. The importance of sustaining the constative experience of transsexuality in the midst of queer performativity, queer's deconstruction of the gendered subject and its devaluation of bodily experience, is paramount; it places transgender studies in strange but potent alignment with women's studies. For surely one of women's studies earliest achievements was to bring to academic attention how being gendered counted as experience and constituted a specific location from which to speak. I find myself thinking of Adrienne Rich's "politics of location": "Perhaps we need a moratorium on saying 'the body.' For it's also possible to abstract 'the' body. When I write 'the body,' I see nothing in particular. To write 'my body' plunges me into lived experience, particularity: I see scars, disfigurements, discolorations, damages, losses, as well as what pleases me. . . . To say

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'the body' lifts me away from what has given me a primary perspective" (Blood, Bread, and Poetry 215). What needs to be sustained in our theory on sexual and gender subjects is the embodied specificity of the point of regard. Translating Rich's politics of location into her poetics of location, Miller suggests that the autobiographical act, "one's own body" -- what I understand as some kind of positioning of one's own body in the regarded picture -- "can constitute an internal limit on discursive irresponsibility" (Getting Personal xiii).

So perhaps the basic requirement in current gender studies should be some thinking through about the point of regard, some awareness of that old feminist tenet, where you're coming from: an acknowledgment that where you're coming from makes a difference to what you see and what you in turn can pass on. Lesbian photographer, Della Grace's photographic work-in-progress of FTM Zachary Nataf is exemplary for this reason.[1] Grace's investment in and identification with her transsexual subject is conveyed through what we see of Nataf's transitioning body. Nataf appears naked in many images and is happy to let Grace in as close as she can get. Several shots are close ups of Nataf's changing parts (chest, genitals, face): a marker surely of his absolute trust that her gaze, both as a transgendered subject herself (a bearded lesbian, a "hermaphrodyke" as she calls herself) and as someone whose work over the past fifteen years has broadcast her desire for transgendered subjects, will meet his and sustain his subjectivity. Criss-crossed with this identification and desire, representing Nataf so intimately (in every sense), Grace's photographs pass this trust on to her viewers; they demand it of us.

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Grace's set up with Nataf couldn't be more different from Rheims's with Harlow. By meeting with Nataf every few months and capturing his body in the process of its changing, Grace preserves the narrative structure of his transsexuality, the somatic progressions entailed in his becoming a man. In contrast to Rheims's sublimation of transsexuality into palatable performance, Grace's close-ups of Nataf naked convey with scientific precision how hormones (and as the most recent series shows, upper surgery) are masculinizing Nataf's body: the changes in body contours, tissue structure and shape, skin texture; his chest's recovery from surgery. Seen together, the photographs have the quality of a document, a record; indeed, perhaps a record of a lifetime, for Grace has said she can't conceive of when it would end -- for when does the transsexual stop transitioning? What stands out in the series so far (what everyone who has seen the images wants to talk about) are the close-ups of Nataf's testosterone-enlarged, erect clitoris-turning-cock. For those unfamiliar with transsexual bodies, it requires a double-take; when I showed these images, many in the audience at first thought Nataf already had a penis. And this is the primary achievement of these shots: to hold these moments of its turning; to not shy from what the subject himself does not shy from; fundamentally, to represent Nataf as a transsexual man. His genitals reveal him as no longer female (there is no reading), but neither a genetic male (there is no passing); rather he appears as a transsexual man in the process of becoming. Grace's and Nataf's project illustrates that transsexual representation need not require the transsexual choosing between passing or

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[1] I am grateful to Grace for showing me her work, and to Grace and Nataf for their discussions.

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being read. The encounter can overturn the opposition between subject and object, and, indeed, the very otherness of the transsexual body.

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