THE GENDERED and TRANS/GENDERED SELF:
PERSONAL, POLITICAL, and PSYCHOLOGICAL NARRATIVES of
TRANS REPUDIATION, TRAUMA, and HEALING

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Abstract

The Gendered and Trans/gendered Self:
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Trans Repudiation, Trauma, and Healing

Transpeople are among the most marginalised and subjugated of social groups. Any attempt to improve this situation demands understanding (a hermeneutic task) and concrete change (which activism can incite). This study turns to feminist theory and psychoanalysis/depth psychology, in an attempt to understand the everyday/night repudiations that transpeople experience. Examples of such experiences are taken from twenty in-depth interviews conducted in BC, and considered in relation to existing comprehensions of gender (in)justice. Trans repudiation is perpetrated from across the political spectrum (from the right, centre, and left) and paradoxically configures transpeople simultaneously as exotic Others (a seductive spectacle), and dangerous transgressors (stirring fear/enmity). Transpeople present a challenge to both modernist and postmodern theories of sex/gender in relation to subjectivity and the body. In particular, they epitomise problems in longstanding debates around the integrity of the “self” and the divided status of the “subject”. Transsexuals illustrate the difficulties of changing sex in order to become “whole”, while the trans-gendered experience obstacles to their desire to remain both (m/f) or in-between (/). All those interviewed have experienced an array of prejudiced reactions based on their status as ‘trans’. Repudiation occurs at the intersections of interiority and exteriority: exteriority in the form of barriers encountered in the social world, and interiority as demonstrated in interpersonal dynamics that engage the perpetrators’ unconscious motivations (repression/projection/abjection) and transpeople’s internalised (emotional/mental) conflicts. The interviews allow identification of institutional sites where trans repudiation is most problematic, while the theoretical framework points to the deeper changes that need to occur in people’s consciousness in order to eliminate this repudiation.
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Abbreviations

APA American Psychiatric Association

DSM-IV-TR Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th Edition, Text Revision (American Psychiatric Association)

GID Gender Identity Disorder (DSM-IV-TR Category #576)

IS Intersex

FtM Female-to-Male

LGBTTTQI Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Trans-Two Spirit-Queer-Intersex

MtF Male-to-Female

SRS Sexual Reassignment Surgery

TG Transgendered

Trans Used tentatively in this study as an umbrella term to denote Transsexual or Transgendered.

TS Transsexual

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1 (1) MtF: vaginoplasty with or without labiaplasty and with or without orchiectomy [with orchiectomy: (1) removal of testes; (2) without orchiectomy: relocation of testes up and into the abdominal wall]; Optional: breast implants, facial reconstruction (FFS), voice box surgery, Adam’s apple reduction/shave, hair transplant.

(2) FtM: usually any one, or combination of, hysterectomy; oopherectomy [removal of ovaries], mastectomy, metoidioplasty [release of the suspensory ligament of the clitoris so that it resembles, according to Lawrence (2000) “a micro penis”]; vaginectomy [removal of the vagina]; scrotoplasty [creation of prosthetic testicles]; phalloplasty [abdominal flap, radical forearm flap, or fibular flap].
Numerous individuals, some in small ways - others in greater ways than they may know - were crucial to the construction of this study. I wish to offer deep thanks and appreciation to all of the following: my supervisors, Prof. Valerie Raoul (French/Women’s Studies), Dr. Becki Ross (Women’s Studies/Sociology), and Prof. Dawn Currie (Sociology), whose guidance as feminist scholars and shared belief in the principles and praxis of solidarity, have aided me enormously in producing this work; Tina Arsenault and Caroline Magnier of Nelson, BC, who provided valuable assistance with the interview transcripts and related equipment; my colleagues at the Centre for Research in Women’s Studies and Gender Relations (UBC) who have provided me, a male-bodied person, a welcoming environment and an uncommon opportunity to contribute to feminist research (with special thanks to Prof. Sneja Gunew, Dr. Dorothy Seaton, Dr. Tineke Fellwig, Dr. Wendy Frisby, and fellow Ph.D. candidates Bianca Rus and Kim Snowden); Caroline White of the department of Women’s Studies at Langara College, Vancouver, for her scholarship, trans allied activism, and assistance with critical feedback on earlier drafts of this study; Dr. Rachael St. Claire, of Boulder, Colorado, USA, for permission to cite from her sagacious, unpublished paper on Jungian psychology and transpeople; Dr. Derek Hook of the department of Social Psychology at the London School of Economics and Political Science, London, England, for permission to cite from his unpublished manuscript on postcolonial psychoanalysis; Prof. Irmingard Staeuble of the department of Psychology at the Free University of Berlin, Germany, for permission to cite from her unpublished manuscript on psychology and colonisation; Susan Cosco of Toronto for her tremendous personal support; the key informants who participated in this study, for their enormous help in aiding me to meet with a sufficient number of interviewees; and most especially: all of the transpeople who participated in the study, for educating me, sharing their narratives, and for immeasurably enriching my life.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Ms. Kimberly Nixon, a trailblazer in the struggle for transpeople's social emancipation and a feminist of fortitude, wisdom, and compassion.
Part I

FOREGROUNDING HORIZONS:
NARRATIVE RESEARCH WITH TRANSPEOPLE
CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION:
ETHICAL AND FIELD ISSUES IN THE STUDY OF TRANSPEOPLE’S NARRATIVES

Ethical Issues in Research on ‘Trans’ Subjects

Subjugation and ‘Cure’: Transpeople as “Phobogenic Objects”

Transpeople are among the most subjugated and marginalised of social groups. In the West, they experience a daunting array of institutional barriers and (inter)personal repudiations, either in addressing a mis-sexed body (transsexuals: TS), or in seeking the freedom to live partially or fully outside of the sex/gender binary (transgender: TG). This study engages with trans narratives and relevant theories, in an attempt to understand the barriers transpeople face in the external social world and the internalised world of the subject / self. Attempting to understand how the two intersect in the complexities of trans lives entails traversing multiple discourses and bringing them together. The result is a hybrid research project that is trans-disciplinary. Transdisciplinarity follows and extends (through hybridity) a long tradition of interdisciplinary research on the lives of transpeople (Denny, 1998). Disciplinary discourses as divergent as hermeneutics, critical realism, feminism, postmodernism, poststructuralism, and depth psychology, as well as the personal accounts of people interviewed for this project, will be drawn on to aid in ‘understanding’ what I will call trans repudiation. The overall approach is hermeneutic, since the aim is understanding through the interpretation of theoretical master-narratives and how these pertain to the personal narratives of individuals.

In this study, transpeople are assumed to be the primary experts on their own lives. For too long, academics and clinicians have adopted an Archimedean standpoint, perpetuating politically loaded notions of neutrality and inscribing their own authority over the lived experience of transpeople. Such inscriptions often radically diverge from the points of view that transpeople
voice, so much so that ‘expert’ inscriptions often represent in themselves a radical repudiation of trans subjectivity, a subjectivity that I believe ought to be seen as meaningful and valuable on its own terms. Scientific claims to expertise over trans lives, purporting to be the products of clinical experience and research, have in fact added fuel to overtly political rejections of transpeople’s assertions to being either fully (TS) or partly (TG) mis-sexed/gendered. One of the most surprising aspects of rejection or condemnation of trans-ness is that it comes from all points of the political spectrum: from religious conservatives, liberal humanists, radical feminists, and lesbians and gays. Repudiation of trans subjectivity also lies at the heart of sectors of the ‘helping’ professions that seek to ‘assist’ transpeople, usually with the aim of making them disappear into ‘normativity’. The specific helping professionals most relevant to transpeople are psychiatrists and psychologists. They are responsible for the initial authorisation and referral for sex reassignment surgery (SRS) and hormonal treatments. In this study, I intend to critically appraise the general theoretical premises that psychology and psychiatry assume in describing and clinically managing “gender disorders”, with an understanding, based on my own experience as a psychologist, that these disciplines are, in practice, especially conflictual for transpeople. The clinical discourses of psychiatry/psychology are in many ways the worst (but not the only) offenders in producing authoritative inscriptions over and about the lives of transpeople. Hence, these intertwined disciplines are a good place to substantiate the necessity of elaborating and following suggestions for better procedures generated by transpeople themselves.

Psychology and psychiatry both include clinicians who are trans advocates, but they simultaneously harbour others whose aim is to produce conformity to ‘acceptable norms’. Those upholding the aims of normative adjustment for those with “gender disorders” range across the following positions: (1) outright denial of the authenticity of all claims to be mis-sexed and an associated rejection of sexual reassignment surgery (SRS); (patients must be adjusted to conform to their ‘sex of origin’); (2) denial of the authenticity of the claim to be mis-sexed but a willingness to accede to the idea that SRS is the only solution for those with persistent “delusions”; (3) a parsimonious acceptance that a small number of subjects are genuinely mis-sexed, with authorisation of SRS contingent on the patient’s agreement to cross into stereotypical sex/gender conformity; or, (4) acceptance of the legitimacy of TS claims to being mis-sexed, accompanied by rejection of TG requests for partial surgeries or hormone treatment alone,
eliminating acceptance of border crossing and in-between-ness as legitimate. These positions coalesce around the notion that persistent trans-based distress points to a serious form of psychopathology that requires clinical management which may or may not include hormone therapy and SRS.

There are philosophical traditions inherent within these disciplines that, when critically examined, can explain the tendency of some psychiatrists and psychologists to consider trans-ness as a form of madness, one that requires a normative prescriptiveness (although they often disagree on how this can be achieved). For example, historians of psychology have traced the ways in which the discourse of psychology as a discipline is rooted in “Eurocentric and Orientalist patterns of thought” which broadly reflect the coloniser’s view of the world. This view operates through a “civilising mission” based on “European modernity as subject and the colonised world as object” (Staeuble, 2005, p. 2). Defined as a category of psychopathology, transpeople are often subjugated, as I will demonstrate in this study, by the gaze of some (‘sane/civilised’) clinicians whose intent (‘mission’) is to cure (‘insane/uncivilised’) “sex and gender deviants”. Hence, psychiatry and psychology name/categorise and then control the means of addressing trans-embodied distress under the diagnostic rubric of “gender dysphoria” (APA, 2000). Through these clinical discourses, transpeople have become an object of fascination, similar to the postcolonial conception of the “phobogenic object” (Fanon, 1967, p. 151).

Hook (2005), in critiquing the concept of ‘race’ as it pertained to Apartheid policy in South Africa, analyses the psychodynamics of the ‘white’ gaze upon ‘black’ skin/bodies; the latter become a “phobogenic object”, which produces a “volatile polarity of affect… criss-crossed with relations not only of dread, disgust and fear, but also with relations of attraction, fascination, exoticism and desire” (p. 2). A parallel example pertaining to transpeople can be seen in the work of the evolutionary psychologist Michael Bailey (2003), a contemporary and controversial figure in sexology. At times Bailey is sympathetic to transpeople, attracted to them as an ‘object’ of study and opposed to social discrimination against them. Elsewhere, however, he endorses a view that transsexual subjects embody a disorder and maladaptiveness which must ultimately be resolved (controlled) through genetic prevention. In essence, he views transpeople as unfortunate, wayward mistakes of nature, which science might one day be able to fully correct.
(civilise). In the interim, granting sex changes where warranted must suffice; but the overall aim is to prevent the necessity for such surgical interventions, for science to preclude these spoiled products of nature. Evolutionary psychologists like Bailey yearn to decipher the genetic codes said to produce the mis-sexed body, to more fully control transsexual and transgendered embodiment and prevent it from occurring in the first place. Such evolutionary/eugenic views ultimately aim to preserve the sanctity of the sexed binary, which is deemed undoubtedly desirable. Whether or not transpeople agree, most are forced into dealing with psychologists and psychiatrists, some of whom hold evolutionary points of view, if or when they seek medical assistance.

The scientific status of psychological/psychiatric studies suggests, by a ‘halo effect’, that their conclusions on transpeople are authoritative and impartial. This clinical gaze Others trans-embodied people as exotic oddities who cannot be healed through the talking cure. Failing to cure transpeople of their psychic distress, psychiatry / psychology maintains the role of gatekeeper to other medical interventions such as endocrinology, involving hormone therapy, and various plastic surgeries. This gate-keeping function usually, but not always, dissuades those who might come to regret a sex change, and indeed a persistent, though very small\(^1\) minority of people do vehemently regret transitioning (Pfafflin, 1992; Batty, 2004). These exceptions are frequently cited as evidence that sex ‘change’ is not a solution, and/or that the originally assigned gender must be the ‘true’ one. The existence of people who regret transitioning points to the need for gate-keeping, as problematic as this function often is. Nonetheless, the health sciences are consistently met with legitimate medical demands made by people who claim, in autobiographical accounts, to have been mis-sexed since their early childhood. That medical technologies are capable of helping most of these people to live lives that are liveable is not the issue. The issue is that such technologies are embedded within a broader culture of almost universal rejection of transpeople. As psychiatry and psychology demonstrate, this repudiation is found even within the very disciplines that purport to assist those with mis-sexed bodies. The health sciences express an uneasy ambivalence towards tampering with the embodied sexed binary, that remains sacrosanct in Western culture. This ambivalence is replete with paradoxical

\(^{1}\) Pfafflin’s review of follow-up literature spanning 30 years found that 1 - 1.5\% of MtFs regret transitioning while the incidence/incidents of FtM regret is less than 1\%. 
contradictions that continue to render issues related to transsexuality/transgenderism controversial.

All Western sexed and gendered selves are interpellated subjects of a culture (language and social structure) that cannot readily accommodate infringement of the sexual binary. Surgery is usually willingly applied to genitals only in a limited number of “extreme” cases, such as intersex (IS) subjects, born with both, or some of both, female and male organs/anatomy (Preves, 2001). In IS subjects, surgical transgression of the binary does not actually take place, rather, the binary is clarified and imposed, etched onto a body that cannot be allowed to continue to represent ‘sexed ambiguity’. The quest for conformity, however, is not infallible and surgery can produce gross, even inhumane errors. Chase (2000) draws attention to the physical and psychological management of some intersex (IS) babies/children. This management prescribes and enforces the sexed binary, as sexologists such as John Money (1986) have long instructed, inscribing sex and gender in ways that frequently amount to mutilation. In the case of IS babies, these medical decisions do not respect or reflect any future agency or control on the part of the patient. Later, as adolescents and adults, many IS people are outraged at the extreme intrusion of unwanted and unnecessary surgeries (e.g. removal of a ‘small’ penis or a ‘large’ clitoris). This is so when the surgical decisions do not concur with the gender identity adopted, or when some IS people would prefer to have retained bodies that reflect their natal ‘ambiguity’, to adopt third or other sexed and gendered identities, similar to the aims of other TG people.

In contrast, transsexuals, some of whom recognise only later in life that they have been assigned to the wrong category, have to go through a taxing and burdensome appeal to medical authorities to achieve the opportunity to live in a re-sexed body through sex change technologies. The right for TS subjects to be granted sex change was a hard won battle. Historically, some medical specialists eventually acquiesced to the wishes of TS people, performing operations justified by a

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2 Critics of sex assignment surgery for intersex babies acknowledge the requirement to proceed with operations when serious health risks are posed for the infant/child. These instances are, however, rare (Preves, 2002).
3 The majority of IS babies are surgically assigned/sexed to conform to the female genital form (Preves, 2002).
4 Preves (2002) notes that Western medical standards codify acceptable clitoral size as between 0-0.9 centimetres. Any “phalloclit” larger than 0.9cm “is considered … unacceptable by Western clitoral standards” requiring surgery to “recede” or “trim [it] back” (p. 530). Normative codification for an acceptable penis requires a minimum measurement of 2.5 centimetres.
humanitarianism that dictates the surgical treatment of a purportedly deep and chronic ‘psychopathological syndrome’. Surgery is granted as a last resort, in response to the persistence of the request in otherwise ‘sane’ persons and in light of the failure of psychiatric treatments to extinguish the request. Psychology and psychiatry are charged with giving/denying consent for accessing these procedures. The end effect is that psychiatry and psychology as discourses and clinical practices entail a fundamental contradiction and conundrum for transpeople (including some IS people): they mis/serve these subjects.

The discussion so far already reveals a basic paradox or tension that is at the heart of studies related to trans-sexuality and trans-gender. Those who wish to ‘change sex’ (TS) frequently subscribe to the dominant view that two sexes (and only two) are both inevitable and desirable. They wish to belong socially (in the eyes of others) to the sex to which they feel (mentally/emotionally) that they belong, and want their body to conform to the expectations for that sex. Subsequent problems are often related to issues of ‘passing’. Such individuals are not anxious to change dominant gender expectations, but to conform to them. Many transgender (TG) people (some of whom also undergo SRS), on the other hand, would prefer to be able to retain ambivalence, either in body or in comportment. They suffer because society does not accept a third sex or indeterminacy. However, as we shall see, TS and TG in reality face similar issues of discrimination and repudiation.

The Importance of Ethical Agency

In researching this area of sex/gender conformity and its transgressions, it is essential that the ‘subjects’ themselves exert their own agency. Trans academics like Jacob Hale (2004) have posited necessary principles for researching transpeople or communities without compromising their integrity, voice, and intrinsic worth. It is significant that it took an academic transman like Hale to articulate such a proposal, in response to the way that ordinary transpeople have been largely ignored by the authorities on their lives. In adopting a hermeneutic approach for this study I recognise that dialogue with transpeople is a compulsory component to researching trans lives in the social sciences. In undertaking a trans-disciplinary project involving both qualitative research (interviews), political perspectives, and a review of depth psychology in relation to
trans-ness, I will be attempting to bring together approaches that might appear irreconcilable. Nevertheless, together they show why transpeople’s position is fraught with inner and outer tensions.

Hale asks non-transpeople like myself to “approach your topic with a sense of humility” (p. 1). Transphobia, regardless of speculations on its cause or even semantic arguments over the appropriateness of the term itself, conveys an arrogance intrinsic to its expression, one that compromises principles of equity; if you, for example, are trans and I am afraid of you or disturbed by your transgressiveness, what right have I to bar you from proper health care, an education, a job, a public lavatory, a restaurant, to make a spectacle of your body, and so on? Worse, what right have I to unleash my unconscious rage at your body, to threaten you, to harass you, or to physically assault you? I have no such right. And yet, as this study reveals, these arrogant assumptions and disgraceful acts are very common, the source of unwelcome experiences in transpeople’s everyday/night worlds. Perpetrators may not know or understand their reasons for subjugating the lives of others. They may very well be expressing an unconscious sense of feeling threatened by an otherness that is deeply disturbing to those whose own sense of security is bound up in sex/gender distinctness.

