

Gender fuck
is my
boyfriend
(polyamory
is my
girlfriend).

Copy left, duh.

This zine has got me all tied up in knots. The first version I distributed 50 copies of at the 2010 Chicago zine fest in March, but I have edited, expanded and removed things. This is my first zine, and part of me keeps feeling like this shit is obvious, like I'm saying things people already know and duh. I tell myself people are gonna think I'm stupid or naive or worse, boring. That's why I've tried to mostly speak about my own experience, because everytime I try to write something 'educational' I trip over myself trying to cater to everyone and include 101 with nosebleed theory. So, some of the language might be new to some folks. If you have questions please ask me!

This is basically a collection of my thoughts on gender- my biggest obsession. The title might be a bit misleading, cos it's not exactly about polyamory... but my life is, so there!

Now, credit where it's due:

Huge thanks to Christy Road for letting me use lots of yr artwork, (find her stuff at croadcore.org)

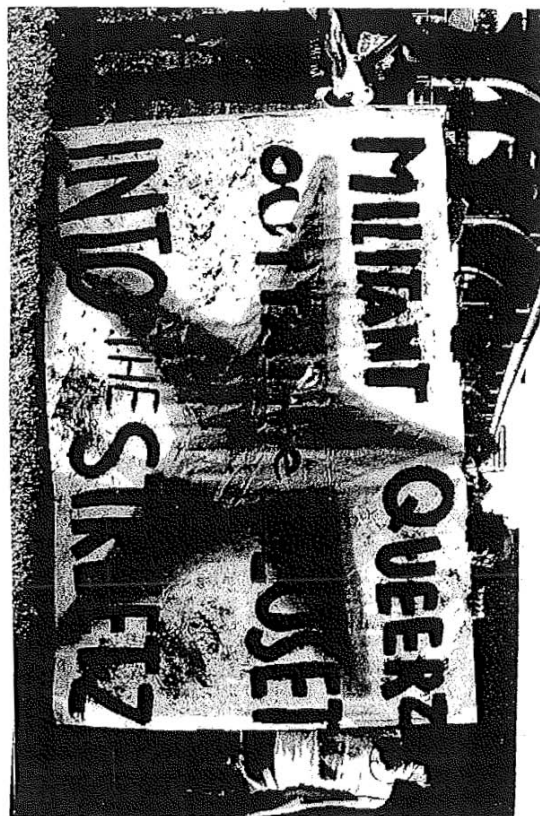
Thank you to Emily and Joey at a softer world for your lovely webcomic, more of their humor at asofterworld.com

Nome, big thanks for always writing thoughtful and personal stuff, yer blog is way cool and I love it. Ze can be found at <http://mnomenidenimp.wordpress.com/>

And Andrea Gibson, thanks for letting me use your poetry! See her AMAZING stuff at andreagibson.org (or youtube!)

I want to thank my wonderful copy elves (and all the copy elves of the world) cos without their copy codes and workplace insurrection this (and many other zines) would not be possible!

And last but definitely not least to my wonderful supportive friends.. I would not be able to figure any of this gender stuff out without yas. I hope yas know how much I'm appreciating your support. I'm fuckin real excited to start our drag group and explore and love and genderfuck and carve a space out for ourselves in this world!



Other Resources/groups, etc

Bash Back! - radical queers lurking in
your backyard bashbacknews.wordpress.com

Drag King Rebellion - cool drag-fuck royalty
from Michigan

Butchialis de Panochittan - Butch performance
group from LA, all about queer latina sexualities, BDSM, and
so much more!

RAA (Revolutionary Anarcha-Feminist Group)
- lovely ladies doing rad things in Dublin

Queer Spraoi - queering up the radicals in Dublin

Queer Zine Archive Project QZAP.ORG

'Riot Acts: Flouting Gender Denance in Music Performance'
- a transfabulous Rockumentary!!

Zines! Bound to Struggle - 'bringing kink and radical
politics together' by Simon Strikeback of the band Actor Slash Model

Every body is a Med-fied body - on www.zinelib.org/info
doris - not specifically trans or queer, but it helped me think
so much that I can't not mention it. - doris.dorisdoris.com

Bash Back Convergence

2010!!

Denver, May 27-30

My relationship to my gender and the way I interpret it is always changing, and I'm sure I'll go back and read some of this just a few months from now and cringe, but whatever! Part of me needs to get some of this stuff in print, just to survive where I'm at and try and explain who I am to people. I hope, dear reader, that it gets you thinking and I hope you like it. And if you have questions or want to call me out on some of my blind spots or just want to say hi, I'd love for you to email me at yrstruly@riseup.net

yrs sinqueerly,
L

I do not want to hate gender. The rigid, non-overlapping gender binary which forces us to check the 'M' or 'F', and places men and women as 'opposites', is oppressive and should be dismantled, yes. But I do not want to 'smash gender,' I want to love gender, explore it, and let it take me places that heteronormativity never could. When I say 'genderfuck' I mean fuck as in love, not fuck as in destroy.

Good Reading

Gender Outlaws: On Men, Women, and the rest of us - Kate Bornstein

Anything by Patrick Califia (specifically, the erotica)

Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity - by Julia Serano

Stone Butch Blues by Leslie Feinberg

Butch is a Noun by S. Bear Bergman

Sons of the Movement by Bobby Noble (pretty theory heavy but definitely worth reading)

The Transgender Child - a great handbook for all parents and anyone working with kids

Redefining our Relationships by Wendy O Matik (about polyamory. I like it cos it doesn't focus on sexual intercourse as the basis for most relationships like the Ethical Slut does (in my opinion). But I'm not really into the 'primary partners + lovers' model so if anyone has recommendations for books/zines on polyamory that doesn't do hierarchies, give me a shout!

That's all, folks! I was going to put a glossary in the back, but I'm running low on time and space, so I am just going to further explain one last thing that I think is important- PRONOUNS!

Preferred Gender Pronoun (PGP): It's not okay to ask someone you've just met 'are you a boy or a girl?' or even 'how do you identify?' ... these are very personal questions which some of us do not know the answer to. A more appropriate question would be 'what's your pronoun?'

