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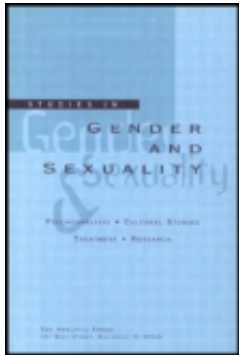
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Imagining the She/Male: Pornography and the Transsexualization of the Heterosexual Male

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Abstract

This essay explores the emergence of a form of sexual desire that did not strictly exist before the late 20th century—desire for the “pre-op” male-to-female (MTF) transsexual woman—a partially feminized male-bodied person who typically has breasts developed through hormone therapy or breast augmentation and some other female characteristics but who has not yet undergone female-to-male sex-reassignment surgery. The historical development of this new form of sexual desire is documented, in part, by the emergence of the transsexual pornographic video as a heterosexual male genre. The primary focus of this article is on the male spectator, with a secondary emphasis on the “male” performer. It explores how both male performers and consumers self-identify, what concepts of gender that both performers and consumers hold, and how the adult entertainment industry organizes and reflects sex and gender conventions and practices.

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Abstract

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This essay explores the emergence of a form of sexual desire that did not strictly exist before the late 20th century—desire for the “pre-op” male-to-female (MTF) transsexual woman—a partially feminized male-bodied person who typically has breasts developed through hormone therapy or breast augmentation and some other female characteristics but who has not yet undergone female-to-male sex-reassignment surgery. The historical development of this new form of sexual desire is documented, in part, by the emergence of the transsexual pornographic video as a heterosexual male genre. The primary focus of this article is on the male spectator, with a secondary emphasis on the “male” performer. It explores how both male performers and consumers self-identify, what concepts of gender that both performers and consumers hold, and how the adult entertainment industry organizes and reflects sex and gender conventions and practices. In my distant past, as I was sorting out a variety of Freudian issues, I was attracted to pre-op transsexual prostitutes. I found them to be beautiful in this otherworldly way. I liked watching them in their clubs—it was theater, it was criminal, it was underground. To me, they were mythical, and being around them was my escape into a world of risk and eros and beauty and tragedy.

—Jonathan Ames, Interview, *Village Voice*, March 3, 2005

Over the 4th of July weekend in 1999 PFC Barry Winchell was murdered, asleep in his bed, at Fort Campbell. The victim of constant homophobic taunts and slurs, Winchell became one of first martyrs of the U.S. military's “Don't Ask, Don't Tell” policy on homosexuals. Ironically, Winchell was probably not gay at all; he previously identified as heterosexual. But he was romantically involved with Calpernia Addams, a transsexual woman. Addams had begun to undergo hormone therapy and had some preliminary surgery, but she had not fully transitioned—she still had a penis. The welter of conceptual and psychological confusion surrounding Winchell's sexual relationship triggered the tragic events leading to his murder.

Addams lived her life as a woman, and Winchell considered her a woman and treated her like one. They had met at a gay bar in Nashville, Tennessee, where she was a regular performer. Winchell had never been to a gay bar before but had gone there with some other soldiers on weekend leave. He was introduced to Calpernia by his roommate, Justin Fisher, who seemed to have been infatuated with Calpernia himself. After they became involved, Winchell wondered if he was gay because he was sexually involved with her. When it became known that he was dating Addams, Winchell was repeatedly taunted and called a faggot by his fellow soldiers as well as his officers. On the 4th of July weekend, he got into a fight with a fellow soldier over an unrelated issue, but the soldier was outraged that he had been beaten by a faggot. And the following night that soldier took his revenge by bludgeoning Winchell to death with a baseball bat as he slept (France, 2000**16**. France , D. (2000 , May 28). An inconvenient woman. *New York Times Magazine*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/28/magazine/aninconvenientwoman.html?src=pm>

View all references; Hackett, 2000**22**. Hackett , T. (2000 , March 2). The execution of Private Barry Winchell: The real story behind the “Don't Ask, Don't Tell” murder. *Rolling Stone*. Retrieved from <http://www.archive.org/web/2006021320320/www.david.clemons.com/gaymilitary/rolstobarry.html>

View all references). Winchell was undoubtedly a victim of the homophobic environment in his military unit, but more notably he was also one of the first martyrs as the male lover of a pre-operative transsexual woman.

Ten years have passed and the sexual appeal of the pre-op male-to-female (MTF) transsexual female is now more commonly accepted. According to the latest Internet statistics, traffic to transsexual porn and dating sites has literally exploded. Growing by more than 5,000% in the last 5 years, the business news website www.examiner.com recently estimated that more than 188 million men (worldwide) have gone to these sites. During the three summer months (June–August) of 2009 traffic to both transsexual porn and dating sites grew by 350% (Claire, 2009**8**. Claire , M. (2009 , August 31). *Man's Secret Love of Transsexual Women: Do New Trends Predict a Second Sexual Revolution? Part II*. Retrieved from <http://www.examiner.com/x-18935-Phoenix-Transsexual-Relationships-Examiner~y2009m8d30-PART-2--Mans-secret-love-of-transsexual-women-Do-new-trends-predict-a-second-rsexual-revolution>

View all references). The consumers who go to these sites are, reportedly, predominately heterosexual men. *Adult Video News* (AVN), the porn industry's trade publication, reviews she/male or “tranny” porn as a straight genre.

If that seems improbable, the claim is supported by economic and marketing results. According to Steven Gallon, who founded one of first transsexual porn sites in the late 1990s, “the majority of customers are straight men.” Transsexual porn has no appeal for gay men, the other large audience for porn. Gallon notes that “tranny porn” garners “practically no response in the gay market at all. I don't even bother to promote it to the gay market, because it would be a waste of money” (as cited in Claire, 2009**8**. Claire , M. (2009 , August 31). *Man's Secret Love of Transsexual Women: Do New Trends Predict a Second Sexual Revolution? Part II*. Retrieved from <http://www.examiner.com/x-18935-Phoenix-Transsexual-Relationships-Examiner~y2009m8d30-PART-2--Mans-secret-love-of-transsexual-women-Do-new-trends-predict-a-second-rsexual-revolution>

View all references).

