

# TRANSGENDER: FROM THE CLINIC TO THE PROTEST

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History of “transgender” as a category

## The West vs. The Rest

- Transvestite, transsexual, trans, trans\*, transgender, queer, what else?
- What does transgender mean, is it universal or is it specific to the West?
- Are non-Western gender minorities (e.g. kathoey, hijra, two-spirit, etc.) necessarily transgender?
- What existed before, what could exist after?

# Terminology

- cis(gender/sexual) – someone whose gender/sex matches that which they were assigned at birth.
- trans(gender/sexual) – someone whose gender/sex differs from that which they were assigned at birth.
- Sex Assigned at Birth – sex/gender identified, usually by medical personnel or family, at birth. Usually relates almost exclusively to the size of the phallus, i.e. based on the potential for penetrative sex.
- Trans woman – a woman assigned male at birth (AMAB)
- Trans man – a man assigned female at birth (AFAB)
- Non-binary person – people who do not necessarily identify fully as either male or female, regardless of sex assigned at birth.

- Mention sexuality

# FROM TRANSVESTITE TO TRANSSEXUAL

This shift primarily has to do with what's known as medicalization.

Medicalization is the process by which gender and sexual variance became understood as a medical problem, or at least, largely the dominion of medical professionals.

It has its origin in turn-of-the-century German psychiatry, including Sigmund Freud, though I won't necessarily be discussing him today in great detail.

This is a uniquely western phenomenon. In other times and places, gender variance fell under the domain of religion, law, morality, and other kinds of regulation.

It is crucial to note that medicalization almost entirely focused on trans women – though early researchers also dealt with trans men to a limited degree.

The main goal was to separate the "types" of gender variance, in other words to develop a differential diagnosis of gender variance as if it were a disease.

## Richard von Krafft-Ebing

- German psychiatrist.
- Published “Psychopathia Sexualis” in 1886.
- “Hereditary Degeneration”
- “sexual invert”

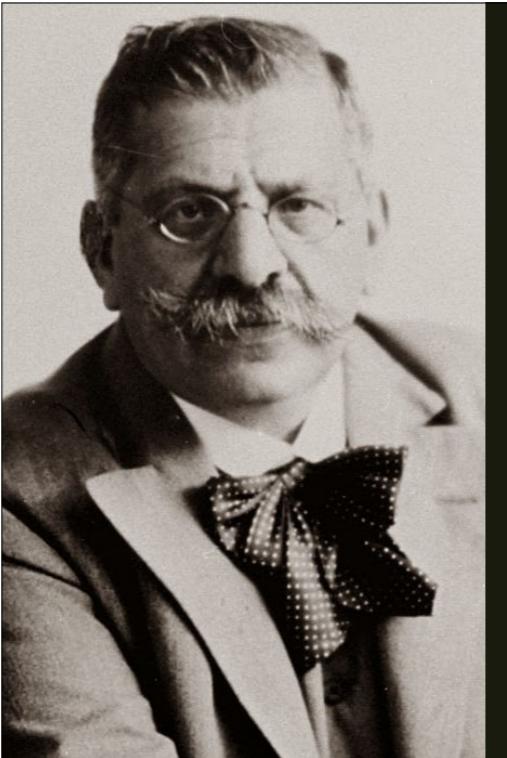


This guy was one of the first to take up the task.

In 1886, he published *Psychopathia Sexualis*, a long latin text concerning the “psychopathy” of sexual variance, including not just homosexuality and transvestitism, but also kink and other forms of non-normative sexuality.

He thought gender and sexual variance must be innate – though it was caused by “hereditary degeneration”.  
In other words, it was an aberration on “normal” human sexuality.

He described sexual invert – people who were “psychic hermaphrodites”, with a mix-match of male and female features – as a theory of homosexuality and transvestitism.



## Magnus Hirschfeld

- Early advocate for homosexual and transsexual rights.
- Administered medication and assisted trans people with transitioning.
- Sexual intermediaries – natural variance in human gender/sexuality.