Some people prefer gender neutral pronouns such as ze and hir (pronounced hear). Getting used to them can take some practice (ex: Ze went to the gig with hir partner) but I think it's good to create new language for ourselves when what we have doesn't fit us right. Some folks prefer the singular they (ex: Leo called and they want us to proofread the gender zine they made). Grammar purists can fuck off. Some people prefer 'people first pronouns', which means using the persyn's name instead of a pronoun (ex: Em said Em's gonna start drag kinging soon!)

And some people don't give a shit about pronouns! But it is always better to ask then to fuck up and make someone feel like shit.

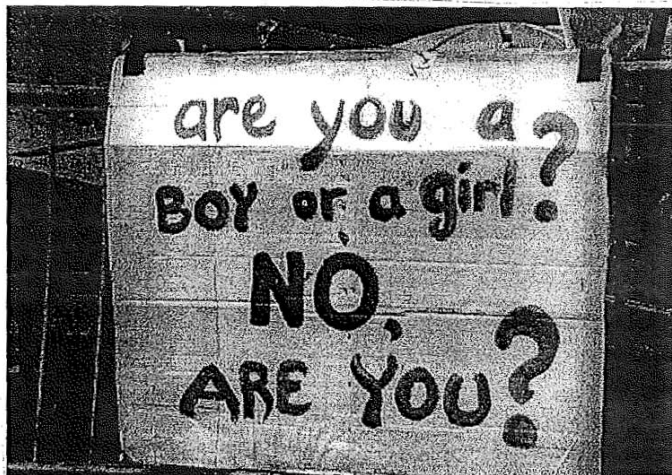


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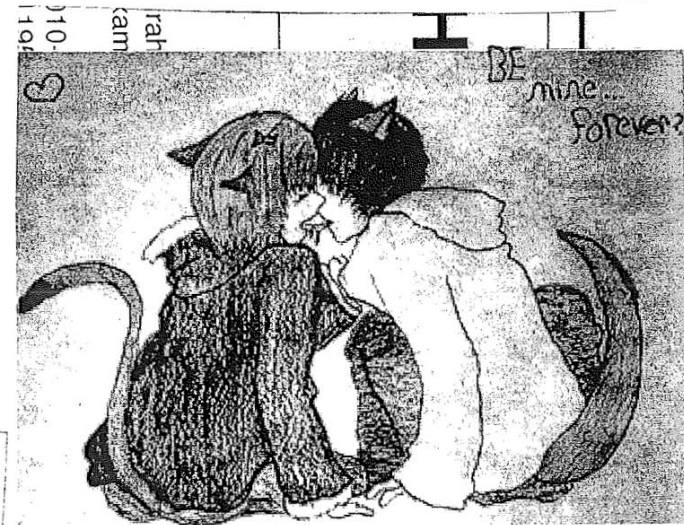
Embracing Submission

Sometimes I wonder about my sexuality. Although I have been polyamorously partnered with women and have kissed lots of my female friends, I have no clue what sleeping with a woman would be like. And I've only slept with a few men (not all 'straight' men, but more or less 'men' in some sense). I've only recently started trying to be aware of my own power in sex, and knowing that I can say no, and trying to retain some of that power rather than just giving it away like I have in the past. Sometimes when I find myself in a sexual situation with someone, I just clam up, I completely lose my voice. I don't know how to say what I want, and I don't even know what I want. I feel no control over my body, I leave it completely in the other person's hands. I am afraid to say what I want in case it is different than what the other person wants, and just desperately want the other person to take charge and do as they please. There is part of me that really wants to change this, I want to take some of the power back for myself, I want to have a voice.

But then again, I am wondering if given the right situation, this could be a healthy, enjoyable part of my sexuality? Like maybe the problem is not that I want other people to take charge but that my mind is telling me that this is unhealthy. Maybe if it is consensual and communicative it is okay to let someone take charge. Maybe my problem is not in wanting to be submissive, but it is in letting that happen by default because I don't feel strong enough to say what I want. I don't feel strong enough when I feel like I have to live up to some aggressive, sex-positive sexuality that just isn't me. Maybe I would feel strong enough to say what I want if what I want is to be dominated by someone else, and I can say that and ask for it. Then it is no longer that that person is exploiting me or oppressing or silencing me, because I've communicated what I want. This new way of being sexual might allow me to enjoy being dominated without guilt.

Tell Barbie she can go now. Tell GI Joe to put his gun down and find a boyfriend or a girlfriend or a girl-boy-friend; fuck it, y'all, GI Joe just needs a friend. I mean, he's plastic and not even the kind of plastic that bends. I want to bend in a thousand directions like the sun does, like love does, like time stopped so the hands of the clock could hold each other; and we held each other like I held these words for too many years on the tip of my tongue.

I am my mother's daughter. I am midnight sun. You can find me on the moon waxing and waning, my heart full of pebbles, every single one begging "love me, love me, love me, whoever I am, whoever I become. Love me, love me, love me."



Poem by Andrea Gibson

When I was a kid I would sometimes secretly call myself Andrew. Would tug at the crotch of my pants the way only pubescent boys do, ran around pounding on my bare chest like Tarzan. It's not that I thought I'd grow up to be a man; I just never thought that I'd grow up to be a woman either. From what I could tell neither of those categories fit me, but believe me, I knew from a very young age never to say "Hey dad, this Adam or Eve thing isn't working for me; I mean, what about all the kinds of people in between?"

In the third grade, Lynnette Lyons asked me where all my Barbies were, lied and told her I'd got in trouble so my mom took 'em away. I didn't dare say "Barbies suck, Lynnette! And for that matter, Tommy, so does GI Joe."

I wanna grow into something none of us has ever seen before, and gender is just one of the ways we're boxed in and labeled, before we're ever able to speak who we dream we are, who we believe we'll become, like drumbeats ever changing their rythm. I am living today as someone I had not yet become yesterday, and tonight I will borrow only pieces of who I was today to carry with me to tommorow.