In this essay I explore the emergence of a form of sexual desire that did not strictly exist before the late 20th century. It is a desire for a kind of person who did not exist before then—the “pre-op” MTF transsexual woman—a partially feminized male-bodied person who typically has breasts developed through hormone therapy or breast augmentation and some other female characteristics but who has not yet undergone female-to-male sex-reassignment surgery. Previously such a person may have existed only in someone's fantasies, through a cross-dresser's performance or with someone who was an intersexed individual (Valentine, 2007**35**. Valentine , D. (2007). *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category* . Durham , NC : Duke University Press .

[View all references](#)).

Desire is not something given to us out of the blue; it is constructed through fantasy—and it is through fantasy that we learn how to desire (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1986**25**. Laplanche , J. & Pontalis , J.-B. (1986). Fantasy and the origins of sexuality . In: *Formations of Fantasy* , eds. V. Burgin , J. Donald , & C. Linden , London , UK : Methuen , pp. 5 – 34 .

[View all references](#)). Porn lets us explore new fantasies. Director Wash West believes that pornographic movies are “passports” to *fantasy worlds* where sex exists without the everyday encumbrances of social convention, endurance, or availability (Escoffier, 2007b, 2009, pp. 336–337). To imagine a sexual performance in a fantasy or to see one in a porn movie enables us to experience sexual excitement without the side effects of anxiety, guilt, or boredom—and for many the erotic excitement is heightened when the fantasy includes an element of risk, danger, mystery, or transgression (Stoller, 1985**32**. Stoller , R. J. (1985). *Observing the Erotic Imagination* . New Haven , CT : Yale University Press .

[View all references](#), pp. 3–69; Cowie, 1993**9**. Cowie , E. (1993). Pornography and fantasy: Psychoanalytic perspectives . In: *Sex Exposed: Sexuality and the Pornography Debate* , eds. L. Segal & M. McIntosh . New Brunswick , NJ : Rutgers University Press , pp. 132 – 152 .

[View all references](#)). Pornographic films embody and even “document” these fantasies through the reality effects of its filmmaking (Barthes, 1986**2**. Barthes , R. (1986). The reality effect. In: *The Rustle of Language*, ed. R. Barthes. New York, NY: Hill and Wang, pp. 141–148.

[View all references](#); Escoffier, 2003**10**. Escoffier , J. (2003). Gay-for-pay: Straight men and the making of gay pornography . *Qualitative Sociology* , 26 , 531 – 555 .

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[View all references](#)).

The porn film industry is broadly organized into straight and gay sectors reflecting the patterns of heterosexual and same-sex gender roles. Nevertheless, two genres (“she/male” and bisexual films) that cross gender and sexual lines are classified to be exclusively in one sector or the other. Bisexual films are considered a “gay” genre, in part because same-sex activity takes place, whereas transsexual films are considered a straight genre. This is because the sexual activity takes place between a male and female—despite the fact that the “female” has a penis.

The historical development of this new form of sexual desire is documented, in part, by the emergence of the transsexual pornographic video as a heterosexual male genre. The typical encounter in these videos is between transsexual women, called she/males (i.e., male-to-female transsexuals who have developed breasts and other female characteristics but still retain their penises), and male performers who routinely identify as heterosexual. The sexual activity will often include mutual fellatio and anal intercourse in which either party can take the “active” or top position.

The primary focus of this essay is on the male spectator, with a secondary emphasis on the “male” performer. It explores how both male performers and consumers self-identify, what concepts of gender that both performers and consumers hold, and how the adult entertainment industry organizes and reflects sex and gender conventions and practices.

The genre and its popularity among heterosexual men challenges our conception of straight male identity and the ways in which male heterosexuality is or is not a sexual orientation analogous to gay male identity. It also facilitates the integration of the viewer into the social world that the genre portrays—one need only go into a “tranny bar” in order to see the continuity between the world of pornographic films and the sexual marketplace in any city. Most significantly, it unsettles received ideas of the relation between gender and heterosexual sex and its representation in pornographic films (Kahr, 2008**23**. Kahr , B. (2008). *Who Been Sleeping in Your Head? The Secret World of Sexual Fantasies* . New York , NY : Basic Books .

[View all references](#), pp. 164–185).

SEX AND THE TRANSSEXUAL

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Erotic interest in transsexual women first emerged in 1953 following the publicity surrounding the MTF sexual reassignment surgery of Christine Jorgensen, whose sex-change operation introduced the transsexual as a representative figure of modern life. Jorgensen had always sought to downplay the stigmatized sexuality (homosexuality) that often predated a successful surgical transformation, but it wasn’t until the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, when sex was more openly explored and accepted, that the MTF transsexual was eroticized. Though Jorgensen was considered by the press and the public to be glamorous and highly attractive, she downplayed her sex life. Yet throughout this period many transsexual women sought to enhance their feminine sexual appeal by having hormone treatments to soften skin and reduce body hair, implants to enlarge their breasts, and plastic surgery to remove Adam’s apples or feminize cheekbones (Meyerowitz, 2002**26**. Meyerowitz , J. (2002). *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* . Cambridge , MA : Harvard University Press .

[View all references](#), pp. 168–207).

In the decade after Jorgensen’s operation the male-to-female transsexual emerged as a separate social identity—but it required sorting through both medical and quotidian conceptions of “biological sex,” the sexual self and gender. Initially, these different conceptions were confusingly overlaid. When the concept of transsexuality first emerged in the 1960s it was closely associated with homosexuality—MTF transsexuals were classified by many psychiatrists and clinicians as homosexual men. Many observers found it difficult to separate MTF transsexualism from homosexual desire because some MTF transsexuals engaged in same-sex sexual activity before their surgical transition. In addition, the gay male community had a long tradition of cross-dressing men, some of whom were effeminate in identification and behavior, who worked as performers (female impersonators) or prostitutes. There were also many heterosexual men who chose to cross-dress as an erotic fetish. Over time *sexual object-choice* was differentiated from *gender identification* and both of them from *cross-dressing*.