Placing myself as researcher in the Socratic stance, beginning with “I know that I do not know”, has allowed the possibility for transpeople to take a pedagogic role in this study, to educate me and my readers as ‘knowing subjects’ in their own right rather than be seen as deviant objects, exotic Others, or colonised victims waiting to be rescued by their very colonisers. In pursuing this study, I have attempted to be critically self-reflexive, to become aware of my own gaze, discomfort, and so on. This gaze can be reflected back to researchers from transpeople themselves, who usually know when they are being repudiated. Dialogue based on the “hermeneutic circle” (Gadamer, 1960) returns speech to the subjects for reconsideration, for the production of self-knowledge. Hence, Hale asks researchers if they can travel in transpeople’s worlds. If the answer is no, then the researcher probably will not understand what transpeople are talking about. I have travelled in transpeople’s worlds and hope to continue to do so. These are not easy journeys to take and challenge non-trans embodied people profoundly. To be a trans ally requires such fellow-travelling and if trans people agree to guide you it is a gift to be cherished.
In approaching the topic of transpeople’s lives and the repudiations they experience, I have taken transcribed interview material and considered these dialogues in relation to a range of theories, in order to better understand the myriad problems that transpeople face. This is, I believe, a hermeneutic exercise. Gadamer (1960), in reviving the term “hermeneutics”, did so to critique the Romantic hermeneutics that had preceded him. Those hermeneutics claimed that a meta-Truth was inherent in texts such as the Christian Bible and that if one were to read such texts correctly, Truth would objectively emerge. The title of Gadamer’s treatise, *Truth and Method*, does not evoke a means to achieve Truth, but rather a critique of method as a means of uncovering Truth. Gadamer’s hermeneutics is not a complete rejection of methodical work. It is a rejection of complete understanding as an achievable goal, of totalised grand vision, and of any particular method as the one and only means to uncover absolute Truths. For Gadamer (1960), “the hermeneutical problem... is clearly distinct from ‘Pure’ knowledge detached from any particular kind of being” [italics original] (p. 314). There is no ‘pure’ knowledge, rather, as Gallagher (1992) comments, “knowledge is always imperfect knowledge” (p. 341), or as Haraway (2004) puts it, “rational knowledge is always interpretative, critical, and partial” (p. 93). The interpretative, critical, and partial assumptions that Haraway speaks of parallel Gadamer’s insistence that dialogue gradually comes to produce only partial understandings that in turn require an ongoing interpretation. Furthermore, these assumptions also parallel the central tenets of the depth psychologies, discourses which suggest that a ubiquitous unconscious dynamic operates in human subjectivity and relatedness, that our knowledge of self and others is only partial.

My approach utilises a hermeneutic and dialogic engagement with transpeople as ‘knowing subjects’. This approach emerges thus: (1) between myself and the interviewees (qualitative research which gives authority to personal experience, foregrounds the power of narrative in the form of reflections and stories, and offers concrete examples as voiced by the subjects themselves); and (2) between this material, gathered from transpeople, and theories about sex and gender: both socio-political and psychological (especially depth psychology). The analysis
of the depth psychologies, and related issues pertaining to contestations between the self and the
subject, emerges following reflection on the interviews as a whole, by extending the sociological
conception of *discrimination* into the intra/interpersonal phenomenon of *repudiation*. This
theoretical explication and analysis frames what I have ‘understood’, what Gadamer (1960)
terms *foregrounding*. In this study, it is hermeneutic/narrative exchanges that produce theoretical
foregrounding. My ultimate aim is to return this analysis to transpeople and their allies as part of
an ongoing conversation, which, I shall argue, is also relevant to feminists and other scholars in
the field of sex/gender studies.

My approach to narrative is consistent with its use as a distinct category in qualitative
psychology, one that has gained strength in recent years (White and Epston, 1990; Josselson,
Lieblich, and McAdams, 2002; Parker, 2004). Narrative research is construed as a means to
insert the importance of storied lives, of retaining voice, of providing a counterbalance to an
over-emphasis on quantitative methods, as evidenced particularly in mainstream psychology
(Rennie, et. al., 2002). Narrative is about deeply listening to human experience, emphasising the
framing of research questions with which to generate dialogue. Combining this approach with
hermeneutics foregrounds the striving for understanding as a result of listening to narrative
accounts.

What I have tentatively ‘understood’ from consulting transpeople is that their everyday/night
lives are troubled by pervasive repudiations. These reflections have produced three clusters that
inform my tentative ‘conclusions’. These research questions are generated and presented as
analytic frames, as an outcome of hermeneutic dialogue, and focus on three tensions:

1. The *Internal/External* distinction as evidenced by a split between psychology and sociology:
   to what extent does this dyad function as a complex interrelationship evident in trans
discrimination, repudiation, and consequent subjugation?

2. *Paradox*: What are the paradoxical dynamics that surround the phenomenon of trans
   repudiation and transphobia?
3. **Contradiction:** To what extent are there splits within the unified referent ‘trans’? How do current social/political conditions produce contradictions that transpeople are forced to navigate?

In considering these three clusters, it becomes clear that transpeople embody in a most striking way postmodern issues and debates regarding the self/subjectivity. These issues point to nostalgia for a lost wholeness/home, as expressed by TS people, and a resistance/refusal of the sex/gender binary as expressed by TG people. Externally, TS people are often frustrated in their attempts to recover/live in this lost home, while TG people find that a third space is an unavailable social position. I believe that materialist feminism holds the potential for explicating the gendered oppression that transpeople face as they navigate the external social world, and can provide pragmatic suggestions for its eradication. In explicating the internal, or what I call *interiority*, I consider that the depth psychologies are theoretically more capable of plumbing the depths, paradoxes, and contradictions that the complex dynamics of repudiation and transphobia pose for both trans subjects and perpetrators.

I do not hope to reach firm conclusions, but rather to prompt further dialogue and conversations. I have nevertheless taken the risk of temporarily stepping out of the hermeneutic circle, to call for solidarity with trans struggle. This is an outcome of the power of the personal narratives excerpted in this study, which compel attention and demand action to combat the seriousness of the problem. The originality of this study therefore lies in bringing together the psychological (internal) and social (external) aspects of trans experiences, as concrete, lived incidents are framed in a tentative quest to interpret and understand these experiences. This dual focus (external/internal) entails discussion of a wide range of relevant theories, from divergent perspectives. The theorising further reflects trans-ness as itself challenging theory (whether modernist or postmodern). It both valorises and questions ‘wholeness’ or ‘integrity’ as a goal (belonging to the *right* sex), implying a degree of essentialism and certainty. It also valorises and questions border-crossing, in-betweeness or indeterminacy as an attractive, transgressive alternative. Both positions have utopian aspects in theory, but prove to be uncomfortable, even infernal, in the real lives of transpeople.
The Research Project

This study began as a qualitative research project, based on twenty in-depth interviews with transpeople living in the Greater Vancouver district (Lower Mainland) of British Columbia. Without any prior contrivance to achieve an equal ratio of FtM or MtF participants, narratives were produced that reflect upon and reveal aspects of the lived experiences of ten MtFs and ten FtMs. The categorisation of MtF or FtM was based at minimum on full-time pronoun use (excepting those instances where a person's safety is compromised) contrary to the sex/gender assignment at birth. My trepidatious use of MtF/FtM categories reflects the fact that many of the interviewees do not themselves use the MtF/FtM designation yet do acknowledge its tentative validity for representation in this study. Difficulty in ascertaining the appropriateness of MtF/FtM labels points to the lack of consensus about the binary in trans communities, since, as mentioned above, some transpeople see the binary in essentialist terms and are loathe to leave it, while others view it as a major impediment to achieving their desired identity and an object for overthrow.

At the time of the interviews, nineteen of the twenty interviewees were taking hormones; five were pre-operative; thirteen were post-operative; and two were 'no-ops' (no surgery intended at the time of interview). In terms of the last category, one was taking hormones, the other was unable to at the time due to health reasons. Both 'no-op' interviewees hold relatively stable identities as TG and offer interesting perspectives on trans repudiation from a TG standpoint. It must be said, however, that a TG standpoint more broadly may also include those who have had SRS, and should not be construed as synonymous with 'no-op' intentions. In contrast, TS identity is synonymous with those who have, or expect to have, sex reassignment surgery.

The interviews focused on these people's experiences as trans. My initial working assumptions, which I revisited after the completion of the interviews, included the use of the term 'transphobia' in the interviews, as it is well known among transpeople. Upon reflecting on the transcripts after all interviews were completed, I noticed that what was being termed 'transphobia' was often actually a range of types of repudiation, which might include phobia.
Listening between the lines, I heard: “phobia, yes, but more than just phobia”. Hence, my initial assumptions were eventually revised, including the appropriateness of the use of the term ‘transphobia’ in the interviews themselves. My initial assumptions included the following:

- transphobia affects all transpeople;
- transphobia is a ‘fact’ regardless of one’s race, class, or sexual orientation. Race, class, and sexual orientation as intersectional issues were not addressed directly but certainly welcomed when they emerged, usually spontaneously, in the interviews. Those who did draw attention to racial/ethnic/cultural identities wanted them noted: one is Jewish; four First Nations and one Metis. Two First Nations identify in the tradition of Two-Spirit, however they also make use of the TS/TG identifications and inscriptions when they deem it necessary (for example, at a medical office);
- Transpeople are not suffering from a mental illness but rather live lives that, in and of themselves, have intrinsic worth and are not compromised by psychopathology on the basis of trans-ness alone.

The twelve questions that formed the basis of the interviews are listed in Appendix B. Since the majority of the interviewees are TS identified many of the questions pertain to them. I did modify the questions slightly for those who are non-operative and TG identified. Questions 1-5 refer to where the interviewees are/were situated in terms of the evolution of their identity. Questions 6-10 focus on experiences and perceptions of transphobia (discrimination / repudiation), while question 11 specifically relates to being a trans ally (“What can trans allies do to assist trans folk in dealing with transphobia?”). The narrative material gathered from questions 10 (“Do you feel that the kinds of transphobia trans men and trans women experience differ? If so, how?”) and 11 certainly assisted me in reflecting on the interviews as a whole, however, I intend to make use of this specific material in future rather than include analysis of it in this present study. The open-ended utility of question 12 (“Is there anything else you would like to say about the issues/barriers transpeople face that we might have missed?”) proved extremely useful, especially in producing a central category of analysis, that of public lavatory and change room use. Upon completion of the interviews I noticed that the range of issues that transpeople
evoke is vast and one of the challenges I faced in constructing this study was how to limit the material and yet reflect the many issues raised.

In keeping with the hermeneutic tradition of focussing on openness and dialogue, I purposely kept the number of questions to a minimum. Hence, space could be made to generate some spontaneous dialogue without succumbing to a completely open-ended format or being overly directive. I was aware that the University of British Columbia disapproves of completely open-ended interviews and hence usually denies Certificates of Ethical Approval to conduct research when such proposals are made. As the interviews proceeded, I was satisfied with the dozen questions proposed and now feel that my task to yield adequate ‘data’, in the form of narratives, was surpassed. The relatively small number of questions contrasts with one of the most detailed sociological studies ever conducted with transpeople (on FtMs), by Devor (1997), which used 102 questions in two-part interviews. Devor’s method was highly structured and yielded excellent data in the sociological sense. What was more important to me, however, was to keep the questions loose enough to open up the narrative without overly controlling it, since my main task, in using a hermeneutic approach, is to seek to generate dialogue, including further questions, as one of the study’s outcomes.

I was very much concerned with the quality of the relationship I developed with the participants during the interviews. I needed to establish rapport quickly and to recognise that, in discussing transphobia, painful life events would probably be invoked. Certainly my years of experience as an Adlerian counselling psychologist, and having previously worked as a therapist with transpeople, helped me. I was able to use empathy, to attend to any distress when it emerged, and to express a general compassion in relation to the ordeals concerned, to let the interviewee know that I am an ally and wish very much for the end of transphobia. Hence, I used my clinical interviewing and counselling skills, combined with orthodox qualitative interviewing methods, to generate the narratives used in this study.

All interviewees were given the option to use a pseudonym, indeed encouraged to do so. However some adamantly refused, insisting that their actual names be used. Justifications were offered, such as “I am already known through media attention”, “I don’t care”, “I am not
interested in masquerades”, and “I wish to retain ownership over my own life story”. I am charged, however, with protecting the privacy of those who chose not to reveal their true identities. As a compromise, I will not indicate whose name is, or is not, an assumed one. Moreover, for privacy reasons I regret being unable to introduce each of the twenty participants in more detail. Had I done so, the participants might have inadvertently identified each other. Many of the interviewees are acquainted with each other, in some cases through activism. Also, transpeople as a group appear to be small in numbers despite their strong local networking. Hence, the disclosure of general profiles (e.g. TS: x to x + sexual orientation + ethnicity + years since surgery) could give strong clues to the other participants that could potentially compromise confidentiality. The participants are listed in Table 1:

Table 1:
List of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FtM</th>
<th>MtF</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>Aiyanna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Jamie-Lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hank</td>
<td>Jenny</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeb</td>
<td>Kimberly</td>
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<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Patricia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keenan</td>
<td>Robin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trevor</td>
<td>Roz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yossi</td>
<td>Sabrina*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>Tami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick*</td>
<td>Wynn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes coexistence of Two-Spirit identity

All participants signed a consent form (see Appendix A) and were informed, verbally as well as in writing, that publication of the research results would be sought following completion of the study. Interviewees were also told that the work was being conducted to fulfil the requirements
of a Ph.D. degree. Following the signing of a letter, their names and pseudonyms (if any), contact details, age, and status (e.g. MtF pre-op, FtM no-op) were recorded.

Study participants were originally to be recruited through an advertisement in *Xtra West*, Vancouver's Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual newspaper, a fortnightly publication. However, this was not necessary since I have had the good fortune to get to know many transpeople over the years, as an ally and an activist for social justice amongst marginalised groups, including transpeople. All the study participants were referred to me through key informants.

The interviews were carried out over the period from November 2003 to April 2004. Most took place in the interviewees' homes (at their request), some at their place of work, and some at my East Vancouver home. One interview occurred at a coffee shop at the interviewee's request, which I discovered is inadvisable, as the espresso machine makes quite a racket, others' conversations intrude, and confidentiality can be compromised. Since that interview was nevertheless excellent and the interviewee was satisfied with the transcript, a repeat interview was not required.

I kept a journal of my reflections on each interview: general impressions, anything I needed to consider in more detail, and so on. For example, I noted that it was a great privilege to be invited into transpeople's homes. In reviewing my journal, I also noticed that I had much to say on the theme of pets, since I am allergic to cats and am afraid of dogs. One interview began with an African Grey parrot that flew onto my head, which startled me, before being whisked into its cage for the duration of the interview. I wondered if my attitude to animals affected my interviewing style on several occasions.

Upon completion of the interviews and transcripts, to ensure that the transpeople would retain as much control over the research as possible, the transcripts were returned to the interviewees to review. I invited them to delete anything that they did not want from the document and to clarify or change anything that they saw fit. Only a few chose to do so, mostly making minor corrections (spelling in some cases) with only one interviewee removing or requesting substantial changes to entries that might inadvertently identify them (cities, names, etc.). Only
one interviewee failed to return the transcript. After repeated attempts to retrieve it, I assumed that no changes were wanted.

Upon analysing the finished transcripts I noted institutional sites and specific issues where transphobia and trans repudiation was relayed, proceeding to a thematic analysis familiar to qualitative researchers. I then coded each transcript to mark the institutional sites and other issues identified. Five analytic categories emerged, pointing to the ways in which the interviewees’ lives were/are challenged and affected:

1. **Health care**: This category relates to aspects of physical care (diagnosing/treating) and institutional (hospitals, clinics) interactions. The emphasis is on relations with professionals in medicine and psychiatry/psychology.

2. **Lavatories / change rooms**: in public, trans subjects are forced to choose gendered geographic spaces, with a notable lack of a third space. This category often pertains to issues of passing, evoking fear on the part of others who cannot deal with ambiguity and on the part of those unable to pass.

3. **Intimate others**: this category includes family, friends, and dating. Personal relations imply issues of being (or not) the same person as before, and dealing with the sense of loss and the need for adjustment on the part of others. Psychodynamic issues raised include defensive reluctance or refusal by others to accept the subject’s ‘new’ sex/gender position, commonly evoking a range of affective issues: mourning, desire, trust, rejection and repudiation.

4. **Public institutions**: these include those related to employment, education, the judiciary, police, prisons, trade and commerce (banks, shopping), and other public services.

5. **Types of repudiation**: the degree of overt and negative reactions towards trans subjects ranges from verbal threat to physical assault. The sources of repudiation can be religious conservatives, mainstream liberals, gays/lesbians, and some feminists. Trans repudiation can also be found in transpeople themselves especially in the form of self-oppression.
The interviews became only one element or dimension of this transdisciplinary study. They provide a good deal of information on the interplay between external circumstances and internal reflections/experiences, and on the reaction of others to those perceived as shifting gender boundaries. The internalised conflicts disclosed in the stories of these transpeople also prompted me to rethink feminist, queer theory and depth psychology theories about identity formation and the sex/gender relationship. Specifically, the analysis I provide both confirms and adds to the sociological material collected by Devor (1997) and Namaste (2000, 2005), and also the trans theorising provided by Elliot and Roen (1998), Prosser (1998) and Hird (2000, 2003). More broadly, I noticed that transpeople un/wittingly serve as a lightning rod, challenging the assumptions and prejudice of those who believe themselves enlightened on sex/gender oppression (such as some gays/lesbians and feminists). In sum, transpeople challenge us inasmuch as they embody the postmodern condition – illustrating both nostalgia for a lost/desired whole/integrity, and the desire for indeterminacy, not to have to choose, to become something that does not yet exist. What emerges is a fundamental split or tension within the category of ‘trans’ itself, that is always present but not always acknowledged in the growing field of trans studies.

**Issues in the Field of Trans(Gender/Sexual) Studies**

It is difficult to speak of a ‘field’ in a unified sense when referring to trans studies. ‘Trans’, as White (2002) points out, is a problematic term, an inadequate umbrella for transgenderists (TG), transsexuals (TS), transvestites (TV), cross-dressers, some Two-Spirit, some queer, and some intersex (IS) people (all of whom may interchange trans with other identities). *Transgender*, moreover, is sometimes used to refer to all of these various categories of identity and embodiment, as in the quest for ‘transgender rights’ and associated protections against discrimination sought through “gender identity” provisions. However, trans scholars such as Namaste (2005) reject the term, citing unthought imperialist motives such as Anglophone generated scholarship over Francophone contexts. She contends that the French language does not have an equivalent term for ‘transgender’, and in contexts such as Francophone Quebec many transsexuals find the word meaningless. Outside of Quebec, the Canadian trans activist...
Mihra-Soleil Ross, in an interview with Namaste (ibid.), argues that “the concept of ‘transgender’ still makes little sense. It constantly has to be ‘explained’ to the average TS/TV person – especially to prostitutes and show girls – by the ‘leaders’ ” (p. 102). It is more important, argues Namaste, to focus on the location of transsexuals in the social world and to clarify subjugation based on class rather than Anglo, middle-class, academic arguments that supposedly digress into identity politics.

I have tenuously maintained the trans umbrella (e.g. in referring to “trans-people”), not to elide these categorical splits but to try and comprehend a common theme expressed by TS and TG people: their experiences of repudiation, including transphobia. The acrimony over the legitimacy of the term ‘transgender’ requires that I abandon it as an umbrella category in favour of ‘trans’. However, I disagree with those theorists and activists who disavow transgender altogether. What this study argues is that transpeople, regardless of their status as TS, TG and so on, grapple with the problem of repudiation. Social location and identity are equally important in this analysis. To better understand the significance of these splits within trans studies, it is imperative that I discuss the contested status of queer theory in relation to transpeople’s lives.