- Institute for Sexological Research in Berlin.
- Was an early advocate for homosexual and transsexual, giving out ID cards and advocating for laws to be changed.
- Switches and distinguished transvestite from transsexual by the 1920s.
- Believed that gender variance was natural.
- Described “sexual intermediaries” – people who didn’t fall neatly into categories of sex/gender.
- Intersex, trans, queer.
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# Harry Benjamin

- German Endocrinologist.
- “Harry Benjamin Syndrome”.
- Developed the standards of care for trans patients, culminating in the 1980 addition of “Gender Identity Disorder” to the DSM.



- Father of the (American) notion of “transsexual”
- Was so closely associated with it that transsexualism became known as “Harry Benjamin Syndrome”
- Issued ID cards, worked with San Francisco to protect his patients.
- Known for his paternalism.

# Harry Benjamin's Model

## “Psychogenic” Transvestite

- Mostly attracted to women (lesbian and bisexual)
- “conflict results from social pressure and legal prohibition”
- “**treatment is therefore rarely attempted. But if so it would be principally psychoanalytic.**  
Endocrine therapy is rarely indicated. Only if there are signs of hypogonadism, masculinization may be attempted with testosterone.”
- “**narcissistic**

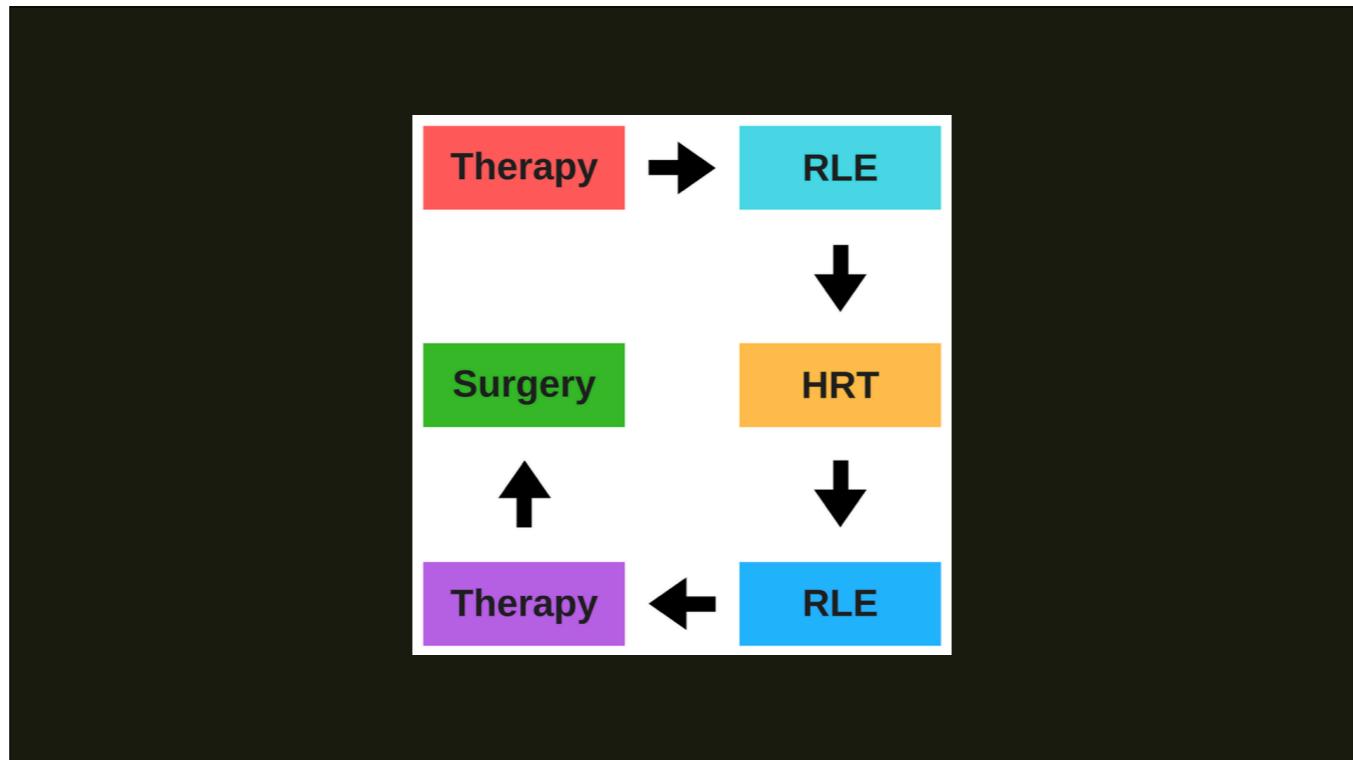
## “Somatopsychic” Transsexuals

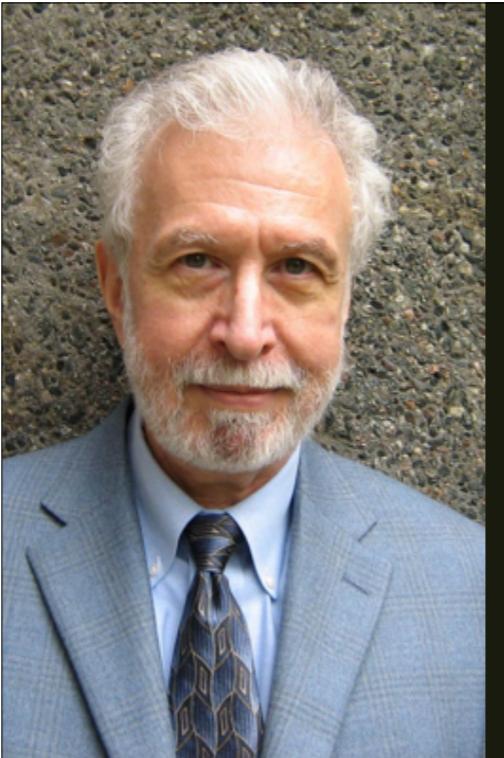
- “of feminine constitution”
- Uninterested in sex if not attracted to men
- “**Another factor should be considered, namely the physical and especially facial characteristics of the patient.**”
- “A feminine habitus...increases the chances of a successful outcome. A masculine appearance mitigates against it.”