Thus, although homosexual desire and the desire to make a transsexual transition definitely overlap, they are also separate psychological needs. And as a more precise nomenclature evolved, cross-dressers came to be identified as “transvestites,” that is, as men or women who wore the clothes of the other sex. However, once sex-reassignment surgery became readily available, men in some of these different groups began to consider making the surgical/medical transition from male to female. Thus transsexualism, transvestitism, and homosexuality became analytically distinct identities, though in fact the social worlds of each group remained linked. However, interest in and anxiety about transsexualism was largely spurred on by its association with stigmatized forms of sexuality such as homosexuality.

During the 1960s a significant change took place. The tactical need for transsexuals and their advocates to downplay explicit sexuality receded, and there was an increased recognition and acceptance of transsexualism and its links to transgressive sexuality. One of the first signs of this shift was an explicitly pornographic memoir, *Take My Tool*, by Vivien Le Mans published in 1968. The book’s back cover copy announced that “sexual surgery made *him* [italics added] a complete woman capable of the ultimate in unbridled sexual desires” (as cited in Meyerowitz, 2002**26**. Meyerowitz , J. (2002). *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* . Cambridge , MA : Harvard University Press .

[View all references](#), p. 170). Included in the book were pornographic accounts of oral and anal sex that Le Mans had engaged in as a homosexual before having her reassignment surgery. She concluded with graphic descriptions of heterosexual intercourse after her surgery. In the eyes of some readers, Le Mans’s heterosexual activity demonstrated that she was a true woman. Other authors followed in the footsteps of Le Mans. In 1972, Olympia Press, the Paris-based

publisher of erotic and sexually provocative books by Henry Miller, Jean Genet, William Burroughs, and Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, published Lyn Raskin's *Diary of a Transsexual*, which described her sex life as a gay man and as a woman, after her operation. In *Man-Maid Doll* (1972) another author, Patricia Morgan, wrote about her life as a prostitute. "Let's face it," she wrote, "I'm a whore ... I've hustled men as a boy, as a guy in drag, and as a woman" (as cited in Meyerowitz, 2002**26**. Meyerowitz, J. (2002). *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* . Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press .

View all references, pp. 201–202).

Despite the fact that reassignment surgery has become more available and less costly, it is, nonetheless, an expensive process to fully transition from man to woman—especially for those from working-class and minority backgrounds. Prostitution and various kinds of sex work have helped many prospective MTF transsexuals to finance the necessary hormone treatments and surgery—as escorts, street-based prostitutes, strippers, and performers in pornographic films (Ryan, 2006**31**. Ryan, J. R. (2006). Transgendered sex workers . In: *Encyclopedia of Prostitution and Sex Work* , ed. M. H. Dittmore , Westport , CT : Greenwood Press , pp. 499 – 506 .

View all references; Chavalier, 2007**7**. Chavalier, M. (2007). *Confessions of a Transsexual Porn Star* . Bloomington , IN : Author House .

View all references). As sex workers, performers in the pornographic film industry occupy a particularly desirable niche—they are able to work on a pay scale somewhat comparable to women in the straight industry, which can be quite lucrative. They are perceived as “stars” and are considered more glamorous than other sex workers. If they also work as escorts, the films serve as “promotional” videos for their services. If successful they are able to work as escorts anywhere in the world.

Although the sexually explicit memoirs published in the 1960s set the stage for the emergence of the transsexual as a sexual heroine, they did not explicitly eroticize the “pre-op” MTF transsexual—that emerged later in pornographic film. The pornographic film industry is almost exclusively interested in pre-op MTF transsexuals as performers. How the pre-op transsexual emerged as a fetish around which a film genre would form is historically obscure. As “chicks with dicks” and she/males they play distinctive roles. Transsexual women occupy a labor market distinct from natural-born female sex workers. Their penises offer a significant comparative advantage. However, it is an advantage that is lost when an MTF transsexual completes reassignment surgery and has fully transitioned. For that reason, some transsexual prostitutes and porn stars hesitate to go all the way and decide to postpone their full transition in order to support themselves (Ryan, 2006**31**. Ryan, J. R. (2006). Transgendered sex workers . In: *Encyclopedia of Prostitution and Sex Work* , ed. M. H. Dittmore , Westport , CT : Greenwood Press , pp. 499 – 506 .

View all references, pp. 499–506).

THE BIG SURPRISE

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In the 40-plus years since porn emerged as a major entertainment industry there has been an extraordinary growth in the variety and range of sexual activities and genres represented (O'Toole, 1999**28**. O'Toole, L. (1999). *Pornocopia: Porn, Sex, Technology and Desire* . London , UK : Serpent's Tail .

View all references). Like any other industry, there is an economic imperative to reach the broadest audience possible. Genres and market niches emerge to cater to specialty interests: gay, BDSM (bondage, discipline, and sadomasochism), and sexual fetishes of all kinds. Since it was introduced in the early 1990s, “tranny porn” or “she/male porn” as it is known in the business, has become extremely popular. Transsexual films are often shot in the gonzo style (a documentary style in which performers may directly address the viewer) and produced by small specialty studios such as Robert Hill Entertainment, Devil's Films, and Legend. By the late 1990s, bigger studios like Evil Angel had also entered the market.