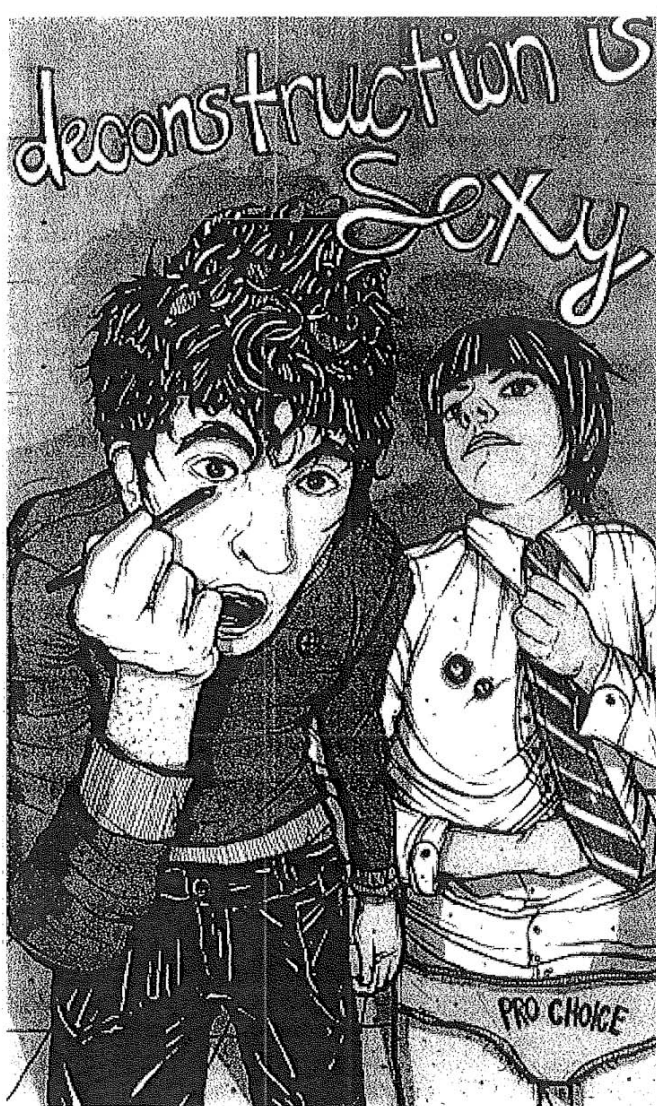
No, I'm not gay. No, I'm not straight, and I'm sure as hell not bisexual, damn it! I am whatever I am when I am it, loving whoever you are when the stars shine and whoever you'll be when the sun rises. Yes, I like girls. Yes, I like boys.

Yes, I like boys who like boys; I like girls who wear toys and girls who don't; girls who don't call themselves girls; crew cuts or curls and that really bad hair phase in between. I like steam rising from the body of a one-night stand; I like holding hands for three months before kissing; I like wishing your body was Saturn, my body thousand rings wrapped around you. You wanted to be a Buddhist nun once; last night you held my cervix between your fingers. I thank gods I don't believe in for your changing. Tell me we'll be naming our children "Beautiful" and nothing else.

I don't think there is anything wrong with dom/sub sex roles- I would be really against saying anything is 'wrong' with any sort of consensual sexuality or desire. But there is part of me that can't help but wonder if these sexualities are formed out of oppression. I know they can be enjoyed and practiced healthily and consensually, but I can't help but feel like the reason they exist in the first place must come from a culture of abuse.

Like I don't want to judge other people or make assumptions about other peoples' reasons for being into BDSM, but I can be pretty certain that my interest in it has a lot to do with patriarchy and sexual abuse. That doesn't mean I will resist it, just because I know it is formed out of something ugly. I think I can embrace my desires and still challenge the things that have formed them. I am who I am- genderqueer, abortioneer, sexual assault survivor, patriarchy survivor, feminist, polyamorist, anarchist, the list goes on and is ever-changing. But the ugly bits are just as much a part of my identity as the wonderful bits.

I think everyone has experienced some form of sexual abuse in their life, everyone is a survivor. I've said before that we are all just 'surviving our sexualities'. It is a miracle that some of us are even able to have safe healthy sex, what with everything we are inundated with in our society- telling us to be quiet, telling us that everyone else is normal and we must be fucked up if we're not, and please just don't let anyone find out. Everyone trying to hide their uniqueness, pretend like nothing is wrong. No one knowing how to communicate about their needs, about their desires. Even to our lovers, we can't even talk about our sexualities to the people we're sleeping with. It is a wonder anyone is able to enjoy sex at all. I think it is a real testament to how supportive and loving we as lovers and friends can potentially be that such vibrant, sex-positive communities exist despite our sex-negative culture. But we have a long way to go. I know I do. Since I don't really know for myself, I am trusting other people's experience in believing that BDSM can be safe and healthy. For me, exploring this is how I want to uncover the ways I have been silenced in my sexuality.



Gender love, Gender fuck

One person told me I am creating more binaries in my thinking, such as 'smash gender' or love it. This is probably true, as binaries are hard to get away from, so I want to deconstruct it a bit more. This person told me that 'loving' something isn't necessarily revolutionary or subversive, that we can love things that are hegemonic and not at all subversive, such as bad television. However I think the problem here is language. There are not enough words for love. When I use 'love in the genderfucking, genderloving sense, I don't mean it in the same way that you love a bad television program. I mean love in an active and interactive way- 'loving gender' is interacting with, transforming with and through gender, 'making love' with and to gender. When I say I want to love gender, I don't mean in a one-dimensional, subject-likes-object way. I mean love in a mutually transformative, subversive way. Loving in that way has the potential to challenge our identities and radically alter the way we relate to other people. This is the type of gender politics I want, where my identity is constantly being challenged and remade, and the ways I see and relate to other people are as fluid and contradictory as I am. 'Abolishing gender' is way too simplistic and will never happen. Systems of oppression such as patriarchy and capitalism are reinforced by the rigid, socially enforced gender binary, and I will do everything I can to challenge that, but smashing gender is not the solution. It is fucking everywhere, in everything. Rather than trying to abolish it, let's fuck with it, play with it, let it fuck us silly until we don't know which way is up and can't tell the difference between our lovers and our mothers.