Queer Theory

It is important to consider the fairly recent rise of queer theory in relation to trans lives not only for its celebration of transpeople as transgressive, but also because many (but certainly not all) transpeople also identify as queer. Briefly, queer theory takes issue with a number of common-sense postulates regarding sex/gender/sexuality, especially the seemingly unproblematic, historically constructed naturalism that flows from the traditional binary of an elevated ‘normal/natural heterosexuality’ versus a debased and ‘deviant/unnatural homosexuality’. Queer theory analyses the hegemony that this asymmetrical relationship between the poles of this binary imposes. Judith Butler (1993) refers to the regulating norm of the heterosexual imperative. The concept echoes Adrienne Rich’s (1980) earlier introduction of

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5 Namaste (2005) overlooks the significant influence that French poststructuralist theory has had on ‘Anglo’ uses of “transgender” within queer theory. Without the underlying influence of several French theorists, philosophers, and psychoanalysts, it is doubtful that an Anglophone writer such as Judith Butler (1990, 1993) could have produced her celebrated analyses.
the notion of *compulsory heterosexuality*, which continues to constitute the normative expectation of sexual identity and behaviour in most societies, in the West and elsewhere. Homosexual relations between men, for example, are in fact still punishable by death in seven nations, with the beheading of convicted homosexuals as one form of execution inflicted upon the condemned (Hari, 2004).

In the West, through discursive and historical analyses, queer theory tells of the creation of homosexuality as an identity and practice that were pathologised only in the later part of the nineteenth century, as part of a regulative ideal of sex/gender difference (Butler, 1993). The medicalisation of homosexuality accompanied sexological and psychiatric discourses that classified as deviant those with persistent same-sex desire. Yet legal and moral statutes, that tended to focus on male same-sex behaviour and its prohibition, were already implemented under the earlier, pre-medicalised view that considered such behaviours as sinful or immoral, rather than the result of a medical condition. These laws echoed mid-seventeenth-century attitudes which saw the temptation to “debauchery” as widespread and something to which anyone might succumb (Jagose, 1996, p. 11).

Following the gay and lesbian liberation movements, launched in the late 1960s in America with ripple effects elsewhere, slow but continued change has occurred, such as the decriminalisation of sodomy laws and the de-listing of homosexual behaviours as mental illnesses in many countries. In some jurisdictions, common-law and marriage rights have been extended to same-sex couples, giving homosexuality broader social recognition, though this issue is currently being vigorously contested in Canada and elsewhere, especially by social conservatives and many religious groups. Attention has also been drawn to the dangers of derogatory language, as “hate speech”, while gays and lesbians have reclaimed pejorative terms such as *queer* to designate an analytic category for theorising. For some gays and lesbians, queer emerges as a new identity that replaces the previous categories of gay, lesbian, and bisexual. “Queer”, however, resists an exact definition. Jagose (1996), for example, points to the plasticity and indeterminacy of this term which connotes its roots in constructivism, poststructuralism, and postmodernism. It resists essentialising the allegedly natural relationship between chromosomal sex, sexual behaviour,
identity, and desire. The term disrupts the stability of identity (including gay and lesbian identities) and posits fluidity rather than innateness or crystallisation.

It is through the queer angle that I find myself pursuing a middle ground, or a fusion of horizons, between discursive and materialist formulations. Several aspects associated with these discourses are relevant in attempting to understand the problematics of trans repudiation: (1) the theoretical power of difference, and the techniques developed by deconstruction to uncover difference and show how grand narratives previously glossed over contingent variances; (2) the acknowledgement that consensus does not actually exist and umbrella terms such as ‘trans’ tend not to hold; (3) an attitude of incredulity towards metanarrative (as conveyed by Lyotard), that challenges the doctrinaire and dogmatic qualities arising from grand narratives such as authoritarian Marxism or orthodox psychoanalysis as well as religion; and (4) recognition that plurality might very well be the force that breaks apart stubborn dualisms such as good/evil, sane/insane, and male/female. Queer theory suggests pursuing an understanding of gendered subjectivity that includes the complexities and instabilities of desire which dualisms such as straight/gay overshadow.

This study occupies an unstable middle ground between postmodernism and the critical realist discourses of feminist standpoint epistemology, in attempting not to overlook the materiality of lived lives as they are located in the concrete social world, nor the power of discourse to produce the realm of the material itself. The material importance of embodiment is especially relevant to all issues of gender, and here specifically in drawing distinctions between transsexuals and transgenderists. In relation to queer theory, these divisions circulate contentiously in discussions of identity and material embodiment (Prosser, 1998; Elliot, 2004a).

Butler (1990; 1993) writes about gender as a fiction based on an inscribed performativity, a repetition of a stylisation of constructed codes that materializes over time, approximating ‘the natural’, so that gender appears innate, essential. She builds on Foucault’s (1978) analysis, that uncovered the discursive construction of sexuality as part of the power/knowledge axis and challenged essentialist understandings. Butler (1990) asks, “How does language itself produce the fictive construction of ‘sex’ that supports … various regimes of power?” (p. ix.). Other queer
theorists such as Halberstam (1994), Noble (2004a; 2004b), Pratt (1995), and Stryker (1998) emphasise the ways in which queer theory undoes the binary by creating a third space for gender transgression. Stryker defines queer as follows: “(1) the sense of a utopian, all-encompassing point of resistance to heteronormativity and (2) a ‘posthomosexual’ reconfiguration of communities of people marginalised by sexuality, embodiment, and gender” (p. 151). This definition reflects the rise of transgender activism in the 1990s which at times militantly rejected conformity to the sex/gender binary (Califia, 2003).

However, not all transpeople are satisfied with total rejection of the sex/gender binary. Prosser (1998) argues that Butler overemphasised performativity and language in her 1990 book *Gender Trouble*. He suggests that she has failed to account sufficiently for embodiment in both *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter* (1993). In challenging the postmodern ‘third space’ assumptions that emanate from Butler’s and other queer theorists’ positions, Prosser wonders what happened to the ‘first’ and ‘second’ spaces that he believes still matter in ways that go beyond the poststructural thesis on the productive nature of power:

> Constructing trans into the very “fin” of the millennium, postmodernism has challenged the key binaries of modernist identity grand narratives by idealizing the middle ground — the “/” or transition itself...this promotion of trans comes at a price...it leaves unattended differences that continue to matter on either side of the slash. (p. 201)

Queer rejection of the possibility of being entirely or definitely a man or a woman does not automatically equate with the embodied experiences of transsexuals. Their experience of embodied incongruity differs from the experience of a congruently embodied female or male subject who is queer identified. While transgender activists privilege the crossing and fluidity of queer, many transsexuals disagree. Firstly, TS people express a variety of sexual orientations, and while some might change these, others retain a stable sexual orientation over the course of their lives (e.g. always feeling like a straight man). TS people may be queer identified, but certainly not all of them are. Many FtMs, for example, are heterosexual in their orientation following transition, a transition that lends social and physical embodiment to their sense of having been heterosexual males in female bodies prior to transition (Devor, 1997). Such heterosexual persons might, but also might not, resonate with the identity ‘queer’.
To return to the problem that White (2002) noted, ‘trans’, as an umbrella term, supposes a sense of unity amongst TG, TS, IS, gender liminal, Two-Spirit, some bisexuals, cross-dressers (transvestites, drag Kings/Queens), gender benders and queer identified people, a sense of unity that often does not exist. There might be issues that produce strategic solidarity (e.g. eradication of transphobia) yet even here one cannot assume that all trans people will come forward to support such a campaign. There are transsexual people who, upon transition, disappear into the world to live straight lives and may not want to be reminded of the past or to be activists in any way (Prosser, 1998). They may be more motivated to maintain the gender binary than to blur it.

Some TS people insist that their ontology is medically rooted, seeing themselves as having a sexed brain that is in contradiction with their mis-sexed body. For those who accept these causal attributions, an essentialist physiology is at the root of the mis-sexed body, not culture, language, environmental factors, psychodynamic factors, or other aspects raised by queer theory. The ‘trans’ discourse, for such persons, is not an accurate one. They do not wish to move from one sex to another, they have always been of one sex, with medical issues that require correction. Hence, queer theory is of little or no relevance to such subjects. As Prosser (1998) writes:

... the current [TG] campaign to remove gender identity disorder entirely from the DSM does not consider that, for some transsexuals, gender identity disorder may be experienced precisely as a disorder, a physically embodied dis-ease or dysphoria that dislocates the self from bodily home and to which sex reassignment does make all the difference. (p. 203)

Prosser argues that some transsexuals adamantly disagree with those TG activists who wish to remove the clinical status of gender dysphoria from the DSM psychiatric nomenclature of mental disorders. Burnham (1999) concurs that there is a lack of unity between TS and TG people. Namaste (2000) also challenges the umbrella definition, arguing that it “may erase the specificity of all different transgendered and especially transsexual individuals” (p. 267). Moreover, she decries the way that queer theory neglects the everyday lives of TG and TS people in terms of their location in the institutionalised social world. She charges that queer theory, including the imposition of queerness on all trans subjects, constitutes “a remarkable insensitivity” that overlooks the “lives, bodies and experiences” of transpeople (p. 23).
For TG people, resistance to the binary is imperative. Noble (2004b) argues that he refuses to be a man and emphasises "the need to think paradox: I’m a guy who is half lesbian" (p. 26). This paradoxical hybridity is typical of TG identity, entailing multiplicity and related configurations. While such identity conclusions are important to TG people, they are not necessarily the same conclusions that TS people arrive at. Meyerowitz (2002) emphasises the historical development of the TG movement. She notes that it arose after well known figures such as Harry Benjamin and Christine Jorgensen died, and cites the relevance of the Internet as an element in postmodern culture, something that also came about after the demise of Jorgensen. The Internet, moreover, facilitates transnational crossing through non-embodied means, nodes with no centre (such as chat rooms), and opportunities for organising global communication and protests. Internet interactions allow cyberspace crossings and cyber identities in performative, language-based modalities (Rothblatt, 1996). This might be a valuable aspect for TG activists, or those who wish to play with gender distinctions, yet such technological sophistications elide the embodied incongruity that TS people live with in their concrete everyday/night worlds. Leading TG activists, such as Feinberg (1993), nevertheless call for the revolutionary overthrow of the binary, a militant rejection of a fixed sex/gender identity, of passing, of duality, in favour of reconfiguring oneself as s/he. Prosser (1998) rejects this universal call, emphasising that in point of fact, TG crossings, fluidity, and indeterminacy are about gender and not sex. TS is not so much about the fluidity of gender crossing as it is about "substantive transition: a correlated set of corporeal, psychic, and social changes" (p. 4): hence, Prosser’s project to "wrest the transsexual from the queer inscription of transgender" (p. 56). Further problems with the trans umbrella emerge when one looks more closely at Indigenous expressions of gender and whether they do or do not belong within the constructed category of trans.

Two-Spirit People

In North American Indigenous cultures and traditions, prior to colonisation, there was no such thing as a sex/gender binary. The binary appeared in First Nations people’s worldview following colonisation, when Western religious traditions intruded, often violently, as in the history of the Residential Schools in Canada and the USA where Indigenous children were
forcibly removed, cut off from their families in order that they might be ‘civilised’. This process involved inculcating and indoctrinating these children in Christian traditions, of which the gender binary forms a major aspect. Historically, in New France, French colonists noted the phenomenon of gender and sex variance among Indigenous people using the pejorative inscription berdache. Brown (1997) traces this term to Arabic, from which it migrated into Italian, Spanish and French. Its root meaning is sodomite. In English, berdache was used as a standard term for the gender liminality perceived among First Nations, especially by anthropologists who thought the term innocuous. However, during the Third Native American / First Nations Gay and Lesbian conference held in Winnipeg [1990], ‘berdache’ was denounced for its colonial and insulting connotations (Jacobs, Thomas, and Lang, 1997). The more appropriate Two-Spirit was coined and adopted at that conference. Two-Spirit captures the spiritual aspects of Indigenous gender liminality that the pejorative ‘berdache’ misses, spirituality being of central resonance in the phenomenon (Hall, 1997). The newer term is not without its own problems. Although widely adopted and recognised, for example in gay and lesbian studies, Two-Spirit poses some translation problems in certain Indigenous languages. Jacobs et. al. (1997) cite its literal translation into Navajo or Apache as signifying a person with two spirits, one living and one dead. In Shoshone, the translation means “ghost” (p. 3), implying a person of whom one should feel frightened.

In denouncing the term ‘berdache’, First Nations scholars noted the ways in which English and French anthropologists focused on bending the phenomenon to fit their more limited focus on sexual ‘deviance’, seeing the berdache as simply a male homosexual (Herdt, 1997). The traditional anthropological reading tended to elide or downplay the special cultural, spiritual and gender roles of Two-Spirit persons. Prior to colonisation, First Nations children who exhibited gender difference were identified, usually by a grandmother, as Two-Spirited, as having the spirits of both male and female simultaneously. In adolescence such people were given a unique initiation ceremony that affirmed their special significance to the tribe. Two-Spirit people were (and are, in terms of reclamation) said to be gifted, endowed with unusual spiritual powers that warranted special status within their communities. Attributions of clairvoyance, prophecy, healing abilities, and so on, were common (Brown, 1997). Two-Spirit people were called upon to offer counsel to other tribe members experiencing marital problems or to assist with
matchmaking prospective marriage couples. They were thought to have special insight into male/female relationships since they were (are) seen to embody both sexes and their wisdom was therefore highly valued. Prior to colonisation, Two-Spirit people were not subject to repudiation. On the contrary they were honoured with special status.

Western anthropologists tended to dismiss the Two-Spirit claim, usually identifying and focusing on male-bodied 'berdaches' and the fact that they often took a male-bodied husband. While the anthropologists classify Two-Spirit people negatively as homosexual, the tribe itself did not view their marital and sexual relations with men as homosexual. Across tribes, in fact, the only consistent restriction placed upon Two-Spirits is that they could not marry or engage in sexual relations with other Two-Spirits. The Western view of Two-Spirit persons, which focussed on the assumed debauchery of supposed male homosexuality, as evidence of uncivilised behaviour, tended to overlook the multiplicity of the phenomenon. It seems that female-bodied persons could also be identified as Two-Spirit. Some First Nations scholars, however, dispute this assertion. Blackwood (1997), for example, argues that the “manly-hearted women and warrior women of the Plains nations were alternative roles for women, not two-spirit genders” (p. 290).

The tendency to clear-cut classification is not necessarily – in the case of gender – an Indigenous tradition. Kehoe (1997) argues that many non-Western cultures “value dynamic shifting, transformations, and existence in more than two dimensions” (p. 266). Colonisation has, however, meddled with Two-Spirit traditions. The imposition of Western religious morals and values on First Nations put the special status of Two-Spirit people into disrepute amongst most North American Indigenous peoples. Having mostly lost their traditional roles, Lang (1997) notes that many First Nations people, who would have been initiated and socialised into Two-Spirit roles, instead found themselves rejected by their families and communities. Those who remained on their reservations often had to closet themselves and those who could not do so usually left for urban centres, assimilating into gay and lesbian subcultures. Western gay activists who forged the LGBT identity configuration have recently broadened it to be more inclusive of Two-Spirit people: LGBTTQI+. In any case, the attempted eradication of Two-Spirit people by Western colonial traditions was not absolute in effect. Lang (1997) tells us that some of the
grandmothers still remember the traditions of gender liminality and try to ensure that a Two-Spirit child is afforded the chance to claim the role within the community. Moreover, in Indigenous cultures that were not subject to colonisation, as in parts of Polynesia, gender liminality retains its cultural significance (Roen, 2001).

Two-Spirit people in postcolonial society may or may not seek SRS. They may also hold an ambivalent position in regard to queer theory and the trans umbrella. In queer theory, the emphasis on sexuality and gender liberation tends to obscure the primacy of race and culture that many Two-Spirit people espouse. Lang (1997) argues that for most Two-Spirit people, their identities as First Nations people are usually the primary element of self-understanding. Recent reclamation of the status of Two-Spirit, damaged as a result of Western imperial adventures and coercive colonisation, privileges ethnicity and cultural heritage. This cultural heritage is sufficient to allow for gender liminality in ways that do not require Western queer theory or a trans umbrella. That some First Nations Two-Spirit and gay and lesbian people are in agreement with queer theory and seek solidarity under a trans umbrella is not to be overlooked under postcolonial conditions. That racial oppression can erase gender liminality and force its limited reclamation under newer Western discourses, such as queer theory, points to the tangled ways in which intersectionality manifests itself. Whether through queer theory or the undoing of racist oppression of traditional Native ways, the challenge for trans studies and TG activists is how to make space for addressing racial subjugation, abandoning their hitherto singular critical focus on the Western sex/gender binary.

Interiority / Exteriority

The current situation of Two-Spirit people illustrates the impact of social/cultural change in a particular context, in conjunction with a personal identity that does not conform to the sex/gender binary. This brings us back to the discussion of the tensions between exteriority and interiority. Exteriority pertains to the social world, its navigation by transpeople and the barriers they encounter. Interiority refers to the phenomenology of the subject and sedimented psychodynamics. The latter include identity configurations and intersections, trauma, fictional

6 Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Trans-Spirit-Queer-Questioning-Intersex
goals, and so on. There has been a tendency among academics to focus on one or the other: psychoanalysis has focused on interiority to the exclusion of exteriority, while sociology has often focussed on exteriority to the exclusion of interiority, as Elliot (2004a) notes. For transpeople the body, in its flesh and blood corporeality, becomes the crux of these two dimensions. This is especially so for transsexuals, most of whom at one point or another must broach the issue of ‘passing’. The body, as matter, matters, as Fuss (1989) wryly notes and Butler (1993) theorises in responding to earlier misperceptions of her theory of *performativity*. How the body is socially read and how one feels about one’s own body meet at the primary intersection between interiority and exteriority, where gender is concerned. This division between interiority and exteriority points to a broad paradox that TS and TG people tend to face, as exemplified in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interiority</th>
<th>Exteriority</th>
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<tr>
<td>TS</td>
<td>wants to conform to binary</td>
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<tr>
<td>TG</td>
<td>does not want to conform to binary</td>
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*Table 2: Interiority/Exteriority*

Interiority pertains to the subjectivity of the gendered and transgendered self, the dimension psychoanalytic and other depth psychology discourses are concerned with. Exteriority refers to the location of gendered and transgendered subjects in the social world, their sociological and legal status, and so on. The issue of passing as male or female or the refusal to do so lies at the crux of this paradox. TS subjects generally want to pass (conform) in the social world in ways
that are congruent with their gendered subjectivity, and yet are often refused and repudiated (read as non-conformist or aberrant). TG subjects often do not want to pass (preferring to be non-conformist) and yet are frequently forced to conform to the sex/gender binary (as when having to choose a lavatory or to tick a male / female box on a government form).

The paradoxes between interiority/exteriority have produced some acrimonious debates within trans communities. While TG activists have called for an end to transsexual passing (the striving to be socially read as male or female) many TS people have rejected the call. Prosser (1998) suggests that TS desires to pass are predicated on matching “corporeal interiority (internal bodily sensations)” (p. 43) with external perceptions. Prosser argues that TS passing relieves the trauma of having been mis-sexed, it becomes “a step towards home” (p. 184). SRS and exogenous hormone treatments are not really far removed from general social passing, as they help to align the felt and visual body. Social passing (dress, gesture, gait, accoutrement, and so on) aligns with external expectations. That passing might, as TG activists charge, be detrimental in the long run to a project of rejecting sex roles is not the issue. The issue is that TS people seem to be targeted for hyper-performing a gender by stereotypical presentations; pejorative accounts such as Greer’s (1999) dismiss MtFs as “pantomime dames”. Such criticisms place an unfair burden on TS people, who need to undo the trauma of psychological homelessness by going home to a body that feels right, to be/long, to be in the right sex. Conformity to sex and gender norms may be necessary for TS people to heal from the trauma of having been mis-sexed, but their performance of the role may still appear as acting rather than being (in the performative sense of bringing something to pass).