Director Joey Silvera probably did the most to popularize she/male porn and put it into the industry's mainstream. Active in the porn industry since the 1970s—first as a performer (he appeared in more than 1,000 scenes) and then since the early 1990s as a director—his “Rogue Adventures” and “Big Ass She-Male Road Trip” series offered higher quality production. The first AVN award (the Oscars of the porn film industry) for a transsexual film was established in 1995 (Cachapero, 2006**6**. Cachapero, J. (2006 , July 1). Tranny content comes of age. *X-Biz*. Retrieved from http://www.xbiz.com/articles/article_piece_print.php?id=80628

View all references). In the last 5 years, more established straight male performers such as Rocco Siffredi and Kurt Lockwood have begun to make she/male videos.

As the genre grew, MTF performers also began to achieve a level of recognition comparable to mainstream female porn stars. One of the first successful transsexual performers was Gia Darling. She was the first MTF transsexual model to appear in full-on magazine layouts as a Penthouse Pet and a Hustler Honey. She also started her own production company, Gia Darling Entertainment, and in 2006, the breakout year for she/male porn, Darling won AVN's Transsexual Performer of the Year, based primarily on her “Transsexual Heartbreaker” series. “In their fantasies, there's always that girl-on-girl thing,” Darling explained, “but the other thing they like is a girl topping a guy. For me, it's easier to be a top” (as cited in Cachapero, 2006**6**. Cachapero, J. (2006 , July 1). Tranny content comes of age. *X-Biz*. Retrieved from http://www.xbiz.com/articles/article_piece_print.php?id=80628

View all references). Carmen Cruz, Allannah Starr, Wendy Williams (not the radio and TV personality), and Danielle Foxx are some of the genre's major stars. Sexual arousal and the performance of sexual acts depend upon the meanings and cues of the social and cultural context. Human sexual behavior is organized by structured expectations and prescribed interactions that are coded like scripts. The theory of sexual scripts formulated by John Gagnon and William Simon provides a useful analytical framework for exploring the dynamics of sexual performance in pornographic production. Scripts are metaphors for the narrative and behavioral requirements for the production of everyday social life. In their theory of sexual scripting, Simon and Gagnon suggest that these “scripts,” with cues and appropriate dialogue, which are constantly changing and which reflect different cultural groups, circulate in societies as generic guidelines for organizing social behavior. They distinguish three distinct levels of scripting: *cultural scenarios* provide instruction on the narrative requirements of broad social roles, *interpersonal scripts* are institutionalized patterns in everyday social interaction, and *intrapsychic scripts* are those that an individual uses in his or her internal dialogue with cultural and social behavioral expectations (Gagnon and Simon, 1973**19**. Gagnon, J. H. & Simon, W. (1973). *Sexual Conduct: The Social Sources of Human Sexuality* . Chicago , IL : Aldine .

View all references; Gagnon, 1994).

For example, interpersonal scripts help individuals to organize their self-representations and those of others to initiate and engage in sexual activity, whereas the intrapsychic scripts organize the images and desires that elicit and sustain an individual's sexual desire. Cultural scenarios guide an individual's behavior as a participant of collective social life—providing prescriptions for various social, gender, or occupational roles; class and racial identities; sexual beliefs; popular cultural ideals and symbols; and broad social values and norms (Gagnon and Simon, 1973**19**. Gagnon, J. H. & Simon, W. (1973). *Sexual Conduct: The Social Sources of Human Sexuality* . Chicago , IL : Aldine .

View all references, pp. 98–104; Gagnon, 1994). The working materials of pornographic movies largely derive from society's received cultural scenarios and rework them in order to produce a transgressive effect (Goffman, 1976**20**. Goffman, E. (1976). *Gender Advertisements* . New York , NY : Harper Colophon

View all references; Williams, 1989³⁷. Williams , L. (1989). *Hardcore: Power, Pleasure and the "Frenzy of the Visible."* Berkeley : University of California Press .

View all references, pp. 271–275). Transsexual porn scripts play on the cultural assumptions of gender preference (Gagnon, 2004¹⁸. Gagnon , J. H. (2004). *An Interpretation of Desire: Essays in the Study of Sexuality*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press .

View all references, pp. 99–129).

Arousal “is stimulated by the scenario of presentation, by the *mise-en-scene* and the implied narrative” (Cowie, 1993⁹. Cowie , E. (1993). Pornography and fantasy: Psychoanalytic perspectives . In: *Sex Exposed: Sexuality and the Pornography Debate* , eds. L. Segal & M. McIntosh . New Brunswick , NJ : Rutgers University Press , pp. 132 – 152 .

View all references, p. 133; see also Laplanche and Pontalis, 1986²⁵. Laplanche , J. & Pontalis , J.-B. (1986). Fantasy and the origins of sexuality . In: *Formations of Fantasy* , eds. V. Burgin , J. Donald , & C. Linden , London , UK : Methuen , pp. 5 – 34 .

View all references). The *mise en scene* of transsexual porn films is organized around a “central” encounter: a man makes a pass at woman, picks up a sexy woman, hires a babysitter, or arrives for tryst with a prostitute for what appears to be a routine heterosexual encounter. The man makes a pass at the sexy woman with large breasts or a big ass; he may fondle the woman's breasts or squeeze her ass. She grabs his penis and pulls it out. She may even start sucking it. Gradually, the man moves his hand toward the woman's crotch, but when he reaches it he encounters a surprise: “this chick has a dick.” This has been called “the tranny surprise.” The surprise—the presence of an extra penis in a heterosexual encounter—is an underlying dramatic device in a vast majority of transsexual sex scenes (Figure 1). The surprise can take many forms: sometimes the surprise is intended only for the video's viewer, and at other times the surprise may about the *size* of the transsexual female's penis or the particular sex acts that the male partner hadn't expected to engage in such as fellatio or anal intercourse. In some scenes, it may even be a pleasant surprise when the male partner “discovers” a hefty package of the she/male's large or erect penis. In many of these scenes, the arc of the male acquiescence (i.e., the transsexual seduction) leads to the male partner taking the receptive role in anal intercourse. The Lacanian cultural critic Slavoj Žižek has suggested that psychologically the “tranny surprise” is an inverse of the child's traumatic discovery that females have no penis (Žižek, 1994³⁸. Žižek , S. (1994). Courtly love, or woman as thing . In: *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Woman and Causality* . London , UK : Verso , pp. 89 – 112 .