Gender fluidity and 'Identity fixedness'

Someone asked me recently if by gender fluidity I mean being able to take off and put on different genders. Not exactly. That sounds more like genderfuck to me. Genderfuck denaturalises gender and shows the performativity of gender. It has the connotation of being about shocking others and disrupting others' perceptions, but I think it can also be about yourself. It can be about exploring yourself through gender, 'leaving more fluid room to be self-expressed and self-explorative, with less expectations of a norm and more room to play via being radically honest' (Wikipedia: Genderfuck).

For me, gender fluidity is less about the way others perceive you and *creating the space* to be 'radically honest,' and it is more about *being* radically honest. It is about letting gender embrace you and feeling comfortable in it. Gender fluidity feels more like emotional and personal growth-not in a linear way but in an expansive, anything-is-possible way. It is more personal than genderfuck. Genderfuck is deconstructive, gender fluidity is expressive. Genderfuck is purposefully contradictory, whereas when gender fluidity is contradictory, it is so incidentally.

In terms of identity politics, fluidity to me means not focusing on one fixed identity as a person's 'true' identity, forcing all previous identities leading up to that final 'enlightened' one to be understood as naïve or artificial. Gender fluidity means validating a person's past, present, and future genders. 'Coming out' is not a once-off event, it is a lifelong process of self-exploration. Within gender fluidity, we do not experience ourselves as being on a linear path to self-discovery that leads to our one true self. It is not that we were xyz all along (a lesbian, a trannyfag) and we just didn't realise it or were suppressing it. Rather for me, as I grow and learn and meet more people with diverse life experiences, my self-expression, desires, and self-understanding change. I don't feel like I'm 'discovering' an inherent queerness that was laying dormant, I feel like I am allowing myself to be self-expressed outside of heteronormativity, which is queer.

I do not want to invalidate people who do experience their sexual/gender identities as fixed and who feel that they were [insert identity] all along. Many folks, probably a majority of people, claim these fixed identities proudly. Some trannies and queers do not want to think about their past identities, probably because it can be painful to remember back when you were straight, or back when you were a boy. To many folks those past selves have little to do with their present identities. However this is just one way of experiencing identity. I'm hoping to describe my own feeling of identity, and explain gender fluidity as I understand and experience it. There are loads of us who do not experience these things as fixed or stable, who do not think that we were [any identity] all along, and who might not be able to untangle our past identities from our ever-changing present ones.

There is a social norm which discourages those of us with fluid genders and sexualities from expressing that fluidity: it could be thought of as 'identity essentialism,' but for now I'll call that norm 'identity fixedism' (if someone thinks of a better phrase, lemme know). Identity fixedism restricts people from engaging in any behavior that doesn't fit their claimed identity. This social norm is not only prevalent in the dominant heteronormative socie*y, but it is pervasive in much of mainstream LGBT culture, a contributing aspect of what some have called 'homonormativity.' For example this social norm of identity fixedness restricts gay identified men from ever being romantic or sexual with women or female bodied people, and identified butches and masculine women from ever expressing any type of femininity. I think sometimes this norm is upheld because people simply aren't interested in identity contradictory behavior and sometimes because they are afraid it will compromise their identity.

NOT GAY
AS IN HAPPY,

BUT QUEER
AS IN FUCK YOU.



He brings up his relationship with his father and how that has affected his perception of manhood and masculinity, and ends by reaffirming his appreciation of women. He says that *'being a fag or a third-gender person is a way for me to try to salvage the good that I saw in my father, the virtues that I see in ordinary men, without being damaged by the ugliness, the unbridled rage, the hatred of homosexuals, the racism, the arrogance that made me wary of my dad.'*

This tendency to base identity categories on behavioral qualifications rather than a person's understanding of themselves results in identity fixedism and social policing, ensuring that people do not step out of their identity boxes or engage in identity-contradictory behavior. Trans folks often end up challenging this tendency towards social policing and identity fixedism that we see in homonormativity (and heteronormativity) because if someone who bases their identity off of being attracted to men starts dating a man with a cunt, or finds out their male partner is going to start transitioning and living as a woman, this person's sexual identity is now in question.

So if identity fixedism is problematic for people who report relatively stable identities but may occasionally engage in behavior which contradicts this identity, imagine how problematic this social expectation of fixedness can be for folks whose identities are constantly changing, growing, or contradicting themselves. This is why many of us have embraced a queer identity for our genders as well as sexualities.

No More Gender Police!

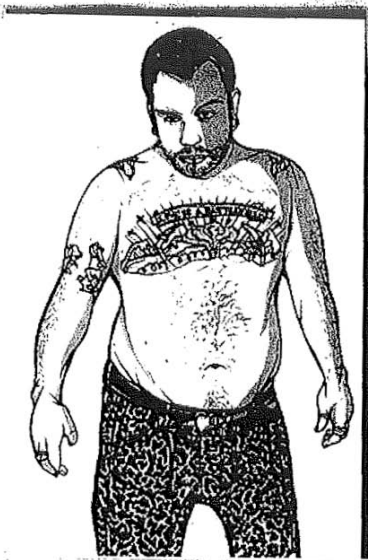
Let's stop policing ourselves and each other. Gender is one game that you don't have to play by anyone else's rules. The real danger in this 'gender is a social construct', 'abolish gender' crap is that in gendertopic spaces, anyone who is not subversive enough, or is seen as 'gender normative' already fails. We (and I'm guilty of this too) assume that they are being 'duped' or buying into gender norms. What the fuck? Are we fighting for gender liberation so that we can tell people how to express themselves? You have no idea where someone else is coming from, or what gender journey has led them where they are today. Awhile ago I befriended a femme lady who seemed so comfortable wearing lingerie at a queer squat party that I thought she must really have a strong sense of her identity- she knows exactly who she is and how to express it. I was surprised when she told me that up until recently she identified as a transguy, and most of her friends back home still refer to her as 'he' even though she's presenting more femme now.