## Legalization

- In the 1960s, San Francisco began to issue ID cards reflecting trans people's true sex, certifying that they were under medical care for 'special problems for transsexualism'.
- "...by 1980, a routine set of procedures and protocols for medically managing transgender populations had fallen into place. A person seeking to change genders would need several months of psychotherapy for a diagnosis of GID before being referred to an endocrinologist for hormone therapy, followed by at least a year of living socially as a member of the desired gender. At that point, a psychiatrist would evaluate the suitability of the person seeking to change gender for surgery, after which legal changes in gender identity could be pursued." (Stryker, 85)
- Nowadays, state IDs can typically be updated to reflect trans people's sex but only with medical approval.

- Eventually a system fell into place.
- Laws were changed to accommodate medicalization





## Ray Blanchard

- American psychologist.
- Attempted (yet again) at a differential diagnosis of transsexualism.
- Proposed a typology of trans women separating the “autogynephiles” with the “homosexual transsexuals”
- Blanchard helped write the DSM-V and secure “transvestic fetishism” as a paraphilic diagnosis.
- His theories were expanded by J. Michael Bailey.

- Another white man.
- Attempted yet again to find a differential diagnosis and differential origin for transsexualism.
- Concluded that there are two types of trans women, homosexual transsexuals and autogynephiles.
- Someone AFAB cannot be diagnosed with a disorder for crossdressing, “autoandrophilia” does not exist.