View all references, pp. 104–108).



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FIGURE 1 The “tranny surprise”—the presence of an extra penis in a heterosexual encounter—is an underlying dramatic device in a vast majority of transsexual sex scenes. Photographer: Scott Brent. Models: Tom Moore and Jesse Flores.

In real life, such a surprise would pose a small crisis for most heterosexual men. In the 1992 Oscar-nominated film *The Crying Game*, the male lead falls in love with another man's girlfriend. Although she initially resists his approaches, she eventually responds positively, but when they go to bed together he suddenly sees her penis. He turns away in disgust. She assumed he knew that she was a transvestite. After an emotional struggle, he comes to terms with his infatuation, but in transsexual porn “the surprise” and the male's internal conflict is often rather perfunctory; an acknowledgment that things have already gone too far for the man to turn back, it produces a ratchet effect. It is impossible or difficult to reverse the “surprise.” The male partner keeps going, perhaps continuing to show some reluctance, but the transsexual woman has gained the upper hand and now leads the man on to go further (continuing with “the transsexual seduction”). She pushes his head down to her cock. Reluctantly, at least initially, he sucks her cock. He begins to play with her ass, and the final stage of a transsexual sex scene usually finishes with anal intercourse. Half of the time, he fucks the she/male in the ass. And ideally, they both display their erections as well as their orgasms at the end. Half the time, the she/male will fuck the man. Again, at the scene's (and their sexual) climax, both will display their erections and optimally the male will ejaculate while he is being penetrated.

This typical scene illustrates a number of the standard rhetorical tropes that organize most tranny porn. They are (a) the meet cute and the “surprise,” (b) the transsexual seduction process during which the transsexual woman “seduces” the man to suck her cock and (c) ultimately to fuck her or to get fucked in the ass—the transsexual top as the ultimate transgression of the heterosexual masculine code (Pronger, 1990³⁰. Pronger , B. (1990). *The Arena of Masculinity: Sports, Homosexuality and the Meaning of Sex* . New York , NY : St. Martin's Press .

View all references), and (d) the orgasms of both the man and the woman are the resolution of the situation.

“Sexuality is constructed by seduction,” argues film theorist Elizabeth Cowie (1993⁹. Cowie , E. (1993). Pornography and fantasy: Psychoanalytic perspectives . In: *Sex Exposed: Sexuality and the Pornography Debate* , eds. L. Segal & M. McIntosh . New Brunswick , NJ : Rutgers University Press , pp. 132 – 152 .

View all references, p. 135). And transsexual porn scenes seek to “seduce” the heterosexual male (spectator) and activate his “polymorphous desire” by stimulating his sexual arousal. The straight male viewer's *fantasy video script* is elaborated through an intrapsychic dialectic that oscillates between desire and identification—the movement between the arousal stimulated by the setup and for the desirable objects (the active role) and imagined substitution of oneself in place of the objects of desire (the passive role). It is the continued imagining of an unattained but “possible” sexual satisfaction that nurtures desire.

Transsexual porn scenarios violate some of the standard expectations of heterosexual sex: in this genre of heterosexual porn the woman has a penis, the man sucks her cock, and then she may fuck him. However, she is a woman; she has breasts and appears to be a woman in every respect except one: she has a penis. To some degree, the transsexual woman's demonstrable feminine traits—her breasts, her makeup and dress, and her female presentation of self—help to neutralize any possible homophobic anxieties of the straight male spectator. As one Internet tranny lover exclaimed, “they combine femininity with big-dickedness” (Kick, 2001²⁴. Kick , R. (2001 , February 10). She-males: The best of both worlds? *Disinformation*. Retrieved from <http://old.disinfo.com/archive/pages/dossier/id791/pg1/index.html>

View all references). The ultimate impact of she/male porn on heterosexual male spectators is reinforced by the kindred genre of heterosexual strap-on porn in which the woman wearing a strap-on dildo penetrates the male. Both genres are often classified as BDSM because the male often plays a submissive role in both, though more unequivocally in the strap-on videos.

One of the ironies of straight pornographic videos in general is the common presence of the penis. Its size, erections, and ejaculations are routinely observed and are an accepted element of heterosexual representations. Male viewers of straight porn are not unfamiliar with penises, though they might not be familiar with them in their actual sex life. Whatever might be the case in an actual sexual encounter, in a porn scene the penis is not unusual. Of course, what is unusual is that the woman has a penis.

In transsexual pornography these contradictions are fairly substantial, not only between gender roles and identities but also the repertoire of sexual activities associated with standard gender scripts. Out of the genre there emerges a small set of basic thematic oppositions that may be not present in any given film but that underlie the entire genre: breasts/presentation of self as female versus penis/sex role as active. In addition, she/male porn films mediate between two diametrically opposed categories of heterosexual sex: anal sex (perverse) versus vaginal sex (normal). Though vaginal sex is absent, the sex in the transsexual porn is by definition, heterosexual, that is, it involves a man and a woman.

STRAIGHT WITH A TWIST

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Although the phenomenon has a clinical term (*gynandromorphophilia*, i.e., literally “the love of males in the shape of females”), relatively little has been written about the men who have sex with pre-op transsexual women. There are a handful of scholarly studies that have touched on the topic; on the other hand there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of websites and discussion boards online that are open forums on the subject. It is probably a form of sexuality that has particularly benefited from the Internet.

