

Calamity Jane, whose outfit would have caused a sensation at *Club Q*, the 1990s lesbian refuses to exchange her whip and leathers for home, hearth and the seal of social approval. She has a body that is going places.

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F2M: THE MAKING OF FEMALE MASCULINITY

Judith Halberstam

The postmodern lesbian body as visualized by recent film and video, as theorized by queer theory, and as constructed by state of the art cosmetic technology breaks with a homo-hetero sexual binary and remakes gender as not simply performance but also as fiction. Gender fictions are fictions of a body taking its own shape, a cut-up genre that mixes and matches body parts, sexual acts, and postmodern articulations of the impossibility of identity. Such fictions demand readers attuned to the variegated contours of desire. The end of identity in this gender fiction does not mean a limitless and boundless shifting of positions and forms, rather it indicates the futility of stretching terms like *lesbian* or *gay* or *straight* or *male* or *female* across vast fields of experience, behavior, and self-understanding. It further hints at the inevitable exclusivity of any claim for identity and refuses the respectability of being named, identified, known. This essay will call for new sexual vocabularies that acknowledge sexualities and genders as styles rather than life-styles, as fictions rather than facts of life, and as potentialities rather than as fixed identities.

Axiom 1 of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*: 'People Are Different From Each Other'. Sedgwick's genealogy of the unknown suggests the vast range of identities and events that remain unaccounted for by the 'coarse axes of categorization' that we have come to see as indispensable. Sedgwick claims that to attend to the 'reader relations' of texts can potentially access the 'nonce taxonomies' or 'the making and unmaking and remaking and redissolution of hundreds of old and new categorical meanings

From: L. Doan (ed.), *The Lesbian Postmodern*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

In the first two stereotypes discussed, the lesbian body is constructed in terms of the heterosexual model of sex which involves penetration; there was no attempt to define the nature of lesbian pleasure from the point of view of the feminine. The threat offered by the image of the lesbian-as-double is not specifically related to the notion of sexual penetration. Instead, the threat is associated more with auto-eroticism and exclusion.

Representations of the lesbian double – circulated in fashion magazines, film and pornography – draw attention to the nature of the image itself, its association with the feminine, and the technologies that enable duplication and repetition. The lesbian double threatens because it suggests a perfectly sealed world of female desire from which man is excluded, not simply because he is a man, but also because of the power of the technology to exclude the voyeuristic spectator. But exclusion is also part of the nature of voyeuristic pleasure which demands that a distance between the object and the subject who is looking should always be preserved. Photographic technology, with its powers of duplication, reinforces a fear that, like the image itself, the lesbian couple-as-double will reduplicate and multiply.

THE LESBIAN BODY/COMMUNITY

The body is both so important in itself and yet so clearly a sign or symbol referring to things outside itself in our culture. So far I have discussed the representation of the lesbian body in terms of male fantasies and patriarchal stereotypes. Historically and culturally, the lesbian body – although indistinguishable in reality from the female body itself – has been represented as a body in extreme: the pseudo-male, animalistic and narcissistic body. Although all of these deviant tendencies are present in the female body, it is the ideological function of the lesbian body to warn the 'normal' woman about the dangers of undoing or rejecting her own bodily socialization. This is why the culture points with most hypocritical concern at the mannish lesbian, the butch lesbian, while deliberately ignoring the femme lesbian, the woman whose body in no way presents itself to the straight world as different or deviant. To function properly as ideological litmus paper, the lesbian body must be instantly recognizable. In one sense, the femme lesbian is potentially as threatening – although not as immediately confronting – as the stereotyped butch because she signifies the possibility that all women are potential lesbians. Like the abject, the stereotyped mannish/animalistic/auto-erotic lesbian body hovers around the borders of gender socialization, luring other women to its side, tempting them with the promise of deviant pleasures.

Within the lesbian community itself, however, a different battle has taken place around the definition of the lesbian body. This battle has nothing to do with the size of the clitoris, animals or self-reflecting mirrors. Preoccupied with the construction of the properly socialized feminine body, lesbian-feminism of the 1970s became obsessed with appearance, arguing that the true lesbian should reject all forms of clothing that might associate her image with that of

the heterosexual woman and ultimately with patriarchal capitalism. The proper lesbian had short hair, wore sandshoes, jeans or boiler suit, flannel shirt and rejected all forms of make-up. In appearance she hovered somewhere between the look of the butch lesbian, who wore men's clothes and parodied men's behaviour and gestures, and the tomboy. She was a dyke – not a butch – whose aim was to capture an androgynous uniformed look. Lesbians who rejected this model were given a difficult time. In debates that raged in Melbourne in the mid-1970s, some of us who refused the lesbian uniform were labelled 'heterosexual lesbians', an interesting concept that constructs a lesbian as an impossibility – a figure perhaps more in tune with the queer world of the 1990s.