Namaste (2000) defines passing thus: “Passing is about presenting yourself as a ‘real’ woman or a ‘real’ man - that is, as an individual whose ‘original’ sex is never suspected. Passing means hiding the fact that you are transsexual and/or transgendered” (p. 144). In a society rife with transphobia and trans repudiation, and in subjects already traumatised by having been mis-sexed, the desire to struggle for home and to not be detected (passing) seems reasonable, even if attempts at passing rely on prevailing stereotypes of how males and females should ideally look and act.
Some feminist theorists, such as Lorber (1994), call for a society in which men and women, as currently understood, would no longer exist. Many of us would like to see this happen. If such a change were to occur, perhaps then TS people might feel more comfortable with SRS/hormones alone, with no further need to ‘pass’. Why are TS people singled out and condemned for their passing, when natal males and females with a wide range of physical and behavioural characteristics pass in the world all the time, usually without any such criticism? The extent to which transpeople carry social stigma is an important consideration for the field of trans studies. 

Stigma is a term that goes back to ancient Greece, where criminals, slaves or traitors were marked in the flesh, branded in such a way as to carry a tarnished and immediately identifiable status that was always visible, so that they might be avoided (St. Claire, 1999). The trans subject, like those maimed Greek outcasts, often carries a visible social stigma. Transpeople remain branded, marked as identifiable, yet they are also curiously erased from the social world (e.g. denied legal documents), as Namaste’s (2000) ethnographic study of transpeople in Quebec reveals. In this instance they do not fit into any categories, and remain persona non grata.

Transpeople have historically been denied their selfhood. Faced with stigma, social barriers, and a widespread lack of understanding, many have turned to writing as a way of articulating their embodiment and associated struggles. Prosser (1998) analysed fifty autobiographies written by transpeople from 1954 to 1996. He asks, “Why do so many transsexuals write autobiographies?” (p. 103). The contested site of the body is a major factor. Prosser notes that in these autobiographies “being trapped in the wrong body” becomes a transsexual’s motivation for writing the self, the “wrong body” theme becomes their “most famous rhetorical trope” (p. 104). Those TS subjects who do not write their life story must nevertheless become master narrators of their own mis-sexed stories. The inevitable requirement to narrate the trauma of being mis-sexed from childhood onwards, in order to gain authorisation from psychologists/psychiatrists, enforces a need for self-narration. Narrating the body becomes a necessary skill, and self-narration is a key element in persuading the authorities to permit SRS. The interiority of memory, and the need to ex/press trauma in a cohesive storied form intersects with negotiating the exterior social world and its institutions. The self as an integrating story is re/called in pursuit of healing or repairing

the mis-sexed body, in appealing to the authorities for aid, for medical help in hope of achieving congruity. Success depends on the ability to convey “who they are”, in order to remain or become what they want to be. This was evident in the stories shared in the interviews conducted for this study.

Trans-scribing Theory and Interviews: The Structure of the Dissertation

This trans-disciplinary study is structured in three parts. Part I, of which this Introduction is the first chapter, proceeds in Chapter 2 to reflect on the thematic topics that emerged from my interviews with transpeople. Excerpts from the interviews are concentrated in Chapter 2, however, they also appear throughout the study when appropriate or when relevant, so as to ensure that transpeople themselves are substantially heard as they narrate the social and internalised barriers they experience. Chapter 3 goes on to situate the theoretical framework used to analyse the problem of transphobia/repudiation raised in the interviews, including further analysis of the concept of “foregrounding horizons” in trans-disciplinary research.

Part II opens with a discussion in Chapter 4 of the terms repudiation and trans/phobia. Transphobia assumes/insinuates that phobia is the sole motivation for social discrimination against transpeople. While acknowledging the colloquial importance of ‘transphobia’ in trans communities, and pragmatically making use of the term in the interviews, I point to the less universalistic and less causal implications of repudiation as a process that intersects the interior (intrapersonal) with the exterior (interpersonal/institutional). Repudiation often includes a phobic reaction, yet might also include ideological forms of rejection/negation of both identity and trans subjectivity of a non-phobic cast. Hence, repudiation complements the more common usage of transphobia and is not intended to replace the term. Examples of political repudiation and prevailing contradictions follow in Chapter 5, which provides a socio-political and clinical context to the myriad issues raised in the interviews. Chapter 6 replies to these varied political/clinical rejections of transpeople’s embodied claims by means of “talking back”, to refute the arguments of those who mis-comprehend trans subjectivity.
Finally, *Part III* pursues a more sustained analysis of the depth psychologies in order to “return the gaze” of the perpetrators of trans repudiation. These discourses are shown to be central to an understanding of the dynamics of unconscious repudiation. The notions of trauma, distress, conflict, defense, compensations, ideal strivings, unconscious fictions, and subjectivity in its (un)conscious aspects, are all part of trans experience. The challenges transpeople pose to the psychic sedimentation of the sex/gender binary in non-trans subjects requires a reconsideration of depth psychology for an adequate theorising of the complexity of trans repudiation. A return of the clinical gaze onto the discourses/narratives of the depth psychologies provides a means of reclaiming them to account for trans repudiation, without maintaining the conservative analyses of psychopathology that have commonly appeared in these discourses. Chapter 7 considers Freudian and Jungian concepts relevant to the issues that transpeople raise regarding transphobia and repudiation, while Chapter 8 looks at Adlerian theory and its usefulness to these debates. The study concludes in Chapter 9 by considering the subject/self debate. For transsexuals especially, the concept of *self*, implying integrity and cohesion, may be an effective healing fiction for those with mis-sexed bodies. In contrast, the perpetually fractured *subject* (as favoured by poststructuralism), which emphasises fluidity and multiplicity, is often more relevant to those TGs who are seeking to escape from the sexual binary. Repudiation denies both subjectivity and selfhood to transpeople, pointing to the need for profound change on both the social and psychological levels so that transpeople might be considered subjects/selves in their own right. In keeping with the feminist thrust of this work, I call for solidarity with trans struggle, for their emancipation from sex/gender oppression. This oppression might seem uniquely targeted towards them but it may, in fact, be part of something broader, something that affects all of us in differing and perhaps unthought ways.
CHAPTER 2:

THE INTERVIEWS

In representing salient points and storied fragments from my interviews with twenty transpeople, I begin with Dorothy Smith’s (1987; 1999) feminist contention that subjects are located in their everyday/night worlds as embodied beings under ruling relations. Her sociological contention is confirmed and illustrated by the narrative evidence I cite which reveals that navigating one’s life in the social world can be, and often is, traumatic for transpeople. The rules enforced are not just textual and institutional, they are also embodied, expressed in flesh and blood gestures and the dynamics of interpersonal relations. The gaze of repudiation directed at transpeople, which often leads to overt, punishing acts, is consonant with Foucault’s (1984) concept of panopticism:

The panopticon consists of a large courtyard, with a tower in the centre, surrounded by a series of buildings divided into levels and cells. In each cell there are two windows: one brings in light and the other faces the tower, where large observatory windows allow for the surveillance of the cells.

(p. 19)

There are few places in the world where transpeople, especially those who do not ‘pass’, can escape the panoptic gaze associated with surveillance and condemnation. In their narratives, the interviewees often evoked painful events that point to the dangers of potential and actual violence. Namaste’s (2000) definition of violence, as it pertains to transpeople’s lived experience, is one that is corroborated by the experiences shared in these interviews:

I use the term “violence” to refer to a variety of acts, mannerisms, and attitudes. It can range from verbal insults (e.g., calling someone a “fag”), to an invasion of personal space (e.g., throwing a bottle at a lesbian as she walks by), to intimidation and the threat of physical assault. “Violence” also includes the act of attacking someone’s body - whether through sexual assault (rape), beating, or with weapons like baseball bats, knives, or guns.

(p. 139)
There are a myriad possible motivations behind transphobia and other forms of trans repudiation. These range from sudden, irrational rage (reflecting serious unconscious conflicts) to more stable and conscious forms of enmity, such as those related to the defense of political ideologies that view transpeople as a threat to a cherished sex/gender binary. That transpeople often un/willingly stir-up and rouse defensive reactions, because of the (un)‘certainty’ of perpetrators’ own tenuous positions as sexed/gendered subjects, points to the phenomenon of projection, which causes stigmatised transpeople to be (unfortunate) targets. As will be discussed in Part III of this study, these defensive reactions may surface due to the triggering of unresolved Oedipal conflicts, unconscious misogyny, abjection, a sense of threat to a subject’s unconscious gendered fictions, or because the “freak” unwittingly throws light onto a perpetrator’s own shadow - surprising and disturbing what is disowned in the self. In many cases, what is roused is an unacknowledged sense of threat to the perpetrator’s own tenuous gender order (the ‘common sense’ sex/gender binary), which is circularly thrown back onto those who are ‘seen’ to disrupt or potentially annihilate it.

The gender ‘order’ is, I suggest, sedimented in the perpetrator’s unconscious yet does not originate there. The problem is ultimately generated in the socio/political fabric of the culture, since the symbolic order within (interiority) reflects something that is internalised from outside (exteriority). That acts of threat and intimidation are not limited to individual perpetrators, but often extend to groups (e.g. swarmings), suggests that the unconscious defences stirred-up in one individual can quickly spread to others, igniting a collective response that seeks to defend the ‘normal’ binary against a supposed threat. Ironically, such perpetrators do not recognise that it is the transperson who is vulnerable and actually threatened with real violence.

The following brief yet potent stories point to incidents that express the seriousness of the problem of repudiation and transphobia, the dangers that transpeople face.

1. Health Care

Darke and Cope (2002) write that, “perhaps nowhere is the brutality of institutionalised transphobia so apparent as in the treatment of transpeople by the health care system” (p. 37).
The narratives that transpeople shared with me further corroborate their observation. Yet Lawrence (2000) reports, in a review of extensive, multiple longitudinal studies of post-operative transsexuals, that SRS and hormonal treatments are an effective way to alleviate the embodied distress that transsexuals experience. Indeed, it is often disastrous for transpeople, should their somatic incongruency not be addressed by the health care system. In short, many transpeople desperately require the services of competent health care professionals to facilitate transitioning (if so desired) or to attend to unrelated health concerns or crises. While I have listened to narrative accounts of good health service rendered, where transpeople have been treated without apparent repudiation or discrimination, there remain far too many instances of traumatic encounters with health care service providers. The health care system mis/serves this population. As “phobogenic objects” transpeople often elicit fascination, desire/disgust, and repudiation. For example, Yossi (FtM) lives with multiple disabilities and often requires medical assistance. He finds that health care professionals often get “hung up” on his transness, regardless of his reason for consulting them.

Yossi: I’ve been to emergency rooms a lot and as soon as they open my chart and see that I’m trans, or if they ask me something and I reveal that I’m trans, they no longer treat what I’ve actually come in for -- they get all caught up in asking questions about my genitals: ‘Have you had genital surgery yet, or do you plan to?’ And you know when you’ve been hit by a car that’s not really the kind of questions you want to go through. So there’s been a number of incidents like that where my health has been pretty profoundly affected by discriminatory care. (entry# 36)

Yossi’s disclosure resonates a little too closely with a tragedy in the United States that Califia (2003) recounts:

...on August 7, 1995, Tyra Hunter was badly hurt in a hit-and-run automobile accident. An Emergency Medical Service (EMS) technician is reported to have jumped back from her body when he cut off her pants, to enable him to treat one of her injuries, and saw her penis... “That ain’t no bitch!” Treatment of Hunter’s injuries came to a halt while other technicians gawked at and ridiculed her... She died in a local hospital after being transported there. Over 2000 people attended her funeral on August 12th. (p. 233)

Yossi has also been denied essential and emergency medical services:
Yossi: My most recent experience was definitely after transition, I’d already had chest surgery. And had meningitis which wasn’t related to [another] disability at all but I had acute meningitis and went in for treatment and the doctor just refused to see me and said, “I don’t work on people like you, you’ll have to go see your GP.” And I didn’t know at that time that I had meningitis, I just had really severe neurological symptoms. So I went to see my GP and he kind of said, “Oh my god.” You know? “We need to get you some care right away.” And you know, that was quite a bit after transitioning. (entry# 38)

Even when health care service is not denied it can be accompanied by undue intrusiveness. In John’s (FtM) case, this is akin to what postcolonial theorists describe in their accounts of reactions to the ‘fascinating’, Oriental Other, the “phobogenic object” something of curiosity (Fanon, 1967, Hook, 2005, Staeuble, 2005). When asked if he had ever been made to feel uncomfortable as a result of his trans status, John replied:

John: Yes, mostly in the medical world. Certain doctors have made me feel a little uncomfortable... I think that it’s mainly due to ignorance. When I go to a doctor, I don’t necessarily want to answer irrelevant questions about my transsexuality. One doctor wanted to know if I took the ‘male position in sex’. I didn’t know what he was talking about; what did he mean by ‘the male position?’ It was an awkward, irrelevant question and I didn’t know how to respond to it (entries# 63-66)... I was just there to get my shot because my regular doctor was away, and he was asking me these odd questions... I didn’t quite know how to respond. It was awkward and I was irritated and annoyed. (entries# 70-72)

As authority figures, medical doctors can be intimidating to transpeople who, considering the complexities of sex reassignment surgery, need to feel comfortable in discussing future treatments. Like many TS people, Frank (FtM) has acquired considerable expertise on various SRS procedures, having spent years looking into his options. This amateur knowledge often exceeds the physician’s own professional knowledge, a common feature of TS people seeking surgery, as Namaste (2000) points out. Frank wishes to take an active and collaborative role in discussing the transitioning of his body with physicians, and was dismayed at the response he received:

Frank: Suddenly he’s an expert after just telling me he doesn’t know very much about [FtM surgery], and he just wants to go in there and cut this and cut that... when I hesitated he said “We don’t have time for this”, and then flat-out: “Forget it, I won’t help you. You don’t trust me so this won’t work.” I’ve known him for what, ten minutes?... yet still he refused to listen to any research or input I had for him. Now I don’t know if
that’s just doctor arrogance or if it was because I was trans. I wouldn’t have allowed him to touch me after that, no way he’s coming anywhere near me with a sharp instrument, but yes, he refused me because I questioned the need for the surgery he wanted to perform. Jeez, if his privates were on the chopping block, I bet he’d have some questions! He was so appallingly unprofessional in his tone towards me, apart from his defensiveness and lack of preparation. He had no info on me at all, even though it had been sent weeks before by two separate doctors, so there was more time needed to make sure he knew my radiation history, which ties in nicely with the triple-booking he had going on... No wonder he wasn’t thrilled to meet me, time-consuming and complicated and uncommon. That’s why he was so bugged about me taking more than my allotted 15 minutes, literally telling me three times that I had to think of the other patients [waiting outside].

(entries# 88-90)

Some interviewees expressed their frustration at the seeming impossibility of accessing necessary health services. Sabrina (MtF) told me about her difficulty in finding a gynaecologist:

Sabrina: I’m trying to find a gynaecologist, preferably female, and most of the ones I’ve approached have been women and they’re just like, “No, we don’t want you as a patient”. My partner’s experienced the same thing... they’re just like, “We don’t want you as a patient, we’re not accepting new patients.” ... I eventually found a male gynaecologist [whom I did not initially disclose my trans status to]. When he examined me, he was totally fine, it was just a surprise when he didn’t find any uterus. You know, he said, “I’d never have known.”

(entries# 119-122)

John has also experienced difficulty with a gynaecologist who dismissed his gendered subjectivity:

John: I needed to see a gynecologist one time very early on in my transition. The visit was fine, but during the follow-up with my GP, I saw the letter she wrote to him about me. I was referred to as “she, she, she, young woman, female”. I felt very angry about that.

(entry# 74)

Even when transpeople can access the specialist that they need, they may very well be subject to repudiation. The reluctance to see Sabrina or the refusal to use John’s correct pronoun may suggest that these medical practitioners doubt the authenticity of the trans status claimed. When Tami (MtF) was asked what barriers she faced before transitioning, she replied that the most difficult was “having the health care providers believe me” (entry# 80).
Jenny (MtF) speaks of her frustration in finding a surgeon willing to perform an orchiectomy (removal of the testes), and in finding a psychologist:

Jenny: It’s that anyone could do it. I’m sure even a dentist could do it, it’s just so silly… women can get hysterectomies easier than I can get an orchiectomy. And hysterectomy’s a dangerous operation… they can’t find anyone. They’re emailing all the hospitals to see if they can get anyone to do it. I just keep bothering them every month or two… And, finding a psychologist too, trying to find a psychologist to write your [authorisation] letters. There’s only one in BC [who will].

(entries# 104, 106, 108, and 110)

Jeb (FtM) has also experienced problems finding a psychologist/psychiatrist (either of which may write letters of consent to pursue SRS and hormone treatments). He begins by telling me about his initial frustrations with his GP:

Jeb: … there was absolutely zero knowledge when I went to my GP, and after six months I still couldn’t get any info out of her. I know now that the information isn’t so hard to find but she wouldn’t do it. My other gripe would be the lack of options, like to get on testosterone you need to go to a psychiatrist, and you need to go to an endocrinologist who will okay you for that, right? And there was one psychiatrist that I could go to [in another city] … which is hard when you’re unemployed or low-income, and it was awful and he and I had stylistic differences (laughter) and I had no other options. That’s the guy I had to see even if I couldn’t stand him… I was supposed to go back again and I flat out refused.

(entries# 98, 100, and 102)

Jeb’s narrative is consistent with Namaste’s (2000) study which shows the considerable dissatisfaction that transsexuals often express towards psychological/psychiatric service providers. She also found, citing a separate study, that physicians (such as GPs) are often woefully under-prepared and under-trained to deal with the complex health needs of transsexuals.

Some of those interviewed had a better impression, like Kimberly (MtF), who evokes her positive experience at a Gender Clinic: “For me it was a very good experience and I can’t say enough about the people I encountered there, the doctors [including the psychiatrists]” (entry# 10).
Permissiveness, or immediate affirmative acceptance for referral to SRS from gatekeepers (contrary to Harry Benjamin International Standards\(^8\)), is not necessarily the answer to all transpeople’s embodied distress. While delays and diagnostic probing may very well be an irritant to those seeking SRS, the diagnostic process tries to attend to those who may presently want SRS but might come to regret transition later in life. In Britain, Batty (2004) interviewed some of those among the minority of SRS recipients who regret their transition. These people blame psychiatry and inadequate medical diagnostic procedures for recommending SRS too quickly or even inappropriately, often with devastating consequences. Narratives of regret include examples of returning to living in the natal sex or feeling stuck between sexes in a way that leads to distress. While longitudinal studies consistently demonstrate that SRS leads to alleviation for most with a GID diagnosis (Pfafflin, 1992), conflicting data report that between 1 and 18% of recipients later regret transitioning (Batty, 2004). It is not clear if there are those within this group who may have ignored the advice of physicians not to pursue SRS, for example, by going abroad for surgeries to jurisdictions where authorisation requirements are less stringent. Giving transpeople the green light, amber light, or red light is an expression of social power that requires further research. Yet what happens when health care professionals push transgendered people to go into full transitional directions, to press for a ‘green light’ for SRS or hormones, when this is not necessarily the person’s present desire, and an ‘amber light’ approach might be more appropriate? Alex’s (FtM) narrative deals with this controversial issue:

Alex: I did go to the clinic, yeah. And I worked with one person there, and I talked to her, which did not work for me. I went in saying “I’m not sure what’s up, I’ve got gender issues going on, I want some help and support in figuring things out, I don’t know whether I want to go on hormones or not, I don’t want surgery at this point in time, and whatever path I choose, I want to do things very slowly”. At our third or fourth meeting, she said I was clearly transsexual and suggested that she put me on the list to see the endocrinologist, since it took ‘a long time’ to get in to see them – about 3 or 4 months. I told her that I wasn’t interested in going that route right then, and she again suggested that I go on the waitlist, but I was so not ready to even consider hormones – that wasn’t a pressing issue at all at the time – I just wanted some support in trying to sort things out and figure out what my options were and discuss my other concerns related to being trans, to become comfortable with myself and OK about myself. Having her ‘diagnose’

\(^8\) The Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association (HBIGDA) first drafted standards of care and protocol for the administration of hormones and SRS in 1979. These standards are widely applied at Gender Clinics and recommend the controversial real life test, requiring applicants for SRS to live in their desired sex full time for 1-2 years (depending on jurisdiction) (see: Israel and Tarver, 1997, for a comprehensive discussion).
me as transsexual was a clear sign to me that she wasn’t paying much attention to who I was and what I needed to look at. I certainly didn’t think of myself as TS - and still don’t – I identify as TG. This pressure really turned me off the clinic and wasn’t at all useful for me. So then I sort of ran away from the clinic for a few months and then, when more crises came up and I needed some support, I heard from some pals that there was a new psychiatrist there and she seemed to be really good, so I called her up to see if I could switch... and saw her and that worked out really well for me.  