# Ray Blanchard & J. Michael Bailey

## “Homosexual” Transsexuals

- Exclusively attracted to men
- Pursue bottom surgeries in order to attract heterosexual men
- Lower IQs
- Poorer
- More likely to be non-white/immigrant
- Transition at lower ages (ergo “better adjusted”)
- More “feminine”

## Autogynephilics

- Queer, bisexual, lesbian, or asexual
- Transition later (post-30)
- “attracted to oneself as a woman”
- Fetishists
- Paraphilic (i.e. suffer from an affliction not unlike pedophilia)
- Less “feminine”

Hierarchy.

Homosexual transsexual: racist, colonial, sexist trope of a woman.

Autogynophile: Less desirable because she is queer, less feminine, less of a woman.

# FROM TRANSSEXUAL TO TRANSGENDER

To describe the work being done by the male researchers I've mentioned as "unfeminist" would be an understatement.

By the 1970s and 80s, there was a lot of backlash against sexism, including sexism in medicine.

Both cis and trans lesbians in particular offered a number of critiques of medical discourses around LGBT folks.

Lesbian feminism also developed the forerunners of intersectionality.

## Lesbian Feminist Thought

- “One is not born, but rather becomes, woman” - Simone De Beauvoir (1949)
- “**Lesbianism...is a category of behavior possible only in a sexist society characterized by rigid sex roles and dominated by male supremacy.** Those sex roles dehumanize women by defining us as a supportive/serving caste in relation to the master caste of men...Homosexuality is a by-product of a particular way of setting up roles...on the basis of sex...**In a society in which men do not oppress women, and sexual expression is allowed to follow feelings, the categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality would disappear.**” – Radicalesbians (1970)

- Gender/sex is a political and social institution, not a biological reality.
- The radicalesbians, by 1970, had developed a critique of gender that included in it a critique of heterosexuality.
- They argued that “heterosexuality” and “homosexuality” were categories predicated on the subjugation of women

## Lesbian Feminist Thought (2)

"...and it would be incorrect to say that lesbians associate, make love, live with women, for '**woman**' has meaning only in heterosexual systems of thought and heterosexual economic systems. **Lesbians are not women**" - Monique Wittig (1978)

"We believe that sexual politics under patriarchy is as pervasive in Black women's lives as are the politics of class and race. **We also often find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously.**" - Combahee

River Collective (1977)

The value of feminist theory to Black women is diminished because it evolves from a white racial context that is seldom acknowledged. **Not only are women of color in fact overlooked, but their exclusion is reinforced when white women speak for and as women.**" – Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989)

- Monique Wittig, a French lesbian feminist and activist, went so far as to say that lesbians are not women, because 'woman' only has meaning within the heterosexual system.
- In other words, sexuality and gender cannot be separated, they interlock.
- Then you have groups of black lesbians, such as the Combahee River Collective, further expanding their critique of gender and sexual politics to include race and class, arguing that they experienced all of them simultaneously.
- Then, Kimberle Crenshaw develops intersectionality as a theory, and she argues that who is allowed to embody "woman" is just as much white as it is heterosexual.

## Stonewall & Gay Liberation

- Stonewall was a riot against queer/transphobic and racist police officers, led by queer/lesbian/trans women of color (“drag queens”), namely Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson.
- First pride parade held in commemoration of the riot (June 1970), quickly spread to other cities in the years after.
- Gay Liberation Front.
- In 1973, Sylvia Rivera was banned from speaking at New York’s Pride Parade.

- These critiques of lesbians and women of color are happening both simultaneously and partially because of Stonewall.
- Stonewall was a riot against police lead by queer, lesbian, and trans women of color.
- Particularly Sylvia Rivera, who went on to play a big role in the early Gay Liberation Front.
- Pride quickly spread from New York across the country.
- The tune of Gay Liberation quickly changed, as more moderate folks came to dominate.
- In 1973, Sylvia Rivera was banned from speaking at the annual pride parade.

## Sylvia Rivera

- Wrestles her way to the stage, **rails against the white cis gay/lesbian middle class**, leads a chant of “GAY POWER” while booed by the mostly privileged audience.
- Lesbian Feminist Jean O’Leary reads a letter calling Sylvia “disruptive” and misgendering her.
- “Lesbian Feminist Liberation negotiated for a week and a half, **using the means that rational women have always used in the past - not disruptive means** - to try to get up here and read a statement. We were told that No, there would be no political statements read today, **because one person, A MAN, Sylvia, gets up here and causes a ruckus**, we are NOT ALLOWED to read our statement.”