I do not want to create more gender hierarchies, with 'subversive' genders at the top and 'normative' genders at the bottom. Some people fit comfortably within the gender binary, and that is fine. If you take a closer look, I bet most people have ways that they 'transgress' the gender binary, but their identities fit comfortably into categories of 'male' 'female', 'hetero' 'homo', 'masculine' 'feminine' and that is fine! There is nothing wrong with the categories of 'woman' and 'man', only when they are constructed as opposites and based off of essentialist definitions such as having a cunt or a dick and fucking men or women do they become problematic. I think it's fine to have two major categories, as long as we don't see them as mutually exclusive, non-overlapping, or the only two options.

However his lesbian and feminist history leaves him with a deep respect for women. In his indecision over taking T (testosterone), he says *'I tripped over an amazingly deep wall of shame about maleness, and antipathy towards it... the good people, the people who will transform the world and make it a safer, better place, are women.'* He even questions what use men have. He wants to reject male privilege and stereotypes of manhood and find a place for his own version of masculinity to fit within it.

He goes on to describe some emotional and psychological changes he noticed after taking T, presumably to name some of the things he experiences as 'manliness' which do not necessarily have a value attached to them but are simply his personal experience. These changes include an intensified sex drive, described as a new sort of immediacy and increased reaction to visual stimuli. He says it is easier to make decisions and working with other people has gotten easier, with less *'fretting about hierarchies or teamwork... there's less bullshit about leadership or taking orders'*. I find this interesting, and my feminist 'gender is a social construct' side would wonder whether it is that some men are less worried about creating hierarchies or 'bullshit about leadership' simply because they are usually benefitting from these hierarchies, and whether being socially dominated by others is less of a triggering, violating thing for most (we're probably talking white?) men because this domination hasn't systematically been used against them throughout their lives. However California seems to be saying that for him this change was a result in taking T, implying that it is not entirely social. Although he also acknowledges that the fact that he now mostly works with men makes the source of this change hard to determine.

Patrick Califia- 'Manliness'



This is a summary/response to Califia's chapter in *The Transgender Studies Reader* edited by Steven Whittle and Susan Stryker. I like the potential conversations it could start about transmasculinities and male privilege. I'm putting it in this zine because Califia is a public figure in the gender world, he has a long history in the BDSM community, and his erotica is fucking hot so people should know who he is if they don't already.

In this chapter Califia writes about his relationship to manhood and manliness after his chest surgery. He discusses the difficulties in transitioning to male from a lesbian feminist background. He does not consider himself a 'primary transsexual' who feels they are simply correcting a mistake of nature (i.e. a man born in a woman's body, etc) but says that his gender dysphoria had more to do with the way people perceived him. He does not exactly identify as a 'man', but does not want to be treated as a girl.

Many trans people battle gender dissonance all or much of their lives, and many transsexuals who transition from one sex to another have fought long and hard to get their gender recognised. I refuse to invalidate their genders by saying gender is socially constructed. It is socially enforced, yes, but not constructed. This is a matter of checking privilege, because many transfolks do not have the privilege of taking their gender for granted or believing it is socially constructed.

I don't want to write people off as 'gender normative' because like I said you never know what gender journey has led someone to their current understanding of their gender and how to communicate that gender to others. Thanks to the help of hormones and in some cases surgeries, there are transfolks living in stealth everywhere. For some, it is necessary to hide their trans status (or live their gender identity as they want to without qualifiers such as 'trans'- depends on how they see it.) And I would never say there's anything wrong with that. Because of the highly marginalised status of trans people in our society sometimes people just gotta go stealth, for safety or for sanity.



Blog, Blog, Blog: What is Cis?

Talking with Nome, author of the blog *That's What Ze Said*

This is my response (though edited and expanded) to a blog entry titled 'What is Cis?' in which the blogger offers a 101 definition of 'cis'. Ze explains where the prefix comes from and why it is important to name the dominant majority rather than allow them the hegemonic power of going nameless and only naming the minorities. To summarise, cis is a synonym for 'non-trans' and generally means that a person's gender identity is aligned with or fits into the sex/gender that they were assigned at birth and socialised into. However 'cis' raises loads of questions for me...

I really like the idea of using 'cis' to describe people, I think it is good to name things rather than just accepting cisfolks as the norm and everybody else as some type of variant. But it causes some confusion for me. I feel like I should identify (or not identify, but at least name) myself cissexual, because I don't experience the intense gender dissonance that so many people do when their bodies don't match their genders... I feel sorta ambivalent towards my body, I guess. I bind, but I don't want top surgery. I don't mind my chest, I just don't want other people to use it to gender me and figure out how they should treat me. But I'm definitely not cisgender, cos my gender is queer.

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USED:
CLOTHES:
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FURNITURE:
FURNITURE:

"We're all oppressors, we're all oppressed"

My friends call me a girl, a lady, ma'am, 'she', and I don't know how to call them out on it. They know how I feel, I've explained my genderqueerness to them. But it doesn't change the way they see me, and they 'slip up'. Is it really slipping up when it's all I hear? I've requested gender neutral pronouns, and asked them not to call me a girl, lady or woman. But I've never heard it. All I want is to know what it feels like to hear someone say something other than 'she', but I haven't, not once. How am I supposed to figure out what pronoun feels right when I never hear any alternatives? I hate how much of my gender relies on other people and their perceptions. But hearing 'she' is not as upsetting as 'girl'. 'She' I'm used to, and it is just a pronoun. But girl is just a slap in the face, a complete denial of my queerness, of my identity. It usually takes the wind out me so much, I'm unable to call out the friend who just said it.

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Look, if you slip up, apologise! Don't just hope the person didn't hear you and move on, because I guarantee you they heard it and it probably set alarm bells ringing for them. Or like one genderqueer says, another fragile piece of zane breaks off everytime ze hears someone get it wrong. Or like I said for me, I get the wind knocked out of me and don't always know how to recover.

But I'm not being demanding to my friends, so why should I expect them to take the initiative and essentially learn a new language? I could get tuff, call them out, tell them they gotta respect me or they're not my friends. But I won't. I barely have the strength to face people I don't care about, how could I face my friends?