From the 1970s onwards, the lesbian community has adopted a series of fashion styles ranging from flannel shirts to the leather and lipstick lesbians of the 1990s. A recent film, *Framing Lesbian Fashion* (Karen Everett, 1991), pays tribute to the flannel lesbians while celebrating the changing styles of recent years. The film is structured around a series of inter-titles which point to the key changes in style which have involved flannel, leather, corporate drag, tattooing and body piercing. There are a series of interviews with lesbians who have lived through these changes, as well as a lesbian fashion show. The opening credits are accompanied by the words 'I like to shop, shop, shop, shop – shop until I drop'. The film concludes with a tribute to the lesbians of the 1970s who set out to liberate themselves from the patriarchal stereotypes of feminine dress and appearance. The problem was that they also imposed a fairly rigid code of dress on themselves and anyone who wanted to join the lesbian community. There was certainly no place for femme or older style butch lesbians. Only with the butch-femme renaissance of the 1980s did butch and femme lesbians come out of the closet and begin to assert their own needs to express themselves without fear of retribution. Today, with the liberating influence of queer theory and practice (often quite separate entities), almost any form of dress is acceptable.

The film makes one thing very clear: most women enjoyed wearing the different 'uniforms' such as flannel, leather, lipstick because it gave them a sense of belonging to a community, the gang, the wider lesbian body. They speak of having a sense of family and shared identity via their common forms of dress. The need to construct a sense of community, through dress and appearance, suggests quite clearly that there is no such thing as an essential lesbian body – lesbians themselves have to create this body in order to feel they belong to the larger lesbian community, recognizable to its members not through essentialized bodily forms but through representation, gesture and play. The 1990s lesbian is most interested in playing with appearance and with sex roles. Women interviewed in *Framing Lesbian Fashion* were very clear about the element of parody in their dress styles. One woman who cross-dressed even wore a large dildo in her leather pants ('packing it') to simulate the penis – the male penis as well as the one that male fantasy has attributed throughout the centuries to the lesbian and her tribade forebears. Unlike

concerning all the kinds it may take to make up a world'.¹ All kinds of people, all kinds of identities, in other words, are simply not accounted for in the taxonomies we live with. Nonce taxonomies indicate a not-knowing already embedded in recognition.

We live with difference even though we do not always have the conceptual tools to recognize it. One recent film, Jenny Livingston's *Paris Is Burning*, shocked white gay and straight audiences with its representations of an underexposed subculture of the African-American and Latino gay world of New York. The shock value of the film lay in its ability to confront audiences with subcultural practices that the audience thought they knew already. People knew of voguing through Madonna, of drag shows through gay popular culture, but they did not know, in general, about Houses, about walking the Balls, about Realness. Livingston's film, which has been criticized in some circles for adopting a kind of pedagogical approach, was in fact quite sensitive to the fact that there were lessons to be learned from the Balls and the Houses, lessons about how to read gender and race, for example, as not only artificial but highly elaborate and ritualistic significations. *Paris Is Burning* focused questions of race, class, and gender and their intersections with the drag performances of poor, gay men of color.

How and in what ways does the disintegration and reconstitution of gender identities focus upon the postmodern lesbian body? What is postmodern about lesbian identity? In the 1990s lesbian communities have witnessed an unprecedented proliferation of sexual practices or at least of the open discussion of lesbian practices. Magazines like *Outlook* and *On Our Backs* have documented ongoing debates about gender, sexuality, and venues for sexual play, and even mainstream cinema has picked up on a new visibility of lesbian identities (*Basic Instinct* [1992], for example). Lesbians are particularly invested in proliferating their identities and practices because, as the sex debates of the 1980s demonstrated, policing activity within the community and commitment to a unitary conception of lesbianism has had some very negative and problematic repercussions.²

Some queer identities have appeared recently in lesbian zines and elsewhere: guys with pussies, dykes with dicks, queer butches, aggressive femmes, F2Ms, lesbians who like men, daddy boys, gender queens, drag kings, pomo afro homos, bulldaggers, women who fuck boys, women who fuck like boys, dyke mommies, transsexual lesbians, male lesbians. As the list suggests, gay/lesbian/straight simply cannot account for the range of sexual experience available. In this essay, I home in on the transsexual lesbian, in particular, the female to male transsexual or F2M, and I argue that within a more general fragmentation of the concept of sexual identity, the specificity of the transsexual disappears. In a way, I claim, we are all transsexuals.