Part of the erotic appeal of pre-op transsexual women is their exoticism; they transgress conventional definitions of masculinity and femininity through their physical appearance and their sexual behavior. They are often both hyperfeminine in appearance and sexually aggressive. For some of the men attracted to MTF transsexuals, one side of the equation matters more than the other. I’ve heard many heterosexual men (many of whom had little or no experience with transsexual women) remark approvingly of their hyperfemininity:

“Their femininity tends to be old school, the ones that I’m drawn to and interact with, but their masculine side tends to be very affirmative and aggressive, and I like the mix” (Operario et al., 2007²⁷. Operario , D. , Burton , J. , Underhill , K. , & Savelius , J. (2007). Men who have sex with transgender women: Challenges to category-based HIV prevention . *AIDS and Behavior* , 12 , 18 – 26 .

[CrossRef], [PubMed], [Web of Science ®]

View all references, p. 23).

“An exoticness, a uniqueness, something that can’t be obtained elsewhere. They’re just totally unique in their sexuality in that they’re both ... men and women and at the same time, neither men nor women. To me that’s my fascination” (Operario et al., 2007²⁷. Operario , D. , Burton , J. , Underhill , K. , & Savelius , J. (2007). Men who have sex with transgender women: Challenges to category-based HIV prevention . *AIDS and Behavior* , 12 , 18 – 26 .

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View all references, p. 23).

“I found them to be beautiful in this otherworldly way. I liked watching them in their clubs—it was theater, it was criminal, it was underground. To me, they were mythical, and being around them was my escape into a world of risk and eros and beauty and tragedy” (Ames, 2005¹. Ames , J. (2005 , March 29). Interview by Rachel Kramer Bussel. *Village Voice*. Retrieved from <http://www.villagevoice.com/2005-03-29/books/books>

View all references).

Others are excited by the sexual transgressiveness of pre-op transsexuals:

“I like big breasts, and when I’m high I want dick,” one adult performer (Little Billy) told me.

“I like tits and I like dicks. ... Something erotic about getting fucked by someone who is a woman” (Operario et al., 2007²⁷. Operario , D. , Burton , J. , Underhill , K. , & Savelius , J. (2007). Men who have sex with transgender women: Challenges to category-based HIV prevention . *AIDS and Behavior* , 12 , 18 – 26 .

[CrossRef], [PubMed], [Web of Science ®]

View all references, p. 23).

“I like the girls with a little something extra, you know what I mean. Pretty with a big dick” (Operario et al., 2007²⁷. Operario , D. , Burton , J. , Underhill , K. , & Savelius , J. (2007). Men who have sex with transgender women: Challenges to category-based HIV prevention . *AIDS and Behavior* , 12 , 18 – 26 .

[CrossRef], [PubMed], [Web of Science ®]

View all references, p. 23).

These comments are an accurate representation of the appeal that many men experience for pre-op transsexual women.

Porn magazines such as *Hustler* and *Penthouse*, which typically address straight male audiences, often run advertisements for she/male porn and phone sex services. Many of the people who run she/male and transsexual porn sites characterize their customers as primarily straight. “A majority of the customers for the niche are straight men,” claims a short article on she/male websites in www.ecommerce-journal.com. “The reason is simple: Even though she/males have a penis, they look and act like women” (August 20, 2009). In an article titled “How to Date a Pre-Op Transsexual Woman,” a commentator on www.tsgirlfriend.com expresses another opinion. He says that “TS’s [transsexuals] tell me that most of the guys who contact them are, in fact, bisexual or bi-curious. They say these men are often looking for a same-sex experience but packaged in such a way that they have deniability” (February 24, 2003). However, few gay men express any interest in she/male porn or having sex with transsexual women.

In one of the most recent studies of men who engage in sex with MTF transsexual women, most identified themselves as straight or bisexual (73% of 46 men interviewed). This seems to be the case online as well. Those who identify themselves as straight (43%) usually offer a default explanation such as “I like women. I’m straight. I don’t like men.” A substantial number entertain the idea that their erotic interest is a form of bisexuality, that it brings the male and female together into one person: “My girl is TG [transgender] so I think of her as a girl, so in some ways I’m a straight person but in reality I guess some people would put me in the bisexual ...” (Operario et al., 2007²⁷. Operario , D. , Burton , J. , Underhill , K. , & Savelius , J. (2007). Men who have sex with transgender women: Challenges to category-based HIV prevention . *AIDS and Behavior* , 12 , 18 – 26 .

[CrossRef], [PubMed], [Web of Science ®]

View all references, p. 23). In addition another group characterizes themselves as “sexual” (Operario et al., 2007²⁷. Operario , D. , Burton , J. , Underhill , K. , & Savelius , J. (2007). Men who have sex with transgender women: Challenges to category-based HIV prevention . *AIDS and Behavior* , 12 , 18 – 26 .

[CrossRef], [PubMed], [Web of Science ®]

View all references, p. 22).

Barry Winchell might have ultimately thought of himself in this way.

Male performers in transsexual films come to the genre along several different paths. In practice, adult film performers tend to work in a number of mixed or fetish genres, such as female strap-on, BDSM, transsexual or bisexual movies. To some extent, the longevity of performers in the industry requires performers to constantly expand the range of their sexual activity (Esoffier, 2006¹¹. Esoffier , J. (2006). The retrogressive dynamic . In: *The Encyclopedia of Prostitution and Sex Work* , ed. M. H. Ditmore . Westport , CT : Greenwood Press , pp. 400 – 402 .

View all references, 2007a). Successful performers may turn to transsexual porn among others to extend their careers. One recent recruit to transsexual porn is Kurt Lockwood, one of the straight industry's leading male performers. Winner of four AVN awards (the Oscars of the porn industry) between 2004 and 2007, he has appeared in over 400 scenes. In 2008 he appeared in a handful or so female strap-on and transsexual porn films as the male bottom. After performing in the transsexual/strap-on films, Lockwood went on to perform in some bisexual scenes (Wikipedia, 2011**36**. Wikipedia . (2011). *Kurt Lockwood*. Retrieved July 14, 2011, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurt_Lockwood

View all references).