CLOTHES:
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The Politics of 'Slipping'

Even despite my own genderqueerness, my own hyper-awareness of gender and trans issues, and my politics of respecting other people's identities no matter what, I somehow manage to 'slip' on occasion and use 'she' for someone I know is a boy. Even when I don't verbally slip, I catch myself thinking about FTM spectrum folks and FT?? genderqueer folks as female. I don't seem to have the same issue with MTF spectrum folks, I have fewer problems thinking of transwoman and MTF spectrum folks as women, and respecting their PGP (preferred gender pronoun), and not 'ungendering' them or focusing on their birth-assigned sex. However I cannot say the same for FTM spectrums. I too often catch myself 'slipping' and saying 'she', and using their birth-assigned sex to gender them.

I don't like calling it 'slipping', because I do not think it is an accident. There is something behind it. In my case I think it is because transmen and transmasculine spectrum folks are often feminist, queer, and totally up on gender politics, refusing male privilege etc, and because of this I relate to them differently than I do most men. (This says something interesting about what I see as 'manliness', doesn't it?) And also, I see more than a little of myself in them, and most people use female pronouns for me (though I prefer gender neutral).

I hope I will be able to unlearn this way of thinking and get to a place where I have an easier time respecting people's identities and PGPs, because I know that being ungendered is a really awful feeling. To me 'misgendering' and 'ungendering' are two different things. Misgendering is when you meet someone and assign them a gender based on your own assumptions, and you are wrong. Ungendering is a different thing. I think ungendering is when you know someone is trans or genderqueer and you take their gender away from them, focusing on their birth sex. Ungendering isn't necessarily done purposefully, I've already explained that I do it even though I don't want to.

So I guess I could be 'cissexual genderqueer', that makes sense. But I dunno, sometimes I feel like the whole cis/trans is just another binary. It seems by definition that they are mutually exclusive categories, but I don't think they can be if they are going to be useful to us. I might technically be cis(sexual) by some definitions, but trans is also wrapped up in my genderqueer identity. Maybe I can be sexqueer, that's one suggestion Nome made.

And as Kate Bornstein and others have pointed out, it is not okay that 'cis' has come to mean 'transphobic' to some people. Cis and trans is sometimes constructed as an 'us vs them' narrative, 'we are the oppressed and they are the oppressors' which I think is problematic. And when people say things like 'cisfolks just don't get it, I'm like 'am I cisfolks?' Because I 'get it', but I'm not transsexual so doesn't that mean I'm cissexual? I want to think not, because I don't want this to be another mutually exclusive, non-overlapping binary. But how else do you talk about the fact that I don't experience the dysphoria that many transsexuals do, without naming me cis(sexual)?

Also I think these categories are not as tidy as we would like them to be. I have heard of people who have transitioned from one sex to another, but they identify as cissexual not transsexual, because their sex now matches their gender, and they are done with their transition- and often or always granted cis privilege. This blogger says 'cis' is purely descriptive, and does not say much about how someone relates to their sex/gender. In other words, it is not necessarily or very often an identity. This helps me make sense of it, because a persyn could identify as trans and then describe their relationship to their body as cis if they wanted to.

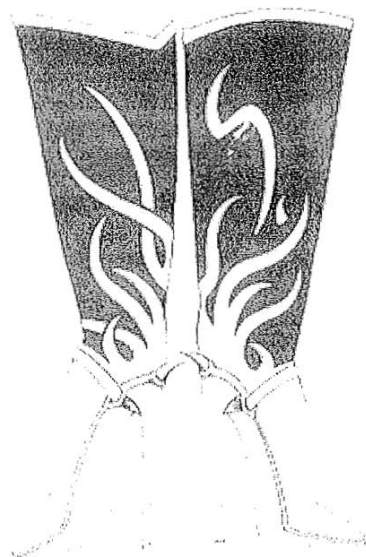
Cis comes from Latin, a prefix for 'on the same side.' It compliments trans, the prefix for 'across' or 'over.' I prefer cis to 'non trans' 'bio' or 'gentic', because these all have heavy essentialist values attached to them, othering 'trans' and constructing 'cis' as the norm.

Genderqueers in the Trans Community

Some questions I've been asking myself are about genderqueers in the trans community. I guess my original questions were about how genderqueers face different things than other trans people and so does that make them less a part of the trans community, but now I think no, definitely not. I guess it is sort of obvious that different genders are going to face different things, and there are endless types of genders in the trans community. And just to be clear, I am not using 'community' here in any sort of essentialist or homogenising way. The author of the zine 'Every body is a modified body' put it well in an article on genderqueer and trans identities when they said "I advocate a difference-positive, coalitional model of solidarity (which doesn't require or assume sameness) rather than unity."

Genderqueers whose gender expression might be fluid but who are not interested in altering their bodies hormonally or surgically experience very different types of oppression than transsexuals whose assigned sex and gender do not match their subconscious sex or gender identity and who constantly battle gender dissonance. (Disclaimer: I am not 'summing up' genderqueers and transsexuals, those are just examples of one way to be genderqueer and one way to be transsexual). Sexism, patriarchy, and cissexism all affect an effeminate transman differently than a feminine transwoman, or a sometimes effeminate sometimes masculine genderqueer person. Are there important differences between 'primary transsexuals' who 'always knew' and have lived with the 'wrong body' dissonance and other transsexuals who decided to transition for more societal reasons, because they did not like being treated by others as the gender they were assigned and socialised into? These are questions I think it is good to think about, but more than anything I think it is important to remember that the answers are going to be different for everybody. Intersectionality describes the ways we can simultaneously experience privilege and oppression within one body along lines of race, class, religion, gender, ability, sexuality, nationality, sexual abuse history, etc. So not only are some genderqueers going to have gender experiences distinct from transsexuals and other trans people, but in terms of intersectionality, no two people in the trans community are going to have the same experience, period. This gets me wondering what 'community' even means. But using a 'difference-positive coalition model' I think we can stop ourselves from deconstructing 'community' into oblivion.