- That's her on the right.
- She fights her way on stage, and gives a speech railing against the white cis gay/lesbian middle class.
- A group of cis lesbian feminists lead by Jean O’Leary take the stage after she leaves.
- To remove the dynamics of trans vs cis out of this, a middle class woman of color speaking down to a bisexual women of color is, well, a bit ugly.
- Signaled a greater divide between trans-inclusive feminists and trans-exclusionary feminists,

## Trans Woman Exclusionary Feminism

- “Rape...is a masculinist violation of bodily integrity. All transsexuals rape women's bodies by **reducing the female form to an artifact, appropriating this body for themselves**... Rape, although it is usually done by force, can also be accomplished by deception.”
- “The proponents of the medical model...have given themselves the mandate to manipulate in the interests of reduced suffering for the transsexual. And in so doing, **they have forced transsexuals back into a social system whose basic sexist norms and values remain unquestioned**. Many persons express...their desire to be married, have (adopted) children, and function as part of a society where these roles and functions are both normal and normative. Thus the transsexual is generally no advocate of social criticism and change.” – Janice Raymond (1979).

- Enter Janice Raymond. She wrote a truly terrible book, “The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the Shemale”.
- Isn’t that a ridiculous title?
- She argues that trans women, just by existing, “rape” the female body.
- However, she does thoroughly critique the medical model, arguing that it forces transsexuals into a social system that doesn’t question its basic sexist norms and values.
- Under the regime of trans healthcare crafted by Benjamin and others, trans women were essentially held to 1950s housewife notions of womanhood.



## Sandy Stone

▪ "The clinic took on the additional role of "grooming clinic" or "charm school" because...the men who presented as wanting to be women didn't always "behave like" women. Stanford recognized that gender roles could be learned [to an extent]. Their involvement with the grooming clinics was an effort to produce not simply anatomically legible females, but women...i.e., gendered females."  
– Sandy Stone (1987)

▪ "The researchers wanted to know what this thing they called gender dysphoria syndrome was. They wanted a **taxonomy of symptoms, criteria for differential diagnosis, procedures for evaluation, reliable courses of treatment, and thorough followup**. The transsexuals wanted surgery. They had very clear agendas...and considered the doctors' evaluation criteria merely another obstacle in their path--something to be overcome. In this they unambiguously expressed Benjamin's original criterion in its simplest form: The sense of being in the "wrong" body."

- Raymond specifically targeted Sandy Stone, a trans woman, in her book.
- In the 1970s Stone worked at a lesbian feminist recording studio, and was subject to a number of violent transphobic controversies.
- Raymond recalls a friend saying she felt "raped" merely by Stone's presence.
- Fittingly, Stone writes this response in 1987 – "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto".
- Best name ever.
- She agrees with Raymond that the medical model is highly sexist, arguing that its goal is not just anatomically legible females but also gendered females, i.e. women.
- Describes the conflict between researcher and patient, and explains that the patients were well aware of the diagnostic criteria and viewed it as another hurdle to jump.

## Posttranssexual -> Transgender

- “The essence of transsexualism is the act of passing. A transsexual who passes is obeying the Derridean imperative: **“Genres are not to be mixed. I will not mix genres.”** I could not ask a transsexual for anything more inconceivable than to forgo passing, to be consciously “read”, to read oneself aloud--and by this troubling and productive reading, to begin to write oneself into the discourses by which one has been written--in effect, then, to become a (look out-- dare I say it again?) posttranssexual.”
- “One answer to the question “Who is a transsexual?” might well be “Anyone who admits it.” A more political answer might, **“Anyone whose performance of gender calls into question the construct of gender itself.”** – Kate Bornstein (1994)

- Politically, Stone argues that the emphasis on creating “passing” transsexuals, not just in body but also in mind and presentation, to be based on a fear of “genre mixing”, or blurring the gender lines.
- This begins “posttranssexual” politics, which soon evolves into the nascent “transgender” category.
- Kate Bornstein, an early transgender theorist, describes a transsexual as “anyone whose performance of gender calls into question the construct of gender itself”
- Transgender very much invested in queer theory and queer politics, very focused on binary-busting.