Another is gay-for-pay porn star Rod Barry (who has always claimed to be heterosexual). Throughout his career Barry has appeared in more than 300 scenes in all genres. In 2004 he was cast in *Coming Out* (which wasn't released until 2007), a bisexual movie for Metro, a leading producer of straight adult videos, with a number of mainstream porn actresses: Shy Love and Arianna Jollee. Jollee (Barry's co-star in one of his two scenes), Shy Love, the film's director, and the videographer all found Barry's sexual performance remarkable. A number of them felt that they'd rarely seen anybody "fuck like that"—and they went on to compare him with the young Rocco Siffredi, a leading straight performer and director. Jollee and the others provided Barry with contacts on the straight side and he went on to perform in numerous straight scenes, many of them for Devil's Films. Because in the straight industry there is strong resistance to hiring performers from the gay side of the business, Barry adopted "Billy Long"—later changed to Little Billy—as his straight porn name.

Barry's versatility and sexual range led also to performing in transsexual films as well as female-to-male strap-on videos. Entrepreneur, producer, and director Tom Moore, himself a sexually complex figure with a sexual orientation very much like Barry's, cast him in a series of transsexual videos, shot mainly in Argentina. Moore and Barry shot more than 80 transsexual scenes. As Little Billy, Barry developed a new persona as an adventurous and wacky sex-driven sidekick of "Uncle Tom"—fucking and getting fucked by trannies, as the bottom in female-to-male strap-on scenes, topping twinkies and in heterosexual creampie videos. He also became widely known as an energetic and adventurous performer in fetish and BDSM circles. In early 2007, Barry was invited to perform for kink.com, the leading producer of BDSM pornography on the Internet. He made a series of videos for kink's *TS Seduction* and *Men in Pain* websites in which he took the submissive role. Although he has been married twice and is predominately involved with women in his private life, Barry defines himself as "sexual" rather than "straight" or "gay." "I'm not gay or straight," he said (Escoffier, 2003**10**. Escoffier , J. (2003). Gay-for-pay: Straight men and the making of gay pornography . *Qualitative Sociology* , 26 , 531 – 555 .

[CrossRef]

View all references, pp. 543–544; see also Escoffier, 2009, pp. 305–311).

The erotic appeal of she/males or tranny porn for heterosexuals poses a special challenge to the natural-born women who are involved with the men attracted to transsexual women. Interest in she/males raises doubt about the men's sexual identities. Magazine sex advice columnists or agony websites routinely handle letters from women who have discovered that their boyfriends or husbands watch she/male porn. Google Answers published a question posed in April 2004: "Why would a man in a committed, loving, sex (I'm his wife) relationship 'use' she/male and transgender porn?" and received numerous responses within days (Google Answers, 2004–2005). Recently, one young woman wrote to dearcupid.org that she had

just discovered my boyfriend of 5 years has been looking at, and jacking off to she/male porn. i discovered while using his computer. i was on google, and a little "memory typing" came up and said transvestite dating sites. i called my boyfriend as soon as i saw this and his reply was "i just wanted to see if it existed [sic]." Well, for some reason i felt he wasn't being honest. so i went through his history and found at least a hundred sites devoted to she/male porn, luckily, there was nothing to say that he was trying to meet these ... women?

anyways, when he got home i confronted him with it. it took a lot of coaxing to get it out of him, and it turns out he's been looking at and jacking off to this type of pornography for almost two years, and this whole time we have still been having sex.i need to know, is this just a phase? is it that he's gay, or bi-sexual? is it normal for straight guys to be turned on by she/male porn?

These queries reflect a common doubt about the practical meaning of sexual fantasies or activities regarding she/males—dearcupid.org has a long list of similar inquiries from girlfriends, wives, and the men themselves:

Does liking transsexuals make me gay?

My husband is into she/males.

Is it weird that I'm a guy who likes to use dildos on himself when I'm with my girlfriend?

Bf watches she/male videos every morning and is hardly interested in me now, help!

Could my boyfriend be gay because he watches she/male videos?

I found she/male videos in my husband's car! We've both tested positive for HIV.

My boyfriend is a cross-dresser. Is he a time bomb waiting to go off?

My manly man likes to see she/male porn! Is this a common fetish for men?

My husband has been watching she/male porn.

He has an obsession with "she/male" porn! What can I do?

He looks at she/male porn. Is this normal!?

My husband of 27 years looks at she/male porn. Should I be concerned?

I've recently found out he has registered on a site to meet a she/male!!!

I'm sure I'm not attracted to men, but I'm turned on by she/males!

One way to characterize men who are attracted to and who have sex with pre-op transsexual women is that they are "heterosexual by default." They may not qualify as gay or bisexual if they are not sexually attracted to men; they are, as some of these men say, straight with twist. But a twist of what? Is sexual involvement with she/males a clinical syndrome (*gynandromorphophilia*), a variety of BDSM, or a sexual orientation all its own? What about the men who enjoy passive anal intercourse with women or she/males? Nevertheless, the porn film industry has found an audience of men who purchase and watch videos and use them as passports into a fantasy world of women with penises who fuck men.

It is almost impossible to step outside of the Freudian discourse on fetishism and the phallic woman. Clearly, the transsexual female penis is a "fetish" of some sort. As Robert Stoller (1985**32**. Stoller , R. J. (1985). *Observing the Erotic Imagination* . New Haven , CT : Yale University Press .

View all references) observed, "a fetish is story masquerading as an object," though in fact, the transsexual female penis as a fetish doesn't quite jell with Freud's account (p. 155; see also Freud, 1927**17**. Freud , S. (1927). Fetish. Reprinted in *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*, ed. P. Rieff. New York, NY: Touchstone, pp. 204–209 .

View all references). Or does the she/male save "the fetishist from being a homosexual by endowing women with the attribute that makes them acceptable as sexual objects"? (Freud, 1927**17**. Freud , S. (1927). Fetish. Reprinted in *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*, ed. P. Rieff. New York, NY: Touchstone, pp. 204–209 .