THESE STARTED A



REVOLUTION

today i went to the local second-hand store in my town. it is on the first floor of a big old house, and it's run by a group of friendly older women. i like them because they don't get weird about me trying on men's clothes, and one even helped me figure out a pair of braces (suspenders)- she said her husband used to wear them so she'd know how to help me.

i wanted to find a pair of black dress shoes. i wanna start drag kinging soon, and i wanna look good. i found one pair in the men's section, and another pair in the women's. i tried one of each, the 'women's' shoe on the left foot, the 'men's' shoe on the right. i paced around, looking down, thinking. the Woman shoe was lovely soft black leather, pointed at the toe with sort of high ankles. it fit me, but i wasn't quite comfortable. it was constricting, squeezing my foot- the kind of thing that i knew i could wear for awhile, but eventually the discomfort would get unbearable, and i'd have to take them off. the Man shoe was exquisite, really classy. sort of an american southwest design carved in the leather, with the daintiest silk laces and a square toe. but the shoe was too big, there was a lot of space left that i couldn't fill. i worried that if i wore them dancing i'd trip and then everyone would know i bought shoes that were too big for me.

i thought about the shoes, how i liked the styles of both, but neither fit me. i wished i could have either pair but in a size that fits me. but that's not how thrift stores work, they don't custom make these things for individuals. you just have to sift through the things other folks have left for you, work with what's there. maybe someday i'll find a pair that fits me better. i paced around a bit more, but i knew pretty quickly there was nothing i could do to make the Woman shoe fit me. and the Man shoe, it at least stays on pretty well, and when i wear them maybe i could stuff something in the extra spaces in the toes to make it feel like they fit me a bit better? i dunno, it's worth a shot, i've got nothing to lose, except \$1.

I recently read a blog post titled 'Appropriation of genderqueer identities' which suggested cisgender folks use 'genderfuck' when they want to express a desire to challenge the gender binary, rather than adopting genderqueer identities as a political statement. I agree that cisgender folks adopting genderqueer identities just to challenge the gender binary as a political statement is problematic, as is adopting genderqueer identities to seem more 'radical' or gain access to queers who wouldn't normally be attracted to you. But I do NOT have the right to decide whether someone is misrepresenting their identity. Only an individual can decide whether they are appropriating genderqueer, it is not up to anyone else to make that judgement.

Part of me is scared that I am in fact appropriating genderqueer and that I am just really ignorant and blind to it. But then I remember that I just can't possibly go back to 'girl'. Genderqueer is the closest thing I've found to a description of me. I think my pause came from the fact that I have a real desire to fuck with people's perceptions and make my genderqueerness more visible. I know that many genderqueers do not *want* to fuck with people's perceptions, they just want to be who they are and don't have much choice in the matter. So my desire to genderfuck/ confuse people- not just desire, my longing- as someone who identifies as genderqueer, made me wonder if that meant I was appropriating. If so much of my genderqueerness is about what other people think, then does that mean it isn't coming from me? *Who am I?* You can imagine the kind of self-doubt a persyn could spiral into with this. But I think that my personal understanding of gender as a language, as an interaction and a way of communicating, makes my own genderqueerness inextricable from my need to fuck with people's perceptions.

Also I want to acknowledge that my ability to genderfuck and do it with a relative sense of safety shows my own privilege along lines of race, class, and possibly even gender in the sense that people are usually perceiving me as female no matter what I do. So unlike some genderqueers/transfolks/butches/etc who occupy a dangerous space of in-betweenness which seems to elicit a hatred that can sometimes cost them their lives or at least compromise their sense of safety, people are usually able to make their minds up about my gender- even though they are wrong.

[illegible]

11

Fuck shit up!

[illegible]

really happened.

It's fairly ironic that recently my queer, genderqueer, polyamorous, anti-normative fantasies often end up going back to not only the same person but the same straight cis man. At the moment, he is the only straight cis man who I have a trusting, romantic and loving relationship with. He can be a goon sometimes... socially dominating, ignorant to why some less socially privileged people might feel silenced, etc. But he is eager to learn, willing to admit his blind spots, and sooo fucking open minded. He even lets me be big spoon sometimes! And he is absolutely terrified of hurting me if we were to become more sexual. I think this is a lot of why we've never fucked. (Don't worry he's not terrified in a patronising way, it's legitimate considering his experience of sex and my own fear with sex, in not feeling like I have a voice to say no, let alone speak what I want or like).

Because we both seem to be terrified of this sex- for lots of reasons- it somehow makes it safer in my mind. I don't know if I'd ever feel safe with someone who wasn't terrified to have sex with me. I'm sending him a zine called 'learning good consent' right now. I want him to learn the language and feel of good consent, and then sexually dominate me. **THIS IS VERY SCARY FOR ME** to admit because I occupy sort of a 'desexualised' space for him, since we've never fucked and haven't really had a sexual relationship (there have been passing moments, but one or both of us has always put on the brakes). I don't know if his desires are anywhere close to mine, I suspect they aren't really (I don't know because we haven't seen each other in months and live in separate places at the moment).

In conclusion, I think this particular person in my life is the person I go to when thinking about this kind of sex because he's the only straight cis guy I deeply love and trust. I can't imagine this kind of sex with any of my other partners or sweethearts (at this moment- all hail fluidity and polyamory!) But that doesn't mean I can't find it other places.. who knows, next week I might meet someone who I desire in a similar (or totally new) way.

But for now, while it might seem unrelated or even contradictory, my desire for this particular straight cis man is inextricable from my queer/trans/polyamorous identities.



Sylvia Rivera (holding the banner) and Marsha P. Johnson (with candel) of the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (S.T.A.R.) at the Christopher Street Liberation Day, Gay Pride Parade, NYC (14 June 1973).

Street
Transvestite
Action
Revolutionaries

That's Sylvia Rivera
and Marsha P. Johnson

There's no hope from the election,
queer and trans insurrection!

Visibility of Genderqueers, or 'Why I Bind'

Visibility is a difficult issue for genderqueers, because our society is constructed around the gender binary, and most people think in terms of that binary- 'men' and 'women' are mutually exclusive and are opposites. Women are feminine and they are attracted to men, and men are masculine and they are attracted to women. Obviously there are loads of people who do not fit into this binary, way too many to regard us as 'anomalies' or 'mistakes'. And while some strides have been made thanks to the feminist and gay liberation movements, there still isn't very much room for us genderqueers. Thanks to pop media and television, much of the dominant society has a vague understanding of the notion of transsexuals being 'trapped in the wrong body,' which certainly does not represent reality for all or even most transsexuals, but it at least provides some ground work for cis folks to understand why a persyn would transition from one gender to another. However there is very little basis for most people to understand a gender identity that is neither man nor woman, or a combination of the two. Everyone, no matter how queer or how radical, genders people the instant we see them. If someone is androgynous or blatantly not gender-normative, we gender them anyway. Only in the queerest of circles is it considered polite to ask someone what their PGP (preferred gender pronoun) is rather than assigning them a gender based on your own assumptions.