We are all transsexuals except that the referent of the *trans* becomes less and less clear (and more and more queer). We are all cross-dressers but where are we crossing from and to what? There is no 'other' side, no 'opposite' sex, no

natural divide to be spanned by surgery, by disguise, by passing. We all pass or we don't, we all wear our drag, and we all derive a different degree of pleasure – sexual or otherwise – from our costumes. It is just that for some of us our costumes are made of fabric or material, while for others they are made of skin; for some an outfit can be changed; for others skin must be resewn. There are no transsexuals.

Desire has a terrifying precision. Pleasure might be sex with a woman who looks like a boy; pleasure might be a woman going in disguise as a man to a gay bar in order to pick up a gay man. Pleasure might be two naked women; pleasure might be masturbation watched by a stranger; pleasure might be a man and a woman; but pleasure seems to be precise. In an interview with a pre-op female-to-male transsexual called Danny, Chris Martin asks Danny about his very particular desire to have sex with men as a man. 'What's the difference', she asks, 'between having sex with men now and having sex with men before?' Danny responds: 'I didn't really. If I did it was oral sex ... it was already gay sex ... umm ... that was a new area. It depends upon your partner's perception. If a man thought I was a woman, we didn't do it.'³ Danny requires that his partners recognize that he is a man before he has 'gay' sex with them. He demands that they read his gender accurately according to his desire, in other words, though, he admits, there is room for the occasional misreading. On one occasion, for example, he recalls that a trick he had picked up discovered that Danny did not have a penis. Danny allowed his partner to penetrate him vaginally because, 'it was what he had been looking for all his life only he hadn't realized it. When he saw me it was like "Wow. I want a man with a vagina".'

Wanting a man with a vagina or wanting to be a woman transformed into a man having sex with other men are fairly precise and readable desires – precise and yet not at all represented by the categories for sexual identity we have settled for. And, as another pre-op female-to-male transsexual, Vern, makes clear, the so-called gender community is often excluded by or vilified by the gay community. Vern calls it genderphobia: '*Genderphobia* is my term. I made it up because there is a clone movement in the non-heterosexual community to make everybody look just like heterosexuals who sleep with each other. The fact is that there is a whole large section of the gay community who is going to vote Republican.'⁴

Genderphobia, as Vern suggests, indicates all kinds of gender trouble in the mainstream gay and lesbian community. Furthermore, the increasing numbers of female-to-male transsexuals (f to m's) appearing particularly in metropolitan or urban lesbian communities has given rise to interesting and sometimes volatile debates among lesbians about f to m's.⁵

Genderbending among lesbians is not limited to sex change operations. In New York, sex queen Annie Sprinkle has been running. 'Drag King For A Day' workshops with pre-op f to m Jack Armstrong, a longtime gender activist. The workshops instruct women in the art of passing and culminate in a night out on

the town as men. Alisa Solomon wrote about her experience in the workshop for *The Village Voice*, reporting how eleven women flattened their breasts, donned strips of stage makeup facial hair, 'loosened our belts a notch to make our waistlines fall, pulled back hair, put on vests.'⁶ Solomon felt inclined, however, to draw the line at putting a sock in her Jockeys because she 'was interested in gender, not sex. A penis has nothing to do with it.' She also notes in response to Jack Armstrong's discussion of his transsexuality: 'I could have done without his photo-aided descriptions of phalloplasties and other surgical procedures. After all I had no interest in how to *be* a man; I only wanted, for the day, to be *like* one.'

Solomon's problematic response to the issue of transsexualism is indicative of the way that many lesbians embrace the idea of gender performance, but they reduce it to just that, an act with no relation to biology, real or imagined. Solomon disavows the penis here as if that alone is the mark of gender – she is comfortable with the clothes and the false facial hair, but the suggestion of a constructed penis leads her to make an essential difference between feigning maleness for a day and being a man. In fact, as she wanders off into the Village in her drag, Alisa Solomon, inasmuch as she passes successfully, *is* a man, is male, is a man for a day. The insistence here that the penis alone signifies maleness, corresponds to a tendency within academic discussion of gender to continue to equate masculinity solely with men. Recent studies on masculinity⁷ persist in making masculinity an extension or discursive effect of maleness. But what about female masculinity or lesbian masculinity?