View all references, p. 206). Does the transsexual female penis restore the phallus to the woman and alleviate her sexual partner's castration anxieties? John Phillips, one of the few to write about transsexual porn, has argued that spectator of she/male porn "wants it all": the feminine and the masculine, the breasts and the penis, visible and incontrovertible signs of *jouissance* from the uncastrated woman" (Phillips, 2005**29**. Phillips , J. (2005). Walking on the wild side: She/male Internet pornography . In: *International Exposure: Perspectives on Modern European Pornography, 1800–2000* , ed. L. Z. Sigel , New Brunswick , NJ : Rutgers University Press , pp. 255 – 274 .

View all references, p. 267). Is the transsexual female an example of the Freudian concept of the phallic woman? In Freudian theory the phallic woman represents the fantasy of a woman, or more significantly a mother, endowed with the phallus or a phallic attribute—a symbolic representation, not a real penis (Freud, 1927**17**. Freud , S. (1927). Fetish. Reprinted in *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*, ed. P. Rieff. New York, NY: Touchstone, pp. 204–209 .

View all references). Or is the she/male in reality a new kind of “phallic woman” not envisioned by psychoanalytic theory? And how does the female with strap-on dildo relate to this concept of the new phallic woman? Fetishism plays a significant erotic role in all pornography, but it also works through a process of commodity fetishism and the creation of porn genres. Linda Williams argues that the powerful role that fetishism plays in pornography derives from the “substitutive nature of desire: the fact that anything and everything can come to stand in for the original object of desire” (Williams, 1989**37**. Williams , L. (1989). *Hardcore: Power, Pleasure and the “Frenzy of the Visible.”* Berkeley : University of California Press .

View all references, p. 271). The generic elements of transsexual porn scripts, which frequently utilize tropes such as the “tranny surprise” or the transsexual with a hefty “package,” serve as a trigger for the “transsexual seduction” of a heterosexual male. In what sense are these men heterosexual? Is the sexual identity of heterosexual males merely a “default” sexual orientation? As long as these men do not engage in sex with a man or a person who presents as a man, can they be considered straight?

OBSCURE OBJECTS OF DESIRE

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Sexuality and gender may be analytically distinct, but they are intimately intertwined. Pornography is one of our society's most significant forms of popular discourses concerning sex and gender—it articulates and dramatizes our fantasies about sex *and* gender. Pornographic cinema is a “passport” into a fantasy world. It creates a safe space for where sexual fantasies and gender roles can be enacted without the attendant anxieties, shame, and various physical limitations impeding sexual arousal and orgasmic resolution.

Moreover, pornography plays an important part in the social/historical process that Foucault called “perverse implantation” through which peripheral sexualities and identities are socially articulated. It is no accident that the political mobilization around transgender issues, the emergence of transgendered studies, and the development of transsexual pornography as a genre all exploded around the same time in 1990s (Stryker, 2008**34**. ——— . (2008). *Transgender History* . Berkeley , CA : Seal Press .

View all references, pp. 121–154). From Christine Jorgensen's spectacular appearance on the public stage and the proliferation of new discourses on sex and gender that emerged in the course of the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, the transsexual and other transgendered people have played an important part in how we think about gender and its relation to sexuality (Meyerowitz , J. (2002). *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* . Cambridge , MA : Harvard University Press .

View all references; Stryker, 2006**33**. Stryker , S. (2006). (De)Subjugated knowledges: An introduction to transgender studies . In: *The Transgender Studies Reader* , eds. S. Stryker & S. Whittle . New York , NY : Routledge , pp. 1 – 17 .

View all references).

Pornographic film genres also serve to normalize the sexual fantasy and activities they represent. The porn film industry distinguishes between bisexual and transsexual movies. Bisexual movies are classified as a *gay* genre because despite the fact that in those films men and women engage in sexual intercourse, sex also takes place between males, whereas in transsexual porn films, men engage in sex with females—yes, females with penises and no vaginas. Thus although transsexual porn seemingly breaks with the standard representation of gender on pornographic videos, perhaps even more important, it disrupts the link between sexual object-choice and sexual orientation or identity. Transsexual porn cultivates the desire for the transsexual sexual object. The viewer of transsexual porn, like the male performer in it, usually “identifies” as heterosexual, but his sexual object-choices are not traditional or “natural” females but she/males—literally phallic women. The presence of penises and of males engaged in receptive anal intercourse does not affect the classification of the genre as straight. Transsexual porn represents heterosexual sex without vaginal intercourse.

The central sex act in transsexual porn is anal sex—as the norm for both women *and* men. It introduces heterosexual men to a fantasy of sexual surrender, to the intense pleasure of discharged tension, and ultimately to the psychic shattering of the self via the intensity of anal intercourse (Bersani, 1977**4**. Bersani , L. (1977). *Baudelaire and Freud* . Berkeley : University of California Press .

View all references, 1986; Bentley, 2004**3**. Bentley , T. (2004). *The Surrender: An Erotic Memoir* . New York , NY : Regan Books/HarperCollins .

View all references, pp. 3–6). It enables a reconfiguring of male heterosexuality to experience, quoting Leo Bersani, “the pleasurable excitement of sexuality ... when the body's normal range of sensation is exceeded and when the organization of the self is momentarily disturbed ... by sensations somehow ‘beyond’ those compatible with psychic organization” (Bersani, 1977**4**. Bersani , L. (1977). *Baudelaire and Freud* . Berkeley : University of California Press .

View all references, p. 77). The erotic appeal of the pre-op transsexual woman and of transsexual porn is just one more example of movement along a “continuum of perversions which underlies human sexuality,” the historical dynamic of a polymorphic sexual economy that allows for selection of diverse objects of desire (Williams, 1989**37**. Williams , L. (1989). *Hardcore: Power, Pleasure and the “Frenzy of the Visible.”* Berkeley : University of California Press .

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