(entry# 8)

This example reveals a paradox in trans healthcare: of refusing service to those who desire SRS (e.g. those TS applicants who are also sex trade workers) while pushing others towards an undesired place of fixed-ness, such as Alex’s experience of being wrongly classified as TS, as ‘solely male in a female body’. Eventually, Alex did start taking what he describes as “low dose hormones”, but with hesitations:

Alex: When I went on low-dose T, I went on the transdermal patches, and I was only the second person at the clinic to use the patches, so you also have to be OK to an extent with not knowing what to expect, or with being a bit of a guinea pig. There’s a lot less known about the health risks of doing low-dose hormones, or hormones for long periods of time without removing gonads.  

(entry# 78)

Cromwell (1997) cites the medical establishment’s repudiation of TG indeterminacy, a “refusal to acknowledge individuals who maintain an intermediate status” (p. 133). This refusal extends to class discrimination, as Namaste (2000) points out. She found that refugees who do not have access to Canada’s health care system, sex trade workers, and intravenous drug users often encounter discrimination by the health care system, that tends to “erase” these transpeople. This frequently forces them to obtain hormones from the street. Namaste points out the dangers in unsupervised hormone use:

Hormones can have serious side effects, including nausea, vomiting, headaches, mood swings, blood clots, liver damage, heart and lung complications, and problems with blood circulation and veins (phlebitis). For these reasons, it is important that individuals who take hormones be monitored regularly by a physician.  

(p. 160)

Another problem with the health care system is its inaccessibility to low income people. In BC, the context in which these interviews were conducted, there is no longer a Gender Clinic, since austerity cuts levied by provincial government cutbacks have closed down the one that did exist.
There are places where transpeople can go for advocacy or referrals, yet there is ambiguity on which surgical procedures will be covered by the public health insurance program. This is often the cause of anxiety. De-listing SRS as a procedure that can be funded is a policy issue with concrete impacts on transpeople’s everyday/night worlds and embodied lives. The neo-liberal favouring of private, consumer models of health care exacerbates class divisions that privilege those with the economic ability to pay for private services. In Ontario, the election of a neo-liberal government in 1995 led to a fairly swift de-listing of SRS as a publicly funded procedure (Namaste, 2000). The closing of gender clinics in the USA, such as the Johns Hopkins Clinic, led to privatisation, and the development of consumer niche markets for private plastic surgeons (Meyerowitz, 2002). For wealthy American transsexuals, Meyerowitz reports that it “opened the gates” (p. 273), making it easier for those with economic means to obtain SRS in places such as Trinidad, Colorado, where many Americans (and those Canadians wishing to by-pass the public system) travel to obtain SRS.

Burnham (1999) found, in her research on MtFs, that electrolysis was viewed as slightly more important than SRS and that income was cited by respondents as a principal barrier in accessing electrolysis. She also found, in discussions with FtMs, that the cost of phalloplasty and metoidioplasty was generally beyond reach since in ‘liberal’ BC\(^9\) these procedures are not covered under the public health insurance program. Moreover, while (limited) mammoplasty is listed as a publicly insurable health service in BC (depending on the determination of ‘inadequate breast size’ of those MtFs having taken sufficient hormone therapy), chest contouring surgery or second stage mastectomy for FtMs are not covered. Burnham concludes that a holistic approach to health care, one that comprehensively accommodates transpeople’s health needs, should be implemented. It strikes me as unreasonable that some MtFs can access publicly funded breast enhancement surgery while FtMs are denied essential chest contouring surgery.

Simply recognising insufficiencies in trans health care begs a number of questions. How many transpeople have been coerced into the sex or pornography trades to finance the treatments they
require to heal the mis-sexed body? How many transpeople have contracted HIV/AIDS as a result of systematic repudiations? Namaste (2000) reports that levels of HIV seroprevalence, especially among transwomen, are “astronomical” (p. 237).

Trans repudiation in the health care system leaves lingering and often traumatic effects on transpeople. Yossi’s comments summarise the outcome of this category of repudiation:

Yossi: When you experience [transphobia] over and over again it makes you very reluctant to seek care, because you feel like you’re crazy and then you’re worried that they’re writing in your chart that you’re just malingering or making it up or that you’re cracked basically... I don’t go for medical care unless I’m on my death bed.

(entry# 47)

Public gender clinics may be useful for introducing and referring patients to trans positive physicians. However, the public gender clinic model, while addressing class issues of accessibility, is not a panacea. Namaste (2000) found that many loathed their experiences at the gender clinics, experiencing systematic sexism in the diagnostic process, based on heteronormative expectations and sexist stereotyping. Moreover, the requirement of many gender clinics, that participants complete a ‘real life test’ of performing as the desired gender for up to two years prior to being prescribed hormones, places transpeople in jeopardy of physical and verbal abuse owing to their prolonged incongruous status.

2. Lavatories / Change Rooms

The topic of lavatory use frequently emerged as questions arose spontaneously in dialogue. Especially for TG people and TS people in the midst of transition, lavatories often represent aspects of the sex/gender binary that foreclose in-between possibilities. Public toilets labelled ‘men’ or ‘women’ force people into a choice, and for transpeople into a situation where they may be seen as making the wrong choice. This appears either as ridiculous (embarrassing/funny to observers) or a threat (and therefore dangerous). For most gender

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9 In neighbouring, conservative Alberta, phalloplasty is publicly insurable as a medical procedure to qualifying, resident FtMs. British Columbians who travel to Alberta for these procedures must, however, pay the full cost for the procedure themselves (between $40 - 50,000).
congruent people, visiting a public toilet is an unproblematic exercise but for transpeople, especially those who do not easily pass according to standard stereotypes, public lavatory use can be irksome, problematic, or even a nightmare.

Kimberly (MtF): I once remember going window shopping years ago. They close the mall about six o’clock in the evening but they keep the mall itself open so you could walk around … I remember going out wandering around and looking in the shops and then I had to go to the washroom. So, I went to the (women’s) washroom and I didn’t think there was really anyone in there. I went into the cubicle, then I heard some voices and a group of women came in, so I was sort of scared and thought I would wait until they left so that no one notices me. I thought they had left, I heard the door close and the voices stop, so I left the cubicle but there was still one woman putting lipstick on in the mirror. I looked at her and got kind of scared so I turned around and went back in the cubicle. I thought, “I’ll wait ‘til she goes”, so she did, and I thought I’d give it a couple more minutes. My heart was pounding, and I thought, “I’ve got to get out of here”… suddenly I hear all of these voices and walkie-talkies, I thought, “Oh my god, my life is over.” So they come banging on the cubicle door… [pause]… it was a real tough decision to open that latch because I knew that as soon as I opened the latch it was game over. So I can remember sliding that latch and the door opening… and they grabbed me. There must have been eleven security guards surrounding me and grabbing me. Then they tried to put me in handcuffs, so they put my hands behind my back and I wouldn’t let them, so they started threatening me. They basically grabbed and dragged me to this room where I was questioned for about two hours. They ultimately decided that I wasn’t doing anything wrong. I remember my shoes had come off, and, I had a really nice expensive gold chain and that was lost in the struggle. (entry# 60)

Nick (TG – ‘FtM’) recalls the problem of ambiguity around lavatories from childhood:

Nick: Yeah, my mom used to say that I was a tomboy all the time and for some reason she didn’t seem to mind it and my brother was a guy kind of a boy, and my sister was femmy. People would mistakenly buzz me into the boy’s bathrooms in public malls and that kind of thing. (entry# 12)

When asked if he has experienced any problems over this more recently, Nick responded:

Nick: Yes, in women’s washrooms. I usually go in the men’s washrooms and sometimes that’s hard too, because then I really get hit on by gay men… I have a certain look and energy in my face that is often mistook as cruising, but what it is, is I’m checking out the scene, there’s a security concern for me because I’m trans. I have to be aware of where everything is, so I just cruise the joint quickly and often …(laughter)… I could get lucky so much with men! … Often they’re there outside the door and I know how everything works and I just smile and keep going; and then in the women’s washroom I get all kinds
of looks like, ‘are you in the right washroom?’ They always look at the door again to make sure they’re going into the right room. Sometimes I just take my jacket off and again try to show whatever female parts I have, but for years now I just go in and let them deal with it, sometimes they even say something. [often] they’ll just look... they’re uncomfortable. They think I’m a guy and they feel uncomfortable and if I was [them] maybe I would too... you don’t know, this guy might be a creep. (entry# 49)

Public washrooms do not allow people like Nick to maintain ambivalence regarding their gender, there is no third space, other than the disability facility that may or may not be available. Nick mentioned that he often uses the disability washroom when it is available. It is ironic, as will be discussed later, that many transpeople are shunted into the disabled (i.e. “abnormal”) category, when they are striving for a semblance of ‘normality’.

A transitioning FtM transsexual relays his difficulty in this arena:

Jeb: I’ve looked this way [in-between] for years and I’ve had lots of stuff happen, especially around washrooms... all the time. You walk into the women’s room and they tell you, “you’re in the wrong one”. But I generally go into women’s rooms because I don’t feel as threatened by women as by men.

Chris: What happens when you go in the men’s washroom?

Jeb: There’s only been one time when I’ve been ‘caught’ and the guy just gave me a look and I turned around and walked right out, but every other time I usually wait until I think it’s pretty dead in there and I go in and out as fast as I can... In the women’s room people will actually stop and tell you, “Get out.” They’ll say, “You’re in the wrong room”; and then everybody stops to look you over. Stuff like that has happened more times than I can count. I’ve had people hold up a hand as I go in and I’ll usually just ignore them, or else I’ve had people tell me I’m in the wrong room, and I say, “No, I’m not” and just keep doing my thing. (entries# 64-66)

Jeb also resorts to using the disability washroom, even if it is far away, and suggests that an unlabelled single occupancy facility should always be available.

Jeb: ...some people really need to have a women’s room and a men’s room for their comfort and that’s fine with me, but I think there needs to be some that are gender-neutral. (entry# 72)

Yossi believes that washrooms are a bigger issue for MtFs:
Yossi: I experienced the same things with a lot of trans people around bathrooms, getting people staring at you in the bathroom, getting really nervous that you’re in the bathroom. I think FtMs often have an easier time of it than trans women, because men often really don’t care, quite frankly. They’re not as attentive to other people and don’t really pay attention to other people the same way women do, so like many trans men I had an easier time than trans women who I knew were going through the process at the same time as me. (entry# 24)

Wynn (MtF) tries to avoid using lavatories outside of home altogether, if she can manage:

Wynn: Oh yeah, I’ve been using both washrooms. I’ve always been really uncomfortable in guys’ washrooms, it used to really drive me mental having to use them. I’ve been able to kind of avoid it... I’ll try and find one of those handicapped ones, or you end up going in the alley a lot... I avoid going to the bathroom a lot. Like at work I didn’t even know there’s a non-gendered staff washroom right by my office that I’m working at, so that was a huge relief... I was like not going to the bathroom, and it’s been really bad because one of the meds I’m on is a severe diuretic so that means you have to go to the bathroom all the time. I had to pee every twenty minutes. (laughter) for the first two weeks I was just getting used to it, so I was just staying at home. (entries# 114, 120, and 122)

Although fully transitioned, Patricia (MtF) still admits to hesitancy around using public lavatories:

Patricia: The odd time if it’s a really busy washroom I still get a little nervous because of my voice, and wonder what people are going to say, but I just do it anyway. For the longest time, when I first started transitioning, I would always find a bench outside the washroom and wait until I knew there was nobody in there and then go in and use the bathroom... the one good thing about women’s washrooms, everyone has their own stall, it’s not like a men’s washroom where you’re standing at a urinal. (entries# 142 and 144)

Alex (TG/FtM) recounts using a women’s washroom while dressed like a man:

Alex: There’ve been lots of times that washrooms have been a challenge even before I started identifying as trans, much less when I was on T [testosterone]. One time I was in the [department store] downtown - this was before I’d started on hormones - I was wearing men’s clothes all the time, and I’m 5’10, so people often read me as a guy at first glance. At the [store], the women’s washroom on the fifth floor is down at the end of a long corridor. Usually that washroom isn’t that busy, so it tended to be one that I headed for when I was downtown. One time as I was going in, this woman was coming out and she physically blocked my path – I moved from one side to the other, and she stepped right in front of me each time, until I said “excuse me” and as I wasn’t on T, the voice matched the washroom, and then she apologized and got all flustered. But this kind of
thing happened fairly regularly, that people would think or tell me that I was in the wrong washroom.

(Entries# 85-86)

Keenan (FtM) assumed that he would be safer using the lavatory in a lesbian bar:

Keenan: When I used the men’s washroom I was targeted and harassed by men. One time some male skinheads looked over the washroom stall while I was in there and they demanded to know ‘what I was’. I was also harassed by lesbians when I used the women’s washroom, ‘cuz I was still in the two-year real life test and washrooms are such a hard space to negotiate. I thought at that time it would be easier to just go into the women’s. After that, if I was out and had to use the washroom, I just avoided it altogether, it was easier to just go out and relieve myself in the alley. (Entry# 14)

On another occasion, Keenan was assaulted while using a lavatory in a queer bar:

Keenan: I was at a bar and I got sick so I went to the woman’s washroom and vomited. A woman came into the bathroom and started yelling at me and she kicked me. She went and got the manager and had me thrown out of the bar for one night. (Entry# 16)

Keenan’s experience is not unique. In the case of Sheridan v. Sanctuary Investments Ltd. [1998] a transwoman in the process of transition was barred entry to a gay and lesbian night club due to previous complaints about her use of that club’s women’s washroom. The British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal found in her favour:

... the woman had been discriminated against on the basis of sex and disability and that the owner of the club had failed in his duty to accommodate her needs... the discomfort, or preference, of other patrons is not a defense for discrimination.”

(as cited in Darke and Cope, 2002, p. 58)

The potential violence that transpeople face in using lavatories was dramatised in the film Better than Chocolate (Wheeler and McGowan, 1999). The film portrays a trans woman who is brutally assaulted for using a lavatory in a lesbian bar. In the midst of the assault, two other lesbians intervene, stop the assault and vigorously defend the injured trans woman’s right to use the women’s washroom. That transpeople are not necessarily safe in Lesbian and Gay spaces will be discussed in more detail later. These stories of problems arising from lavatory use pinpoint the
paradox/tension at the heart of TS/TG repudiation. Most of the time, transpeople cannot escape the binary: they have to choose. This situation extends to similar contexts, like changing rooms:

Frank: I was in the gym one day with my buddy who was a power lifter since before he transitioned, he had been at that gym years ago but he hadn’t been back since he transitioned... I don’t think he was even on hormones yet, but he certainly looked like a man, was a completely huge power lifter, and lived as a man but he had no beard or anything. We were in the gym, or in the locker room, just finishing up and some guy that was bigger than both of us came in and confronted him. I was safe because I had the beard but I hadn’t had any of the surgeries, but I had all my clothes on. This guy came in and confronted my friend and said, “What the ‘f’ are you doing in here?” And my friend looked at him and said, “You don’t know what you’re talking about.” He didn’t escalate the situation but we were both on the spot. I mean we were both looking up at this giant and he’s angry. And he says, “You’re not supposed to be in here, you go to the other one.” And my friend said, “No, you don’t know what you’re talking about.” Anyway my friend left the changing room and I finished putting my shoes on and the guy said to me, “That guy’s a chick.” And I said, “I think you got the wrong person.” Then the guy went yelling up the stairs to the proprietors of the gym: “See that guy over there, he’s not a guy, he’s a chick, I know him from before.” I stayed quiet. I talked to my buddy later and he said he would have done the same thing. But it was really rattling, he never went back to that gym.

(entry# 92)

Ultimately, it is about being perceived as the wrong person, with no right location, because transness poses problems of re-cognition.