In the introduction to her groundbreaking new study of transvestism, *Vested Interests*, Marjorie Garber discusses the ways in which transvestism and transsexualism provoke a 'category crisis'.⁸ Garber elaborates this term suggesting that often the crisis occurs elsewhere but is displaced onto the ambiguity of gender. Solomon obviously confronts a 'category crisis' as she ponders the politics of stuffing her Jockeys, and presumably such a crisis is one of the intended by-products of Sprinkle/Armstrong's workshop. Solomon attempts to resolve her category crisis by assuring herself that she wants to look *like* a man, not *be* a man, and that therefore her desire has nothing to do with possession of the penis. But, in fact, what Solomon misunderstands is that penises as well as masculinity become artificial and constructible when we challenge the naturalness of gender. Socks in genetic girls' jockeys are part and parcel of creating fictitious genders; they are not reducible to sex.

But what then is the significance of the surgically constructed penis in this masquerade of sex and gender? In a chapter of her study called 'Spare Parts: The Surgical Construction of Gender', Garber discusses the way in which the phenomenon of transsexuality 'demonstrates that essentialism *is* cultural construction'.⁹ She suggests that f to m surgery has been less common and less studied than male-to-female transsexual operations, partly because medical technology has not been able to construct a functional penis but also on account of 'a sneaking feeling that it should not be so easy to "construct" a

"man" – which is to say, a male body' (Garber 1992: 102). Garber is absolutely right, I think, to draw attention to a kind of conscious or unconscious unwillingness within the medical establishment to explore the options for f to m surgery. After all, the construction of a functional penis for f to m transsexuals could alter inestimably the most cherished fictions of gender in the Western world.

If penises were purchasable, in other words – functional penises, that is – who exactly might want one? What might the effect of surgically produced penises be upon notions like – 'penis envy', 'castration complex', 'size queens'? If anyone could have one, who would want one? How would the power relations of gender be altered by a market for the penis? Who might want a bigger one? Who might want an artificial one rather than the 'natural' one they were born with? What if surgically constructed models 'work' better? Can the penis be improved upon? Certainly the folks at *Good Vibrations*, who have been in the business of selling silicone dildos for years now, could tell you about many models as good as, if not better than, the 'real' thing.

Obviously, the potential of medical technology to alter bodies makes natural gender and biological sex merely antiquated categories in the history of sexuality, that is, part of the *inventedness of sex*. Are we then, as Jan Morris claims in her autobiography *Conundrum: An Extraordinary Narrative of Transsexualism*, possibly entering a *post-transsexual era*?¹⁰ I believe we are occupying the transition here and now, that we are experiencing a *boundary change*, a shifting of focus, that may have begun with the invention of homosexuality at the end of the nineteenth century but that will end with the invention of the sexual body at the end of the twentieth century. This does not mean that we will all in some way surgically alter our bodies; it means that we will begin to acknowledge the ways in which we have already surgically, technologically, and ideologically altered our bodies, our identities, ourselves.

One might expect, then, in these postmodern times that as we posit the artificiality of gender and sex with increasing awareness of how and why our bodies have been policed into gender identities, there might be a decrease in the incidence of such things as sex-change operations. On the contrary, however, especially in lesbian circles (and it is female to male transsexualism that I am concerned with here) there has been, as I suggested, a rise in discussions of, depictions of, and requests for f to m sex change operations. In a video documenting the first experience of sexual intercourse by a new f to m transsexual, Annie Sprinkle introduces the viewers to the world of f to m sex changes. The video, *Linda/Les and Annie*, is remarkable as a kind of post-op, postporn, postmodern artifact of what Sprinkle calls 'gender flexibility'. It is archaic, however, in its tendency to fundamentally realign sex and gender. In the video, Les Nichols, a post-op f to m transsexual sexually experiments with his new surgically constructed penis. The video records the failure of Les's first attempt at intercourse as a 'man', and yet it celebrates the success of his gender flexibility.

[...]