For me as genderqueer, I'm always aware of when people use 'she' for me, but it is not as much of a slap in the face as when I'm referred to as a girl or a woman. That does not feel right to me, and I've requested of many friends that they refer to me as a persyn, not a girl. This has been met with a lot of resistance among my non queer friends- they often make jokes referring to all women as 'that person who identifies as a woman' and calling me out every time I use the words 'man' or 'woman'. My queer friends don't make a joke of it and they say they want to support me, but they seem to have a hard time not referring to me as female and treating me as such.

I've begun to bind my chest, although I am relatively comfortable with my body and couldn't really imagine wanting top surgery if I had the option. I just don't want people to use my chest to gender me. And sometimes I wonder why people aren't more confused when they meet me- I wonder why they are so sure I'm a 'she'. I don't want to play into gender norms in order to get read more



All I have to go off is my desires, and what I think about when I am wanking. So I think I want to be fucked by a straight cis guy cos no matter what I begin thinking about when I'm wanking, I often end up going back to that. And not just being penetrated, but being dominated, overpowered. I'm pretty sure that in practice, experiencing this with any random straight cis man would freak me out, I definitely need some level of trust to feel safe. But how many straight cis men do I really trust? Not very many.

Queer Desires...

I'm amused and take pleasure in putting my prescription for an IUD¹ in my 'trans' folder. Me, an anti-heteronormative genderqueer, not only hoping to obtain an IUD, but putting the prescription with my trans stuff! Blasphemous! I usually try and keep my queer and trans politics/identities unaware of the fact that I like to be penetrated, sometimes by sperm-makers.

Okay there's plenty of sperm-makers in my queer and trans communities, so getting an IUD hardly compromises my queer/trans identities, of course. But that's not the whole story. Sometimes I want to be penetrated by 'straight' cis men. "I'm-a-man-and-I-like-girls" cis men. Now that is blasphemous.

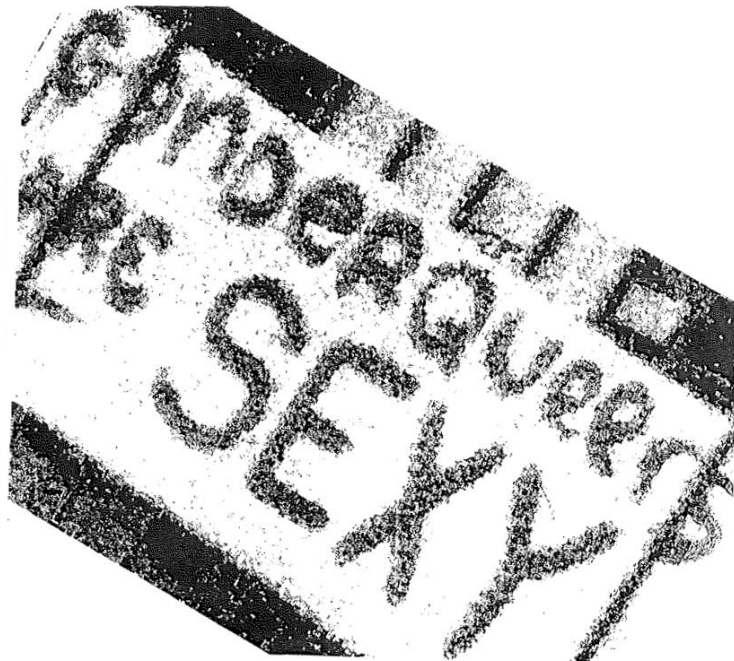
If I am being fucked by 'straight' cis men, what does that make me? Well they'd certainly see me as a girl, otherwise you can be sure they wouldn't be fucking me. How can I be okay with that? With all my politics, my queerness, genderqueerness, and my feminism- how could that possibly work?

Ok hold up. To be honest, I'm portraying myself in a certain way, the way I want to be perceived. I'm generalising more than is possible considering my relatively limited sexual experience. I don't know for sure if I do like being fucked by straight cis men- the last two 'men' I've fucked were not *exactly* straight or cis, and I won't go more than two years in the past to analyse my sexuality, cos I know it has changed so much since then.

¹ An IUD is something people who have impregnable bodies can insert into their uterus to prevent pregnancy- it involves no hormones, lasts 10 years, and is a modern version of birth control which was used in camal transportation days.

masculine (I'm not masculine at all really) but I do want to disrupt people's perceptions a bit more- genderfuck, if you will. My choice of clothing is pretty masculine/androgynous, and I have had a real aversion to feminine clothing and signifiers in the past few years. But my speaking patterns and mannerisms are pretty effeminate (calling them feminine doesn't quite feel right) and I don't feel like actively trying to change that just to make my genderqueerness more visible.

And I have found that I am much more comfortable doing 'femininity' when I am dressed extra-male or with several male signifiers such as suspenders, a mustache, etc. I feel sort of free to be as girly or as diva as I want, because I know it won't get mistaken for straight girl femininity. I get a real kick out of wearing very traditionally male clothing, then adding a glitter belt or something and being a total fag. Sure I'm performing, but I'm always performing some type of gender, am I not?



GAMES, Always. (by myself, group games are better of course)

One of my favorite games to play is looking at people I perceive as binary gendered, studying their faces, and deciding whether they could pass as the other binary gender from what they are presenting. You would be shocked at how many seemingly binary gendered folks are just a haircut and change of clothes away from being perceived as a different gender.

I can't say I'm not jealous of them. Some of them might never question their gender, they might be perfectly comfortable living as the sex/gender they were assigned, and maybe they never give gender a second thought.

But if they wanted to, they could.

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