3. Intimate Others

According to both sociology and psychology, the family (whether the Western nuclear family or other forms of collectivist family) undoubtedly has a powerful influence on identity formation and one’s developing sense of self. Nuttbrock (2002) speaks of the role that parents play in affirming gender identity as “critically important” (p. 5). In fact, in a society governed under the law of the binary, parents and siblings are usually the first of the many gender police to which we are generally subjected. Hence, it is unsurprising that transpeople often, though not universally, carry memories of unfortunate experiences with their families. In Chapter 7, I outline the psychodynamics of parent/child relations in reference to Freudian theory, suggesting that the foundations of infancy and childhood create developmental features that are sedimented in the psyche. These dynamics are generally unconscious, with concepts such as repression being
central in understanding some aspects of many transpeople’s lives. Indeed, for some transpeople, the inter/intrapersonal bonds of loyalty that they may hold with their families are among the initial sources of repressing their transness, as Trevor (FtM) explains:

Trevor: My mother passed away and that was a gatekeeper kind of relationship, so when she was gone it was kinda safe to proceed. I had lived out my promise to myself that I had made in my 20s, that I’m not going to hurt my parents by being who I am, and I realised that really that promise was to my mother, though I didn’t really keep that promise to my father. Two weeks after her memorial service I went to my GP and got my referral to the gender clinic. So it all happened very quickly. (entry# 16)

For families, there may be a sense of loss when their daughter or son, sister or brother, is no more the person they thought they were, that person is gone. Trevor explains his father’s reactions, complicated by his deepening dementia:

Trevor: My father was actually in the early stages of Alzheimer’s but didn’t know it. And he’s always somebody who never paid attention anyway. So I had no subtle messages with my father, I said, “Dad I have something to tell you and I want you to pay attention”. So I told him out straight: “I’m changing my sex, I’m going to be a man, this is my new name”. He wasn’t too sure, it was a different Welsh name than what he had chosen - so ya that was fine. He was already slipping into dementia, so he would grasp any external cues to keep what he could together, he was talking to a man, so then I was a man. But on another level he would sometimes ask where I was by my old name. Because he hadn’t seen her for a while, where was she and why didn’t she come to see him. And I would say, well I’m the person who comes now, and she really loves you and misses you, but she won’t be able to come and visit, I’m the person who comes now. Yet on another level he knew exactly who I was because he used my childhood nickname right up until the end. He went quite deeply into dementia and right up until the latest point would use my nickname, until he couldn’t speak anymore. So I knew on some deep level he knew who I was and that he grasped it.10 (entries# 25-26)

Many of the transpeople that I interviewed disclosed the difficulties their families had with their transness:

Jamie-Lee: ...my father... he really had his heart set that I was a male, right? And my sister too, she had difficulties because she’d always thought she’d had this brother, you know, so it was difficult I think for everyone. (entry# 38)

10 This example seems to be consistent with Adler’s (1956) contention that the unconscious is present in the conscious which can aid, for a time, even those with serious degenerative diseases of the brain (see Chapter 9).
Persistent coercion to be the gender assigned at birth was often recalled by the interviewees:

Roz (MtF): I was always most comfortable at school playing with the girls and doing all of that stuff, you know I watched all of that rough and tumble and I wasn’t [into] the guns and the cowboys and Indians and all of that. I was more into playing house and shop with the girls, and again at some point, age seven maybe, was strongly discouraged from that. So I think there were all the indicators and triggers there, from my folks, that they suspected that I was a gay man. And so I found that my life was a series of, “Oh well we’re sending you away to the Y camp.” Or, “We’re sending you here, we’ve enrolled you in Cub Scouts. We’ve registered you in this.” And all of these things to make a man out of me, kind of thing, you know? (entry# 12)

Roz remembers her father’s homophobic remarks:

Roz: And of course my dad was always making these comments, my father has a history in policing and he was always saying, “We got a call last night where somebody rolled another queer, those damn fags.” You know, so all these derogatory remarks about the LGBT community. (entry# 14)

Roz recognised the impossibility of being who she was while living in her father’s house. Her solution was to repress and sublimate her trans feelings into other activities:

Roz: It was just [because of] the tone and the language that he used that I thought, “This is something he’s not going to get, and my life will be a living hell if I ever try to do this now, so I’m just going to bottle it, push it away and deal with it later”. Then I found out years later that at that particular time [a person with] gender dysphoria was still classified as someone that would have to be committed to a mental institute and be treated with electroshock aversion therapy. So it was not the sort of thing I wanted to do as a sixteen-year-old, and I found my freedom at that time in swimming and water polo. (entry# 36)

For some transpeople, adolescence is recalled as a particularly awful time. Some were no longer able to bear living with their families. Others found the whole experience, family, school and so on, alienating. They did not see themselves or the pain of incongruency reflected in the world around them. While Frank did not disparage his family experiences, he nevertheless could not bear to be located in a milieu that consistently refused to confirm, mirror, or assist him in validating his pain. He left home at a very early age:
Frank: Again, there wasn’t any language for it but the other kids could tell I was ‘different’, and I ended up just leaving school, I couldn’t see myself in anyone else around me. Leaving my education and leaving my family, they weren’t a bad family, there was just… I was so buried in the shame. If nobody tells a child otherwise, I think it’s very typical of the child to figure that it’s all about them. That there really is something to be ashamed of, to be frightened of, and I started to act out in small ways, in very irritating ways, and I began to feel that I was more trouble than I was worth, so I just left. It was the sixties and I just left. I stuck my thumb out and I was gone for years and years and years. It’s not like, as a twelve-year-old, I wanted to leave the security and the safety and the warmth of my family, but the angst inside was too great. If I had known, if anyone had known, that there could be something like gender dysphoria that may be going on… I mean when I first saw that shrink’s office [at the gender clinic] - there was a corner devoted to children’s toys, he works with kids that have got gender issues, to explore and observe and let the child express. Um, you know I can’t help but believe that if something like that had been available to me that it would’ve given me a whole other life, and it certainly would have spared my parents a whole lot of agony. (entry# 33)

Tami also left home, unable to bear the constant violence that she was subject to: “I was abused a lot – [pause] - beat up by my brothers” (entry# 54).

Families are often highly conflictual spaces where interiority and exteriority intersect. Conflictual feelings of loyalty, love, rage and anger mixed together create a potent turmoil in subjectivity. In some cases, the family situation can be so traumatic that severance is the only way to survive. In other cases there simply is no family connection any more of which to speak. Family relations may also become fragmented as a result of the decision to transition. In John’s case, the fundamentalist Christian background celebrated by his family is not easy to reconcile with his transsexualism. He describes his current relationship with his parents:

John: It’s better now. I don’t think they’ll ever pronounce blessing on it, but they have come to a kind of acceptance. We have all moved to a different place with this, and I think it continues to evolve. We can talk and visit on holidays. Sometimes they even use my correct name, if not my correct pronoun. My mother is much more able to put things aside and relate as one human to another. She can express love and affection; she can hug me and we can talk. But my father and I are still a little bit uncomfortable. I think we’re still working out our relationship. We’re still in process. (entry# 38)
John’s comment resonates with Kristeva’s (1982) idea of the subject in process/on trial (see Chapter 7). In this case, other family members are also on trial, and processing a new situation. The panoptic judgmental gaze is one that John and his family continue to negotiate and work on, their relationship is in process. That he is able to navigate the complex religious issues that shade the dynamics of his family relations remains a testament of hope. Transpeople are not always subject to permanent condemnation for having the courage to create their selves, to heal/repair their mis-sexed bodies. Adler’s (1998/1938) comment that “everything can be something else as well” (p. 18) suggests that even the most difficult tensions can, in some cases, be transcended.

Transpeople also challenge the identities of family members, affecting their self-definition as parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and siblings. “I am a father to a daughter” transitions to: “I am (now) a father to a son”, and so on. A deeper challenge is posed by TG people since present language seems inadequate to the task. Family members may wonder if they are to blame by not detecting that their child was mis-sexed and trying to prevent or solve it in some way.

Transpeople may also lose friends and social groups as a result of their coming out and transitioning. For some, especially those estranged or living far away from their families, losing social groups increases the probability of loneliness, alienation, or ostracization that can adversely affect mental health. Some will be able to make new friends, others may be too shy, or afraid of further rejection. I asked Trevor what happened to him after he came out as trans:

Trevor: It was very sad and there was grieving over it. And for quite a while it didn’t sink in, I couldn’t believe it. And there were one or two lesbian friends, one said very clearly to me, “You’re not the way you used to be, I can’t talk to you anymore”, and that was a loss. I really enjoyed her, we used to have really good talks. (entries# 85-86)

More research is needed into the extent of transpeople’s loss of family, friends, and social groups, and the effects that these losses have on their lived experience and mental health.
4. Public Institutions: Employment, Education, and other Public Services

Employment

Darke and Cope (2002) reported that 40% of 152 transpeople sampled were unemployed in Canada, despite 71% having at least two years of post-secondary education. They also note that over 70% had “low” income as measured by standard Canadian indexes. Perhaps as a consequence, Goldberg (2002) points out that a significant number of transpeople (mostly, but not exclusively MtFs) work full or part-time in the sex trade. Many transpeople find their employment prospects curtailed by trans repudiation with few career/work options available. One study Goldberg cites, for example, shows that 36% of transpeople in Ontario were at one point employed in the sex trade. This can be a dangerous profession that places transpeople at (further) risk. Thus, in her account of having been a sex trade worker over a twenty year period in Canada, trans woman Alexandra Highcrest (1997) argues for the legalisation of prostitution (a trade that helped pay her way through university). Other transpeople have had little or no work experience, which can be attributed to trans repudiation in the workplace (a factor that limits their ability to endure a job), or the refusal of employers to hire transpeople in the first place. Several narratives drawn from my interviews confirm the persistence of this problem and its concrete social and psychic effects.

Dean (FtM) describes his former job and how it came to an end:

Dean: I worked at a drug and alcohol counselling centre for women, and my boss at the time was supposedly a really good friend of mine, and I told her that I wanted to get into the gender clinic to see if I could get on hormones, at which point she strongly encouraged me to leave my job. This was even before taking hormones … [I didn’t want to] make a big stink about it... so I just left… That’s discrimination, I don’t care what you call it. (entry# 64)

Roz also had a difficult time as a police officer but managed to retain her job while she transitioned. Our dialogue draws attention to the struggles she endured:
Roz: ...the officer in charge called me into his office and said, “Thanks for all the great work you’ve done and while you’re here, there’s this weird rumour going around the building.” At that point I just said, “Well the rumour is true, I’m transsexual, I’m waiting for a placement with the gender clinic.” ... Immediately there were a couple of police officers who said, “I refuse to work with the freak”... [some] officers phoned me at home privately to offer their support but said, “We cannot be seen publicly to be supporting you, we don’t have a union and it would cost us a promotion or our jobs.” One officer even suggested that I should be relieved of my weapon and that I might be a danger to myself or to others, so I was ordered to go and have a psychiatric evaluation and I went and saw one of the police department psychiatrists and after about forty minutes she said, “I’m going to send a report to the department letting them know that you’re stable, you’re fine, that there’s nothing wrong with you here, that you’re handling this well.” ... and yet there was one police officer who came to me and said, “Why don’t you retire, why don’t you resign, why don’t you go and get a job in another part of the city somewhere because you’re making people here really uncomfortable.” ... [then] somebody leaked this to the press. People would see me, I would be on the elevator and see me and refuse to get on (“Oh I forgot something, or I forgot this or I forgot that”) ... Or, if I got on the elevator they would get off, or if I was walking down the hallway they would be walking towards me and all of a sudden detour into a room or whatever. I mean I just knew, once it was so obvious, a guy walked into a broom closet, saw an open door and walked into a broom closet ... there was ongoing stuff where I felt uncomfortable, I felt alienated, I felt isolated. Clearly there were an awful lot of people that did support, you know there were the women at the credit union, I walked in there one day and they said, “Well this is very brave what you are doing and we support it one hundred percent and if there’s anything we can do to support you we will.” A lot of the female staff in the Communications Centre, the same thing. So there was a lot of support that was there.

Roz’s experience contrasts with that of a Toronto police officer who spent 26 years on the force. In a Human Rights complaint to the Province of Ontario, Bonnie Henderson (who went public with her complaint) alleges she experienced taunts and bigotry, and in one case was stalked by another member of the force. Unable to bear the generally transphobic culture of policing, she opted for early retirement and subsequently filed a complaint of discrimination (Demara, 2004). Roz also endured an ostracism that, considering the nature of policing, potentially threatened her safety:

Roz: There were times where I was going to work or walking down to the parking lot with somebody... people, other officers, would talk to whoever I was with, yet I was treated as if I wasn’t there. So I just got to a place where I felt unsafe and concerned that in a jam there were certain people who wouldn’t show up, or they would respond slowly to that complaint, and so I transferred out and worked instead at our Diversity Relations unit.

(Entries# 65-69)
Roz began facilitating diversity trainings with other police officers. She recalls how difficult the work could be:

Roz: One of the members wanted to know if it was workplace harassment, if he could be charged under the discipline code for refusing to work with me or work around me because he found the whole thing disgusting and against God. So there have been situations like that. (entry# 79)

Wynn also describes the difficulties she experienced while transitioning on one of her jobs (which she left shortly afterwards):

Wynn: ...the boss guys that would refuse to use my new name and go out of their way to use masculine pronouns but do it in a way, like they were trying to be friendly, like they were trying to get me to be a guy or something. I think more than anything they were uncomfortable with it. (entry# 28)

Like Wynn, Jeb finds it difficult working while in the midst of transitioning. The ambiguity of gender presentation in this in-between state, and the difficulty coming-out as trans to co-workers, prompted him to quit his job at a supermarket:

Jeb: My co-workers were really homophobic and really racist, and there were a lot of awful things that happened in there. I dealt with a lot of stuff just being queer in there... I reported a lot of things. But there were a lot of things that happened that I couldn’t really report, and I just couldn’t handle coming out there. They knew I was queer but not trans. They barely handled my being a lesbian, there really was not a lot of understanding and not a lot of education and just the thought of having to go through it all over again as trans tired me out and I ended up leaving mostly because of that. There were too many people that I would have had to come out to and it would have been ongoing and never ending; so I just got out of there. We had three or four trans customers that came in and I’d heard some pretty awful things employees said. A trans woman came in and asked for something and someone turned around and said, “That’s a man in a dress!” I tried to explain to them afterwards why that wasn’t okay, and they didn’t care. So I explained it all to management... [then] a bunch of co-workers were going to have to go to diversity awareness training and they were mad about it. Everybody knew it was me that had complained about homophobia so that ostracised me further, it was ugly. (entries# 38-42)
The repression of the gendered self to suit work environments is also illustrated in Nick’s job searches. He laments what his barriers have been as a TG (wo)man: “Well, every time I’d go for a job interview I’d have to feminize myself as much as possible, for years” (entry# 34).

Kimberly had accumulated many years of experience as an airline pilot. After she transitioned, however, she was unable to find work in her field:

Kimberly: So I tried for many, many years and I would get calls, interviews instantly because of my experience and qualifications... But because my history in flying had been under a male name, when I had to give a reference the new employer would always find out. Or I would tell them in advance, but usually they would find out by contacting the references. I remember I had an incident with a corporate charter company in [town], they actually hired me and then they asked for my references to follow up the résumé... I got my envelope and résumé torn up in, it must have been a hundred pieces, and then they stuffed it in another envelope and mailed it all back to me... I’ve tried for eighteen years to get back into the field and the profession that I’m good at and should be doing... Most recently... after eighteen years, last spring I finally got a job at the airport and it was in a pilot supplies store. So I thought maybe now times are better, times are different. I worked there for about four or five months, and then when the case that I’m sort of in the middle of went to a judicial appeal to the Supreme Court of BC, the publicity around that and the media attention, my co-workers became aware that I was transsexual and then they never had me back again. (entry# 28)

The prejudice towards transpeople is not limited to what are, perhaps, perceived to be chauvinistic or masculinist professions (e.g. policing, airline piloting). Aiyanna works as an artist:

Aiyanna: I’m one of the only, globally, transsexual artists who has been working professionally, who has been able to successfully continue her career. It’s a horrifying statistic, and I’m hardly proud of it, I’m ashamed of this on so many different levels. (entry# 110)

Patricia also has a hard time finding work, and speculates on some of the reasons:

Patricia: Yeah, I think some of the people I had interviews with would seriously consider hiring me but they’re not sure how everyone else would react. They take the safe route. Instead of taking the chance of losing customers and clients, they would rather have someone who isn’t trans. (entry# 68)
Education

In 2001, the New York based organisation Human Rights Watch issued a report on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth attending public (state) schools in the USA. The report notes that many students are wrongly perceived as transgender, yet such persons are similarly subject to persecution. Repudiation of any gender transgression is a systematic problem in schooling. The report states:

If gay and lesbian people have received some modicum of acceptance in the United States over the past several decades, transgender people remain misunderstood at best and vilified at worst. ...Youth who identify or are perceived to be transgender face relentless harassment and live with overwhelming isolation. (p. 1)

Human Rights Watch notes that harassment of transpeople in schools is not limited to repudiations by fellow students, but also extends to repudiations from teachers, who often act to police gendered behaviours. The Report concludes that “peers enforce the rules through harassment, ostracism, and violence. School officials condone this cruel dynamic through inaction or in some cases because they, too, judge gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth to be undeserving of respect” (p. 1 – concluding section).

The interviews that I conducted retrospectively narrate serious problems with primary, secondary and post-secondary education. While these incidents may have occurred years ago, there is little persuasive evidence that much has changed or improved. Education as an institution is in need of being educated about transpeople. For example, Devor (1997) comments on the paucity of educational materials available to teens and teachers regarding trans issues in secondary schools. This is unfortunate considering that “puberty is an especially horrendous time for many transsexuals” (Califia, 2003, p. xxxvi).

One of the interviewees, Alex, who identifies as TG, recalls how he coped with the gender policing in his school. His reflections are evidence of the creative ways in which some transpeople manage to cope with the compulsory gender binary enshrined within schooling:
Alex: When I was in high school I went to a girls’ school where we had to wear uniforms which were kilts, and in the winter we got to wear ties. So I spent a lot of high school saying to myself, “in Scotland, this is men’s clothing, in Scotland, this is men’s clothing.” (entry# 20)

Alex also recalls that his ‘all-girl’ school at times made an unusual (and perhaps unthought) allowance for him to be cast as a male figure in school plays:

Alex: I think something about my gender identity probably came through to others, because in every single school play that I was in, I was cast as a male character – the one and only exception was the play that was all female characters. (entry# 24)

At both primary and secondary school levels, transpeople often face constant harassment. Robin recalls being taunted as a “faggot and a queer” (entry# 22). Such taunting figured in some transpeople’s decisions to drop out, as Jamie-Lee (MtF) recalls:

Jamie-Lee: [school] was difficult because that’s where I was finding I was different, I was teased because I was a very slight, effeminate boy. You know, there was the name calling and that kind of stuff, so I escaped into my little world... I dropped out in grade ten [and it was]... definitely due to the gender issues. (entries# 2, 13, and 15)

Frank recalls that puberty at school was a particularly difficult time:

Frank: Back then I didn’t know I was a transperson... I was in grade school in the early sixties and there wasn’t any language for what was going on... Nobody knew this existed, so looking back I remember how horrified I was in the changing rooms. I remember how things were mostly all right and then I started to menstruate and it’s something that none of the other kids talked about so I didn’t know that I was the only girl that was horrified. It wasn’t just ‘Ooooh, what’s this?’ I was absolutely mortified. I hid it from everyone for a good two years, as best as a child could hide it. But the changing rooms were horrifying too because it’s the same kids that you’re in school with, and I had no idea what I was so ashamed about, what I was so frightened about; here were all these other kids so excited about all the changes with their bodies, comparing things, and I’m terrified I’m going to ‘get caught’, totally terrified even to be in there with them like I’m not supposed to be in there, in the girls’ changing room... the other kids could tell I was ‘different’, and I ended up just leaving school, I couldn’t see myself in anyone else around me. (entries# 32-33)
Those who remained in school were frequently targeted for verbal abuse. Dean confirms that it can be a long ordeal. I asked him if he had ever been beaten-up at school: “Oh yeah, tons”. Chris: “And that was all through your high school period?” Dean: “Yeah” (entries# 35-40).