[Alongside] these fictions of gender, it is worth examining the so-called facts of gender – the facticities at least – that are perhaps best revealed by the medical discourse surrounding transsexual operations. While I want to avoid the inevitable binarism of a debate about whether transsexual operations are redundant, I do think that the terms we have inherited from medicine to think through transsexualism, sex changes and sexual surgery must change. Just as the idea of cross-dressing presumes an immutable line between two opposite sexes, so transsexualism, as a term, as an ideology, presumes that if you are not one you are the other. I propose that we call all elective body alterations for whatever reason (postcancer or postaccident reconstruction, physical disabilities, or gender dysphoria) *cosmetic surgery* and that we drop altogether the constrictive terminology of crossing.¹¹

An example from a recent series on plastic surgery in the *Los Angeles Times* may illustrate my point. The series by Robert Scheer, entitled 'The Revolution in Cosmetic Surgery', covers the pros and cons of the plastic surgery industry. By way of making a point about the interdependence of the business of cosmetic surgery and the fashion industry, the writer states the obvious, namely, that very often media standards for beauty impose a 'world-wide standard of beauty' that leads non-Western, nonwhite women to desire the 'eyes, cheekbones or breasts of their favorite North American television star'.¹² By way of illustrating his point, Scheer suggests that 'turning a Japanese housewife ... into a typical product of the dominant white American genetic mix – for whatever that is worth – is now eminently doable'. He quotes from an Asian woman who says she wants to be like an American, 'You know. Big eyes. Everybody, all my girlfriends did their eyes deeper, so I did.' Scheer asks her what is next on her cosmetic surgery agenda: 'Nose and chin this time around.' Scheer comments:

Eyelids are often redone too. Asian women don't have a crease in the middle. Why does one need an extra fold like two tracks running horizontally across the eyelid? Why is the smooth expanse of eyelid skin not perfect enough? The answer is that the desirable eye, the one extolled in the massive cosmetic industry blitz campaigns, is the Western eye, and the two lines provide the border for eye shadow and other make-up applications.

Scheer's rhetorical question as to why 'the smooth expanse of eyelid skin' is not acceptable is supposed to ironize the relationship between body politics and market demands. His answer to his own question is to resolve that the dictates of the marketplace govern seemingly aesthetic considerations. And, we might add, the racially marked face is not only marginalized by a kind of economy of beauty, it is also quite obviously the product of imperialist, sexist, and racist ideologies. The cosmetic production of occidental beauty in this scene of cosmetic intervention, then, certainly ups the ante on racist and imperialist

notions of aesthetics, but it also has the possibly unforeseen effect of making race obviously artificial, another fiction of culture.

Cosmetic surgery, then, can, in a sometimes contradictory way, both bolster dominant ideologies of beauty and power, and it can undermine completely the fixedness of race, class, and gender by making each one surgically or sartorially reproducible. By commenting only upon the racist implications of such surgery in his article, Scheer has sidestepped the constructedness of race altogether. To all intents and purposes, if we are to employ the same rhetoric that pertains to transsexualism, the Japanese woman paying for the face job has had a race change (and here we might also think of the surgical contortions of Michael Jackson). She has altered her appearance until she appears to be white.

Why then do we not mark surgery that focuses on racial features in the same way that we positively pathologize surgery that alters the genitals? In 'Spare Parts', Marjorie Garber makes a similar point. She writes:

Why does a 'nose job' or 'breast job' or 'eye job' pass as mere self-improvement, all – as the word 'job' implies – in a day's work for a surgeon (or an actress), while a sex change (could we imagine it called a 'penis job'?) represents the dislocation of everything we conventionally 'know' or believe about gender identities and gender roles, 'male' and 'female' subjectivities?¹³

The rhetoric of cosmetic surgery, in other words, reveals that identity is nowhere more obviously bound to gender and sexuality than in the case of transsexual surgery. And gender and sexuality are nowhere more obviously hemmed in by binary options.

Transsexual surgery, in other words, unlike any other kind of body-altering operations, requires that the medically produced body be resituated ontologically. All that was known about this body has now to be relearned; all that was recognizable about this body has to be renamed. But oppositions break down rather quickly in the area of body-altering surgery. Transsexual lesbian playwright Kate Bornstein perhaps phrases it best in her latest theater piece called 'The Opposite Sex Is Neither'. Describing herself as a 'gender outlaw', Bornstein writes: 'See, I'm told I must be a man or a woman. One or the other. Oh, it's OK to be a transsexual, say some – just don't talk about it. Don't question your gender any more, just be a woman now – you went to so much trouble – just be satisfied. I am not so satisfied.'¹⁴ As a gender outlaw, Bornstein gives gender a new context, a new definition. She demands that her audience read her not as man or woman, or lesbian or heterosexual, but as some combination of presumably incompatible terms.