# TRANSGENDER AND TRANSFEMINIST POLITICS

- Transfeminism develops both alongside and in response to the birth of “transgender” and queer theories.
- It's not necessarily a rejection of transgender as a category, but an elaboration of trans women's experience and concerns.
- “Feminism for and by trans women”.

# Julia Serano

- Cissexism – “belief that transsexuals’ identified genders are inferior to, or less authentic than, those of cissexuals”.
- Oppositional Sexism – “the belief that **female and male are rigid, mutually exclusive categories**, each possessing a unique and nonoverlapping set of attributes, aptitudes, abilities, and desires”.
- Traditional Sexism - “the belief that maleness and masculinity are superior to femaleness and femininity”.



- Synthesis of queer/transgender theory's concerns with those of second wave feminism.

## Cis-Hetero-Patriarchy

"This explains why bisexuals, lesbians, gays, transsexuals, and other transgender people—who may experience their genders and sexualities in different ways—are so often confused or lumped into the same category (i.e., queer) by society at large. **Our natural inclinations to be attracted to the same sex, to identify as the other sex, and/or to express ourselves in ways typically associated with the other sex blur the boundaries required to maintain the male-centered gender hierarchy that exists in our culture today.** Because trans discrimination is steeped in traditional sexism, it is not simply enough for trans activists to challenge binary gender norms (i.e., oppositional sexism)—we must also challenge the idea that femininity is inferior to masculinity and that femaleness is inferior to maleness. In other words, by necessity, **trans activism must be at its core a feminist movement.**"

- Blames oppositional sexism, or fear of genre-mixing, for homophobia and transphobia.
- Also equally blames traditional sexism.
- Argues that trans activism must be feminist.

## Transmisogyny

- "...while there are many different types of transgender people, **our society tends to single out trans women and others on the male-to-female (MTF) spectrum for attention and ridicule.** This is not merely because we transgress binary gender norms per se, but because we, by necessity, embrace our own femaleness and femininity. Indeed, more often than not it is our expressions of femininity and our desire to be female that become sensationalized, sexualized, and trivialized by others.
- "**When a trans person is ridiculed or dismissed...for their expressions of femaleness or femininity, they become the victims of a specific form of discrimination: trans-misogyny....** When it's okay for women to wear "men's" clothing, but when **men who wear "women's" clothing can be diagnosed with the psychological disorder transvestic fetishism**, that is not transphobia—it is trans-misogyny. When women's or lesbian organizations and events open their doors to trans men but not trans women, that is not transphobia—it is trans-misogyny."

- jokes about men in dresses
- Majority of violence and sexual assault committed against trans women
- Transmisogyny is to blame for the hyperfocus on trans women in the west.
- While trans people on the female-to-male (FTM) spectrum face discrimination for breaking gender norms (i.e., oppositional sexism), their expressions of maleness or masculinity themselves are not targeted for ridicule—to do so would require one to question masculinity itself.

## International Colonial Contexts

- Medical discourses and models have largely been exported abroad, especially to the previously colonized peoples of the world.
- Indigenous notions of gender now intermingle with transsexual, transgender, and transfeminist understandings of gender.
- Gender and sexuality do not have 1:1 translations abroad.

- Gender politics has been one avenue of colonialism.
- Western notions of gender have been imposed.
- Doesn't mean everything was roses before Western gender was imposed.
- It does, however, mean that western imperialism and colonialism are radically changing gender politics abroad.
- Are non-Western gender minorities (e.g. kathoey, hijra, two-spirit, etc.) necessarily transgender? **Maybe. Maybe not.**

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