Social isolation and ostracism is also a problem for many transpeople in school:

Roz: And I remember feeling uncomfortable at school, like the kids knew I was different. Because I wanted to play with the girls, but they didn’t want me to play with them because I was a boy. And I didn’t want to play with the boys … so I was bullied, I was harassed and spent most of that life on my own. (Roz, entry# 12)

As Roz moved into secondary school she continued to encounter systematic bullying:

Roz: In grade eight my locker was down on the ground floor of the junior high school and homeroom in the morning was up on the second floor. Everyday that I climbed up those stairs with my books and papers under my arms, somebody in that stampede to go to classes would pull the binder from under my arms and it would scatter down the stairs and everybody would kick the books all over the place and kick the papers everywhere. I was repeatedly targeted for really an extended period of time. (entries# 18-20)

Jeb also recounts his experience of being targeted at school:

Jeb: [at school] I wasn’t openly trans but I was definitely targeted because of the way I walked and dressed, and it was all for very gender-related things even though I was not out… I had quite a few incidents where I was kind of mobbed, where I would be surrounded by people. (entries# 16 and 18)

In many cases, trans-ness (or an overlapping ‘queer’-ness) is detectable by peers even though a conscious acceptance of one’s future trans status has not yet necessarily formed as the examples of Frank, Roz, Jeb, and Wynn demonstrate. A sense of difference is, however, already evident. Wynn was able to find a group of friends in secondary school, and yet she was still targeted for abuse:

Wynn: Yeah, me and, there was a little group of us people that didn’t fit in so we kind of had each other and I guess watched out for each other. And this one good friend of mine was this kind of effeminate guy and we always hung out and everyone just assumed we were gay or whatever, so we got lots of shit for being that way, and we dressed funny and so we got lots of comments and threats - “fags” etc., and plus I was always really tall and
so a lot of the jock types would want to fight me and I got jumped on my second week at my high school, knocked over and punched a bunch. (entry# 18)

Aiyanna (MtF) recalls how her gender issues at school were tied-up with racism:

Aiyanna: When I started in school it was when the U.S. and Canada changed the law that allowed us [First Nations] to go to public school. We weren’t allowed in public school prior to 1952 … this is when I first found out that one: I was not a girl, I was quickly slapped with a reality that I was a boy and not just a boy but an ugly little Indian boy. And gone from this cute little child, tousled hair and dimpled cheek, “What a cute little child”, to being this “ugly little Indian boy”. And very quickly my neighbours who I had played with, this little girl would no longer play with me once I started school... now that ‘I was a boy’. (entry# 48)

Problems continue at the post-secondary level of education. Robin tells her story of trying to become a nurse, and how she eventually was forced to leave the program. In her statement, she summarises the intersectional dynamics of trans repudiation that often result in living a life of poverty:

Robin: [crying] I’ll tell you what hurts, is that instead of making 50 to 60,000 dollars a year, I’m making nine or ten on welfare. That’s what hurts. That’s what I’m crying about, the money. And a place in the world, perhaps, but the money… Marginalization. We all face it, all transpeople. (entries# 97 and 99)

Jamie-Lee also tried training to become a nurse and found similar trans repudiation. She filed a lawsuit against her school and won. However, that was not the end of the ordeal:

Jamie-Lee: So I went to [a Solicitor] and he sued the college and I won, but I remember this one instructor who didn’t like me, she said to me, once I’d won, I think my first day back, she said, “You may have won the battle but you won’t win the war” … it started happening again and I just thought “No.” you know, how can I study... with this happening to me, right? So I dropped out. (entries# 64 and 66)

In her research, Burnham (1999) found that pre-operative transsexuals were, on occasion, instructed by post-secondary teachers and/or school career counsellors to return to school only after their transitions were complete so as not to ‘disturb or distract’ other students. Some transpeople encounter barriers that prevent them from paying tuition fees. Namaste (2000)
details how they may be denied student loans for post-secondary education, citing institutional problems (in Quebec) that relate to barriers in having one's sex status changed on legal texts, certificates, and so on. This makes it impossible for banks to process student loan applications, which prevents some transpeople from obtaining a post-secondary education.

Article 26 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) affirms that everyone has the right to an education. That many transpeople face persecution within the education system is both alarming and socially untenable. Clearly, there is a need for a cultural shift in schools and other institutional sites, so that gender-based discrimination can become a thing of the past.

5. Types of Repudiation

Threat / Intimidation

The interviewees' stories confirm that transpeople are frequently exposed to threats and intimidation from others in their everyday/night worlds. These acts represent an intersubjective aspect to the force of subjugation in transpeople's lives. Verbal threat/intimidation can in itself be traumatic and often escalates into physical assault. As will be examined later, 50% of interviewees reported having been physically assaulted.

Hank (FtM) tells of his experience walking down the street:

Hank: I've never been beaten up, but I've had people do things that are threatening physically, sort of like surround me while I'm walking down the street. Where there's eight young straight men around me, walking down [X street] trying to bother me, usually throwing often transphobic, but also homophobic slurs. Getting in my space. (entry# 84)

A perception of gender transgression is often the precursor to threat and intimidation. The interpellation of the gaze of repudiation is a constant risk, especially for those who are pre-transition or in the initial stages. Hank describes one incident:
Hank: When I was in [a city] I went on a date to a bar wearing a suit and these guys decided they were more of a man than I was and wanted to go outside and fight me. We went outside but their girlfriends pulled them off before they could hit me, they were like, “You’re not a man, we’re going to show you you’re not a man.” Stuff like that. That was a few years ago.

(entry# 88)

Perceptually, the sometimes narrow boundaries between queer and trans may perpetuate the superimposition of these two distinct categories under the gaze of a general homophobic/heterosexist repudiation. This problem is exemplified in Alex’s experience:

Alex: One time when I was 20 and had shaved my head but wasn’t shaving my legs, I was wearing a hippie skirt and walking down a street in a small city in Ontario and a carload of guys drove by and yelled “faggot” at me. I’m not sure if they honestly thought I was a guy or if they didn’t know the word “dyke”. Sometimes transphobia and homophobia can be pretty difficult to sort out.

(entry# 56)

For some transpeople, threat and harassment have been lived in the everyday/night world as a persistent ordeal, ever-present. Yossi tells of his experience of having beer bottles thrown at him from passing car windows:

Yossi: ...that happened a lot, I mean that was just a daily kind of thing. I just stopped going outside in that point of my transition where I was very visibly female bodied but had facial hair, so that was a daily occurrence. People would yell, “What are ya, a man or a woman? You fucking freak.” Blah, blah, blah. That happened all the time to me for a little while.

(entries# 64-65)

Sometimes these daily ordeals escalate in frightening ways. Roz shares her harrowing story:

Roz: I’d gone out one morning for my run [in a park], and as I was finishing up and having my little cool down walk when three teenaged boys went by me on bicycles. As they rode past me one of them called out, “Fucking faggot.” And I laughed for a couple of reasons thinking, “Boy have you ever got it wrong.” ... So they came back and circled me and threatened to hurt me and I just stayed there and stood my ground and looked at one of them that I considered to be the leader of the group and said, “Okay which one of you wants to die first? I won’t get all three of you but I will get one and when the police arrive they’ll know which one it is because I’m going to rip your nuts off.” And we stood there in a stand-off stance for a few moments, then the leader of the group said, “It’s not worth it.” They rode away, my heart was pounding.

(entry# 77)
The matter of threat is more complicated for Roz, however, when it comes from her own colleagues. She tells of the threats she received when she invited some trans friends to police headquarters, a gesture of thanks for assisting with her diversity training workshops. For doing this a colleague “quietly pulled me aside and said, ‘If you ever do that again, if you ever bring those people into our club again, there will be consequences and you won’t like them’” (entry# 77).

Intimidation as a dynamic can be subtler but nevertheless convey the message of repudiation. Jenny tells of her experience on a city bus:

Jenny: …when getting on the bus and the kids move to the back of the bus because they don’t want to sit near you… once I overheard some girls start commenting, “Oh you can never tell with those kind of people if they’re guys or girls.” I think she couldn’t tell if I was a guy or a girl… She was in the seat behind me with one of her friends so I heard every word. (entries# 164, 166, and 168)

Wynn has had “lots” of experiences of threat and intimidation that were not at all subtle. She recounts a particularly frightening one:

Wynn: I was staying in [district] with my friend and we were walking home. It was about one in the morning and a bunch of young men pulled up in a car and started screaming, “Fucking faggot.” And screeched the car right up to me and a couple of them started getting out, so I basically took off, me and my friend ran to her apartment and got inside… I was really scared with that one. I’ve had lots of times where people yelled from their cars or slowed down and said they’re going to beat me up, but that one was really scary… they were completely willing to attack me. (entries# 68 and 74)

Jeb has also had numerous experiences of threat and intimidation:

Jeb: Growing up there were tons of things that happened. I used to walk to a coffee shop every night and almost every night there was someone, usually they were pretty wimpy about it, they’d wait until they were in their cars and then yell something. I’ve had cigarettes thrown at me, I’ve had full McDonald’s pops thrown at me, I’ve had beer cans and beer bottles (they missed, thank God), I’ve had pennies, and they’ll yell “Queer!” out the window as they do it. I’ve been spat on by someone driving by. This one kid and his friends, I would run into them everywhere and they would always say stuff like, “What, you think you’re a man or something?” That started when I was twelve, that one kid was in one of my classes and everyday he would lean into me and say, “You’ve got a moustache, are you trying to be a man?” He would say stuff like
that, and, “What are you?” to try to intimidate me, that happened a lot. Since I’ve been in the city it’s been pretty tame though. I’ve had a couple of comments… one guy, what did he call me? “Faggot girl”? or something, like he didn’t know what I was, so he said, “What are you, a faggot or a girl?” and he followed me after we got off the bus. But that was the only sort of scary thing that happened in the city. I’m pretty careful what I do too, I’m pretty nervous and anxious, especially around younger people. I avoid them, I’ll go over across the street or I’ll wait ‘til they’re gone or something. (entry# 74)

Jeb’s statement, of feeling nervous and anxious towards younger people especially, may point to teenagers’ conformist ‘need’ to solidify their gender identities (in accordance with the law of the binary). Teenagers may express less tolerance/restraint towards those who appear to transgress gender/sex boundaries, partly in fear that their stated defense of gender transgressors may lead to group expulsion or suspicions that they themselves might be, to use the British term, “bent”. Those who are intoxicated may also have less capacity for restraint in regard to censoring unconscious impulses, and express their fear of Others with violence. Patricia, like Roz, has learned to use assertiveness in order to defuse potentially violent situations:

Patricia: I was walking home on [X Street] and this, I’ll call him a gentlemen, was drunk and he just goes, “Get out of my way, you faggot.” He tried to push me and I just turned around and I had my umbrella in my hand and I said, “Come any closer and I’ll smack you in the face with my umbrella.” But he didn’t, he just kept on walking. (entry# 78)

Nick, who lives with disabilities that entail chronic pain, needs to diffuse any potentially violent situation quickly. Any physical assault to his/her body could have dire consequences. His/her TG status allows for fluidly, shifting when required in creative ways, to use the ambiguity of her/his body in order to avoid conflict:

Nick: I sometimes feel like that’s where I use some of my socialized female stuff to help resolve some of the situations I’ve been in and that’s how I avoid a fight. I see it coming and prepare in physical ways, raise my voice, any breasts I can show, any female stuff I can show before it gets bad. Occasionally I’ve got, “Are you a guy or are you a girl?” and I go, “Why?” or, “That’s kind of a weird question.” And keep walking. I do street outreach, so it would always sort of be a quick response. (entry# 46)

Nick exemplifies some of the advantages of a TG position by being able to draw on and exploit both ends of the binary when necessary, in finding ways to survive repudiations. Indeed, many of the excerpts presented above point to transpeople as objects for a potentially misplaced
homophobia/heterosexism which perpetrators themselves struggle with, as reflected in statements such as "what are you?" Perpetrators respond to perceptions of binary transgressions yet seem unable to nuance the differences that these transgressions entail. Being a butch dyke, a feminine gay man, a cross-dresser, or a drag King is quite different from transitioning into a liveable body as a result of having been mis-sexed. A poverty of language and lack of perceptual appreciation (understanding) of those who cross boundaries is unfortunately too common, whether the crossing is a temporary playful/parodic performance, or, as in the case of TS people, involves serious and permanent changes to the body.

*Physical Assault*

Among the most painful stories to emerge from this study were those where the interviewee had been physically and sexually assaulted. Goldberg (2002) points out that transpeople are vulnerable to an array of physical abuse from families, partners, Johns (sex trade clients), and unknown assailants. These acts often constitute hate crimes and yet are generally not acknowledged as such specifically on the basis of trans status, by subsuming attacks under sexual orientation clauses. Darke and Cope (2002) note that violence against transpeople is seriously underreported. Goldberg (ibid.) also draws attention to the reluctance of transpeople to report violent incidents to police, due to prior negative experiences with law enforcement officials, a point which echoes the conclusions of Namaste’s (2000, 2004) research. Indeed, in one of my interviews, a trans woman narrated a shocking account of sexual abuse that she claims she endured at the hands of a police officer who had, temporarily, forcibly confined her.

I have decided not to reproduce specific examples of narratives of physical abuse in this section since I find it too upsetting to select or to recount the many traumatic events of violence inflicted on transpeople. We live in a violent society. Images of war, terrorism, murder, gratuitous violence in the media, and so on, occur with stunning frequency. There is an ongoing danger that we will become collectively desensitised and dissociate ourselves from this frenetic array of violent images. I will assume that the reader can imagine the horror of these stories, and recognise the need to include transpeople among those to whom violence must be stopped.
A related matter surfaces in response to the problem of assault. This has to do with law enforcement. Like anyone, transpeople can be questioned, detained, and arrested by law enforcement agencies. Transpeople may also themselves be in need of the services of the police, especially when they have been assaulted. How police interact with them, considering their authority and weaponry, is a matter of concern. For example, transpeople working in the sex trade are frequently targeted by police. In her study, Namaste (2000) found that all of the trans sex trade workers that she interviewed were harassed by the police. This harassment was not just related, or limited, to the legal quagmires surrounding prostitution in Canada. The harassment, rather, frequently takes aim at the worker’s trans embodiment. For example, Namaste points to the police asking MtFs for their former, masculine birth names, which they would then use instead of their correct names. Male terms would also be facetiously and insultingly used by police (to their patrol partner or the accosted transwoman), such as “‘sir’, ‘boy’, ‘guy’”, or they would objectify and depersonalise transwomen by referring to them as “it” (p. 170). Namaste further notes that verbal harassment sometimes escalated into physical beatings by police. These incidents of ridicule, humiliation, harassment, and physical violence led some trans women to refrain from accessing law enforcement services in other instances, such as following a beating from a pimp or lover. Harassment of transwomen by police may be systemic. Meyerowitz (2002) outlines a persuasive case in her historical sketch of policing in San Francisco’s Tenderloin district beginning in the early 1960s. She reports that police regularly beat trans people with batons or “demanded free sexual services” (p. 229). In my interviews, a similar example was relayed concerning an incident with the police in Vancouver.

Identifying a suspect in policing requires the establishment of the person’s physical parameters (sex, race, weight, height, and so on). Sex, like race, is a primary signifier of profiling that police use to categorise people. In recent years, there have been multiple reports of ‘racial profiling’ of ‘suspects’ by police in Canada, a controversial practice that points to the problem of racism in our society. I contend that police are also at times guilty of trans repudiation, which points in a similar manner to the ubiquity of the panopticon, the judgmental gaze. The trans repudiation from her fellow police officers recounted earlier by Roz exemplifies the kinds of transphobia that
exist within the institution of policing. While not all officers of the law are transphobic, many clearly are. Establishing the extent of the problem requires that more research be conducted on interactions between police and transpeople.

Customs and immigration agents, too, can be concerned over a person’s gender presentations. Califia (2003) raises the matter when he echoes Wilchin’s concept of gender profiling, something that seems to be increasing as a part of ‘the war against terrorism’ in these post 9-11 days. To what extent are transpeople unduly scrutinised at border crossings? More research is needed to ascertain the extent of the problem. Here is Jeb’s brief account of one such experience:

Jeb: [border agents] they’ve been generally decent to me but there have been times where they take a look at my ID and they’re like, “What’s that about?” One night we got pulled aside and they searched the entire car, and they called me “sir”, then they saw the F on my ID their attitudes changed. They got more grumpy about the whole thing, like I’d purposefully tricked them.  
(entry# 78)

Finally, to what extent are private security guards trained in gender issues and to what extent do transpeople have difficulties in dealing with them? Since public policing is rife with trans repudiation, it is probably also rampant in private security, perhaps worse.

Relations with (Other) Lesbians and Gays

Heterosexual transpeople can be mistaken as homosexual in their sexual orientation. Hence, like gay, lesbian, and bisexual transpeople, they too can experience homophobia and heterosexism in their everyday/night worlds. For transpeople, the LGBT alliance does not always vibrate the symbolic ‘rainbow’ that is supposed to signify inclusiveness. For example, Califia (2003) documents the fact that “Some of the most hateful journalism about transgendered people during the last five years has been written by gay men and lesbians” (p. xxxiii). This trend follows a long history of trans repudiation within Gay and Lesbian media, as Meyerowitz (2002) also notes in her social history of American transsexualism. While some transpeople identify as queer and feel a sense of community among lesbians, gays, and bisexuals, heterosexual transpeople may also associate themselves with the LGB(T) community, as they believe that they will find greater tolerance here than elsewhere (Califia, 2003).
In their report on human rights abuses in American schools towards gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth, Human Rights Watch (2001) states:

During the course of our investigation, we had the opportunity to observe interactions between gay boys and transgender youth. In several cases, the gay boys behaved in ways that appeared to be sexually harassing. (p. 3)

Tami has experienced direct repudiations from gay men, especially at work:

Tami: Well, shocking news flash: gay men and lesbian women have a hard time wrapping their heads around physically changing your body from one gender to the other or anywhere in between... I worked at [organisation X] primarily with gay men and it became very cliquish... There was a complete lack of camaraderie, in fact [they were] almost blatantly rude... you know, a conversation is going on and I would try to enter it and everybody would just walk away, exclude me, regularly. Not just a couple of times and it wasn’t just my imagination, I said, “we’re all trying to provide a service, you know?” I didn’t want to make waves and make the service less comfortable for everybody else. So I thought I’d just let it go, but I still think it was the biggest beef I had in my transition. I’ve practically wanted to lodge a formal complaint and say to them, you know, “You guys had better clean up your act in terms of how you’re treating transsexual people.” (entries# 72, 94, and 96)

Hank, who likes to socialise at one of the queer night clubs in the city, relates some salient experiences:

Hank: Well, I was out on Thursday night at the [night club X]. I walked in and went up to the bar past a table of men. And they were like, “Is that a man or a woman?” really loudly, the jukebox was loud and I could hear them. The whole line-up could hear them and they were discussing and evaluating my body, trying to figure out which one I was. When people are seen as being Other, people seem to forget that you can hear. They’ll have a very loud conversation about you and don’t seem to understand I can hear what they’re saying. (entry# 80)

He particularly laments the difficulties he has had with gays and lesbians:

Hank: I’ve had quite a bit of harassment and intense interactions with queer folk. And I think it’s just like the rest of the world, they’re not really educated on trans issues. Especially with FtM, MtFs have been in the community a lot longer. So people are more
used to it, not that they necessarily like it. I’ve had a lot of people, when I tell them I’m a tranie, think that I am MtF, that I’m a trans woman. ...whereas a lot of straight people, especially in small towns, will be like “oh yeah, whatever”, because they don’t have so much weight on it. They don’t really care, they’re just like, “Oh yeah”, moving on. They don’t really want to talk about the differences, they don’t have any language to process that through, so they’re just like, “Oh yeah.” Whereas queer people, especially queer women, want to talk about the whole ramifications of it: Their lives, the community, the world, the struggle, all these sorts of things. So it becomes much more contentious, I think. (entry# 82)

For Hank, interactions with other gay men have been, at times, difficult and upsetting:

Hank: I also had a waiter at [a gay restaurant] almost pick me up off my feet by the collar of my jacket into his face because he was not happy with me and not liking me. So I was right in his face and he was trying to tell me off while he was holding onto me... we were there having drinks and there was a drag show going on, and someone who worked there, not him, like I was passing pretty well, wanted to talk to me or something. The waiter was passing a message that some boy there thought I was hot or whatever, and the waiter kept kind of, like knew I wasn’t a bio male but also kept sort of flirting with me. He would touch my hand while he was talking to me, kind of flirtatiously bitchy. And then by the end of the evening he was like, “Well, I don’t understand you people, and I don’t understand drag queens either.” And just started going off and I blocked out most of it, but then he pulled me up really close to his face so he could talk to me. And I was like, “You need to put me down, you need to stop touching me, I’m going to get really angry if you don’t stop touching me.” He said “I don’t care about you people, I don’t understand.” And I was like “Well, read a fucking book. If you don’t understand it’s not my problem, I’m just trying to leave. Maybe you need to do some learning for yourself.” He definitely scared me a bit, he was kind of jokingly being rude. It was kind of playful but he was holding me really tightly. He wasn’t screaming in my face, but it was kind of where the joke is not funny anymore. But he let go of me and I walked out. (entries# 84-86)