[...]

We are all transsexuals, I wrote earlier in this essay, and there are no transsexuals. I want both claims to stand and find a place in relation to the postmodern lesbian body, the body dressed up in its gender or surgically

constructed in the image of its gender. What is the relationship between the transsexual body and the postmodern lesbian body? Both threaten the binarism of homo/hetero sexuality by performing and fictionalizing gender. The postmodern lesbian body is a body fragmented by representation and theory, overexposed and yet inarticulate, finding a voice finally in the underground culture of zines and sex clubs.

Creating gender as fiction demands that we learn how to read it. In order to find our way into a posttranssexual era, we must educate ourselves as readers of gender fiction, we must learn how to take pleasure in gender and how to become an audience for the multiple performances of gender we witness everyday. In a 'Posttranssexual Manifesto' entitled 'The Empire Strikes Back', Sandy Stone also emphasizes the fictionality or readability of gender. She proposes that we constitute transsexuals as a 'genre – a set of embodied texts whose potential for *productive* disruption of structured sexualities and spectra of desire has yet to be explored'.¹⁵ The *post* in posttranssexual demands, however, that we examine the strangeness of all gendered bodies, not only the transsexualized ones and that we rewrite the cultural fiction that divides a sex from a transsex, a gender from a transgender. All gender should be transgender, all desire is transgendered, movement is all.

The reinvention of lesbian sex, indeed of sex in general, is an ongoing project, and it coincides, as I have tried to show, with the formation of, or surfacing of, many other sexualities. The transgender community, for example, people in various stages of gender transition, have perhaps revealed the extent to which lesbians and gay men are merely the tip of the iceberg when it comes to identifying sexualities that defy heterosexual definition or the label straight. The breakdown of genders and sexualities into identities is in many ways, therefore, an endless project, and it is perhaps preferable therefore to acknowledge that gender is defined by its transitivity, that sexuality manifests as multiple sexualities, and that therefore we are all transsexuals. There are no transsexuals.

NOTES

1. See Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 23.
2. See Alice Echols, 'The New Feminism of Yin Yang', in Snitow, Stansell, and Thompson, eds, *Powers of Desire*, 439–59; and 'The Taming of the Id: Feminist Sexual Politics, 1968–1983', in Vance, ed., *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, 50–72.
3. Interview, 'Guys With Pussies' by Chris Martin with 'Vern and Danny'. Part of this interview was published in *Movement Research Performance Journal* 3 (Fall 1991): 6–7.
4. Interview with Chris Martin, 'World's Greatest Cocksucker', in *Movement Research Journal* 3 (Fall 1991): 6.
5. See, for example, Marcie Sheiner, 'Some Girls Will Be Boys', in *On Our Backs* (March/April 1991): 20.
6. Alisa Solomon, 'Drag Race: Rites of Passing', *Village Voice* (November 15, 1991): 46.
7. For example, see Kaja Silverman, *Masculinity in the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992) or Victor Seidler, *Rediscovering Masculinity: Reason, Language, and Sexuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989).

8. Garber, *Vested Interests*, 16.
9. Ibid., 109.
10. Morris, *Conundrum*.
11. As I was writing this piece, I read in a copy of *Seattle Gay News* (January 1992) that a transsexual group in Seattle was meeting to discuss how to maintain the definition of transsexual operations as medical rather than cosmetic, because if they are termed 'cosmetic', then insurance companies can refuse to pay for them. As always, discursive effects are altered by capitalist relations in ways that are unforeseeable. I do not think we should give up on the cosmeticization of transsexualism in order to appease insurance companies. Rather, we should argue that cosmetics are never separate from 'health', and insurance companies should not be the ones making such distinctions, anyway.
12. Robert Scheer, 'The Cosmetic Surgery Revolution: Risks and Rewards', *Los Angeles Times* (December 22, 1991): A1, A24, A42.
13. Garber, *Vested Interests*, 117.
14. Bornstein's play, *The Opposite Sex is Neither*, played in San Diego at the Sushi Performance Gallery, December 13–14, 1991. The quotation is from 'Transsexual Lesbian Playwright Tells All' in Scholder and Silverberg, eds, *High Risk*, 261.
15. Sandy Stone, 'The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto', in Epstein and Straub, eds, *Body Guards*, 296.

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