In his first commentary, Hank points out a disturbing dynamic of depersonalisation in his comment: “people seem to forget that you can hear”. This behaviour is part of a repudiation of transpeople that denies them self/personhood, something deeper than just a denial of subjectivity. In the second instance, he relates how some gay men make aggressive jokes about transpeople: “I don’t understand you people”. Both comments point to lack of understanding and resulting repudiation as a problem in the queer ‘community’, and to splits in be/longing, of fractures in the supposed ‘LGBT’ alliance.
On the morning of 28 June, 1969, at the Stonewall Inn in New York City, a riot erupted that galvanised queer and transpeople to fight for their liberation. Transpeople were central to that event, yet too often it is mythologised as the “gay liberation” moment. This both erases and repudiates transpeople and further marginalises them. In the same way that feminists have been rewriting women back into the history (herstory) that men have erased them from, so too are transpeople such as Califia (2003) reinscribing trans back into their histories, their trans-stories. Aiyanna expresses her negative reaction to the erasure of transpeople from historically relevant events:

Aiyanna: In terms of trans, certainly trans people were instrumental, integral in instigating Stonewall and we have been erased from the movement from the very beginning. There have been numerous activists and numerous transsexual people since that time that have overtly or covertly continued to demand for inclusion…White gay men still have a horrific time trying to accept the notion, because of what a penis means to a white gay man, gay men in general. For them to accept the notion that anyone with a penis would cut it off, or turn it inside out more appropriately, is horrifying to them, intellectually, emotionally, on so many levels. For gay men to accept the notion of transsexuals is just too, too hard. Too threatening, I’m certainly not saying all, it’s a broad brush. (entries# 110 and 128)

Yossi is a gay man but has experienced trans repudiation from other gay men:

Yossi: And you know being a fag, a lot of the discomfort I get is from gay men. Once at a forum I facilitated around ‘Coming Out’ for gay and bi men - you know, people knew I was trans, but it wasn’t a big whoop - at the break a drag queen came up to me and said, “Oh it’s really, you’re so brave for facilitating this forum and I just want to say thank you and also to let you know that I would never have sex with you.” (laughs). You know it’s like I get that a lot from gay men actually, that you know, in theory they think it’s very brave or heroic but, dear god, no flirting, no sexual anything. And you know it’s that tension, right, within communities where they might want to pay lip service to being inclusive but they’re so dis-, they’re just so uncomfortable with you, you can [tell], it’s sometimes very obvious. (entry# 57)

Trevor has also, at times, found some gays and lesbians to be very unsupportive of transpeople:

Trevor: I had been active in a queer group in the Church and [that was] the group that was least supportive, people I had loved, cared about, stood shoulder-to-shoulder in activism, worship, spiritual pursuits. That group of people were the least welcoming, the least supportive. I still hold my breath, not very often ‘cause I’ve long ago left the
Church, but I will still occasionally go back and join in an activity with that group of people. Last time I went there were still two or three people who didn’t get the pronoun right, who still used my old name, who outing me to people who didn’t know in the group. Hello! I mean these are people themselves who are struggling to be perceived as *they* are in a very conservative institution - the Church - and at the same time cannot see their own actions in terms of how they are treating somebody they see as Other... some lesbian friends struggled but got it and they were able to come back a year - a year and a half later and I really left the door open to anybody. If they want to talk, let’s talk, I’m happy, wherever you want to go with this. And there were a couple of lesbian friends who sat down and engaged and said, “I don’t like this because... it disgusts me because... it frightens me because...”. We could really talk and engage with it. And they were able to shift but it took them time. (entries# 84 and 88)

Jamie-Lee relates memories of her conflictual history with the gay community. It was a place that gave her refuge and at times employment, yet also sent her mixed messages:

Jamie-Lee: I first noticed it when some of my gay guy friends were going to [a gay club] and they wouldn’t let me in looking like a girl. And so they just wanted this male club, gay club, so I noticed stereotypes like that... I was disturbed by it, I was troubled by it because here I was already doing shows in the gay community; I was part of this community, that’s where I found acceptance. But on the other hand I also found this barrier, it was confusing. (entries# 39 and 42)

Dean demarcates sub communities and suggests that there is a greater level of acceptance of transpeople in one group in particular:

Dean: ...the way I see it is there’s three communities. There’s the gay community and the old school guys: ‘You’re not a real guy until you have a dick’, and then there’s the lesbian community: ‘You’re now becoming a traitor because you’re becoming a male’, and then there’s the queer community, and the queer community I find is more accepting, more open. (entry# 87)

In addition to conflicts with gay men and lesbians, transpeople also speak of tensions with radical cultural feminists, another equity seeking group that represents the interests of the marginalised yet is often implicated in repudiating transpeople.
Reactions from Radical Cultural Feminists

Most feminists are, I believe, tremendously supportive of transpeople and trans struggle. Historically, the former Danish Justice, Helga Pedersen, helped to arrange the permission required for Christine Jorgensen to receive her famous SRS in 1950s Denmark. However, many of those faithful to the doctrines of radical cultural feminism have steadfastly preserved a negative attitude towards transpeople. This issue surfaced in the majority of the interviews that I conducted for this study. Robin identifies as a radical feminist and supports many of the political analyses and projects of local radical cultural feminists. However, as a trans woman, the latter have negatively targeted her, for example, by heckling her speech at a feminist event:

Robin: It all ended up being broadcast on the air [radio], ... when I spoke at ‘Take Back the Night’, another show called ‘WomenVisions’, which is aligned with Rape Relief, rebroadcast it and referred to me a number of times throughout their show as a transgendered man. Here you are at the one place you might expect to find some radical solidarity, which is the left, and the collective which is Co-op radio, and you find that your worst enemies are deeply entrenched within that particular community too...
Segregation of trans women from feminist organizations mirrors patriarchal privilege and oppression against women, and reinforces the old idea that there are right women and wrong women, that there are right feminists and wrong feminists, and we need to be a lot more creative. (entries# 154 and 155)

Dean lost friends and a job due to radical cultural feminist rejection of his transitioning, and laments what one friend told him:

Dean: Oh yeah, like I’ve had friends – had - [pause] [who] let you know how that worked out: “Men are rapists, if you become a man you will become a rapist. I don’t have rapists in my life”... and if it’s about me as a person, I wasn’t a rapist before, so I think it’s pretty safe to assume I’m not going to become a rapist after testosterone, do you know what I mean? So that kind of thinking is not about a person, it’s a stereotype. (entries# 73 and 75)

Wynn also speaks of losing feminist friends as a result of transitioning:

Wynn: I just want to say there’s a woman in the feminist movement that I’ve known for a long time and that I used to be pretty close with, [who] now won’t speak to me. It’s like I’m not a person anymore... She won’t say “hi” to me, like I’ve tried to talk to her and she’ll just walk the other way... I asked around to some that know her and a couple of
people said that she has a real problem especially with MtFs, and she describes it as, when men dress as women it’s like when white people are wearing black face.

(entry# 124)

Frank, as a former radical cultural feminist, offers a personal perspective:

Frank: [radical cultural] feminists are entitled to their opinion but it wears real thin real quick to have someone pontificating on what my reasons are for doing what I have to do. For me it was life and death, once I found out this avenue was available, I couldn’t stay in that other cage any longer. And to have someone passing judgement... like insisting on using the wrong pronouns - I mean, who the hell do they think they are? I think maybe I’ll use the wrong pronouns with them from now on, see how they like it, see if maybe they can get even a dim emotional glimmer of how offensive that can be.

(entry# 51)

Jamie-Lee, a well-known trans activist and sex trade worker advocate, recalls meeting feminist sociologist Dr. Becki Ross at a public forum:

Jamie-Lee: I remember attending a Vancouver Lesbian Connection forum and Becki Ross was on the panel. She had met me previously, so she had mentioned my name, and I’m sitting in the audience, right? About how much of a pleasure for her to meet me and the work I was doing. And this one lesbian woman was so angry at that, she got up and she yelled up to Becki - at least she used the correct pronoun - she said: “She’s no lady! That’s a man!” It wasn’t surprising and I remember [X], who was sort of the head of the Lesbian Centre then, and [X] came up to me and sat beside me and said, “I’m so sorry, I’m so sorry.” And I said, “Well you know, you’ve taken this position too... now you see how hurtful it is.”

(entry# 122)

Kimberly has devoted many years of her life to challenging the discriminatory practices of some radical cultural feminists in human rights tribunals and the law courts. As a feminist, she is moved by a core principle of feminist praxis:

Kimberly: Feminism means working for all women, and that includes women of colour, lesbians, bisexual women, large, small women; it’s addressing the systemic barriers together that all women face.

(entry# 84)

The vulnerability that many trans women experience, being targets for abuse, harassment, sexual assault, and in some cases severe violence leading to death, underscores the problem of trans repudiation and transphobia, as a very harmful and dangerous force. For this reason, many
feminists and social justice activists support Kimberly Nixon in her on-going legal conflict with Vancouver Rape Relief. The issue of ending violence against women, as a central rallying point for the women’s movement, is especially important for very marginalised women such as transwomen. However, not all feminists wish to include transwomen in the movement, disputing transwomen’s status as ‘real’ women. Many of the spaces that transpeople must navigate including meetings involving those who might be expected to be allies constitute potential sites for conflict, often of a serious nature.

This chapter has considered an array of locations and issues that transpeople contend with, issues that intersect interiority with exteriority. Dorothy Smith’s sociological insistence that subjects are located in the social world as embodied beings is useful for considering the ways in which ruling relations pose institutionalised barriers for transpeople. However, the material or physical consequences of confronting barriers in the social world must be balanced with the potential for emotional trauma at the interiorised level of the psyche. Intersecting interiority with exteriority offers a more comprehensive account of the consequences of trans repudiation. The stories presented here remind us that transpeople are the experts on their own lives, and their narrative accounts clearly do not split the inner from the outer effects of trans repudiation. The expected solidarity from other marginalised groups such as gays and lesbians and some feminists is sometimes surprisingly lacking. This lack of solidarity also reiterates dominant ruling relations in ironic and paradoxical ways. Perhaps it is, once again, something that is parallel to Fanon’s (1967) phobogenic object; could it be that non-trans people’s reactions are based on their own defensive fictions, which lead them to interpret transpeople as exotic, dangerous Others through an irrational binary? This binary may conceive transpeople as ‘oversexed’ or ‘de-sexed’: oversexed as the forbidden erotic, hyper-sexualised as expressed in transsexual pornography; or de-sexed, as in neutered eunuchs, or sex mutilating freaks. A host of questions surround the central issue of why transpeople are so widely repudiated.
CHAPTER 3:
FUSING HORIZONS:
SITUATING THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Trans-embodied lives are clearly of interdisciplinary interest. Traditional knowledge territories - disciplines - such as psychology, psychiatry, medicine, neurology, law, anthropology, the Humanities, sociology, social work, philosophy, and so on, have all expressed interest in the embodiment, social position and lived subjectivity of transpeople. Locating this research in Women's Studies, where gender definition is an issue, opens the doors to an inter- and transdisciplinary take on the relevance of trans lives to any theory of sexual difference, and draws attention to the need to press for social change that will advantage this subjugated group. Women’s Studies have foregrounded the significance of interdisciplinarity as crucial to the clustered problems that categories such as gender entail (Klein, 1996). This interdisciplinarity and a striving towards transdisciplinarity (transcending disciplines) concurs with a general current focus in the academy on hybridity in all its forms. This study traverses narratives of interiority and exteriority, and challenges the compartmentalisation of knowledge between sociology and psychology. This is consistent with Sloan’s (1996) comment on the necessity of theorising “that relatively unthought space between sociality and individuality, between self and society” (p. 13).

Hermeneutics

In addressing issues related to trans narratives, from those situated within and outside the shifting category of ‘trans’, I rely on hermeneutics as a framing discourse. Hermeneutics, in conjunction with feminism and depth psychology, grounds my focus on the intersections of perspectives that may produce conflicting stories. This trans-theoretical approach justifies my decision not to use a conventional qualitative method (such as ethnography or grounded theory)
in pursuing this inquiry into trans lives in relation to a range of theories. I share Gadamer’s (1960) central philosophical assumptions, including his mistrust of any method as a means to produce ‘Truth’, as laid out in his treatise on hermeneutics, Wahrheit und Methode [Truth and Method] (1960). One of the first German philosophers of his generation to critique dominant modernist discourses, like French poststructuralists Gadamer reasoned that any claims whatsoever to knowledge require recourse to language as a means with which to communicate or mediate such claims. It is language and its circular exchange that produces narrative. As Smits (1997) elaborates:

... hermeneutics begins from the premise that human reality - that is the way we think about, discuss, represent, and convey possibilities - is embedded in language, both written and spoken. This is not to say that extra-linguistic realities and forms of expression are impossible or non-existent. But it does mean that the only access we have to meaning is through language, and language is what marks our particular being, or ontology, that is, what we understand to be particularly human in quality. (p. 287)

Gadamer’s hermeneutics differs from French deconstructionism since he does make some limited claims to universality, maintaining that truths might exist, although they cannot be fully grasped, let alone represented: hence, the necessary and ongoing hermeneutic task of interpreting ‘data’, such as the ‘findings’ that social science research yields. Such data are unfinished, shrouded, and require a linguistically based mediation through dialogue to arrive at a tenuous sense of sufficiency, a meaning that can be provisionally ascribed. McCarthy (1991), writing from a Habermasian standpoint, echoes Gadamer in stating that “there are no privileged positions outside of or above history from which to view human life. And there is no such thing as the correct interpretation” (p. 128). Language itself is historically and socially situated. Perhaps this is why Namaste (2000), in her sociological study of transsexuality, avoids asking “what or why questions” (p. 56) about transsexuals and instead focuses on how they are located in the social world.

Like the deconstructionists, Gadamer does not accept that our perception of the surface of objects, as immediately sensed, is complete, absolute, and undistorted. Gallagher (1992) points out that “all interpretation is linguistic, but, critical theorists would maintain, also more than linguistic” (p. 242). This remark resonates with Hartsock’s (2004) observation that “material life
(class position in Marxist theory) not only structures but sets limits on the understanding of social relations" (p. 37).

The term *hermeneutic* is etymologically traced to the Greek *hermeneutika* (message analysis) conveying the need for interpretation. The term is also related in root to the Greek god Hermes, "the messenger", patron of interpreters, travellers, and thieves/robbers. It is noteworthy in the context of this study that Hermes, the ‘father’ of hermeneutics, was also the father of the mythical child who challenged the sex and gender binary. Hermes’ and Aphrodite’s child, *Hermaphroditus*, is a figure that cannot be constituted as singularly male or female, giving rise to the term *hermaphrodite*, an embodiment that is now reconfigured as *intersex*¹¹. Now, as before, the figure that is both male and female (and therefore neither) represents the unspeakable (there is no appropriate pronoun) and demands explanation and interpretation. The meaning assigned to such a figure is shifting and debatable, and the stress of indeterminacy may lead to forced conformity to inappropriate physical, social or psychological expectations. The transgender movement that emerged in the 1990s has demonstrated that there are also people who do not necessarily have an intersex ‘condition’, yet cannot identify as being either male or female. Hermaphrodite, experiencing the life of both sexes at once imparts wisdom, but present day intersex and other transpeople are not usually recognised as having extra knowledge or status. They represent, rather, an enigma.

Hermeneutics is still often associated with the interpretation of enigmatic religious texts, and the search for God as Truth¹². While God in the Judeo-Christian location is above and beyond

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¹¹ The term hermaphrodite is controversial. Devor (1997) occasionally uses it (in a non-derogatory manner) to describe the FtM body that is without phalloplasty. Chase (2002), however, points out that "*hermaphrodite*, with its strong mythological associations, reinforces the notion that hermaphroditism is a fantasy, not your neighbour, not your friend, not your teacher, and especially not your baby. And because it falsely implies that one individual possesses two sets of genitals, it allows my clitoris to be labelled as a penis, and the clitorectomy performed on me to be justified as "reconstructive surgery". For these reasons I prefer the term *intersexua* [Italics original] (p. 205).¹² The ‘objective’ hermeneutics of Schleiermacher and Dilthey that were so familiar in the nineteenth century have all but disappeared. The exception is in the metaphysical hermeneutics of the three great monotheisms (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), religious discourses that retain their traditional hermeneutic tasks (e.g. the Rabbinical commentary of *Midrash*). In Christian hermeneutics, consciousness is clouded by sin, by carnality and licentiousness. The necessity of interpretation is exemplified in Paul's epistle to the Corinthians (13:12): “For now we see through a glass, darkly; But then face to face – Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I am known.” Christian fundamentalists maintain that only salvation unclouds the dark glass, allowing a ‘pure life’ undistracted by ‘carnalities’, and knowledge of self emerges only by surrendering to the Absolute. Desexualisation / disincarnation remove issues of sex/gender from the ideal of self and of knowledge.
sexuality, he is nevertheless gendered as male (Father/Son). Gadamer abandoned metaphysical
hermeneutics, recognising that tradition\textsuperscript{13} places limits on perception and consciousness.
Recourse to a range of traditions can, however, bring out new understandings through what
Gadamer terms a \textit{fusion of horizons}. As Heidegger’s leading successor, Gadamer not only rejects
metaphysics but also follows in the tradition Nietzsche invoked in his critique of positivism.
Citing Nietzsche, Macey (2000) draws attention to

\begin{quote}
... the adage in fragment 181 of Nietzsche’s \textit{The Will to Power} [1901], where the
‘positivism which halts at phenomena’ is refuted in the proclamation: ‘No, facts is
precisely what there is not, only interpretations’. (p. 181)
\end{quote}

Gadamer disputes the surface empiricism that assumes the authority of ‘facts’, or unfettered
access to the ‘real’, by drawing attention to the mediating effects of tradition, However,
translators point out a problem in regard to Gadamer’s concept of “tradition” [Gr. \textit{Uberlieferung}]
(Weinsheimer and Marshall, as cited in Gadamer, 1960), which Gadamer saw as an “ongoing
conversation” (p. xvi).

Human subjects/selves are born into a world that pre-exists them. This world is dynamic, in
motion. For Gadamer, the ‘ontological’ task is to become more conscious of what one is born
into. He suggests that this is achieved through the process of producing \textit{understanding}, as one
wholly consumes all aspects of a culture and its tradition both consciously and unconsciously. As
will be discussed in Chapter 7, in psychoanalysis the process on the unconscious level is referred
to as \textit{introjection}, akin to the automatic taking-in of breast milk, without question or reason. It is
what is fed to us. The human, as infant and young child, is a compulsory consumer, ingesting the
prevailing language, customs, symbols, ideologies, and so on.

\textsuperscript{13} The English term “tradition” as used in Gadamer’s philosophy is somewhat inadequate. His English translators
note: “English has no corresponding verb, nor any adjective that maintains the active verbal implication, nor any
noun for what is carried down in “tradition” [Gr. \textit{Uberlieferung}]... We are likely to think of “tradition” as what lies
nearly behind us or is what we take over more or less automatically” (Weinsheimer and Marshall as cited in
Gadamer, 1960, p. xvi).
Gadamer argues that the medium of hermeneutic experience is constituted through language / speech - Sprache – which brings one into the “horizon of a hermeneutic ontology” (Silverman, 1991, p. 1). In order for understanding to take place one must interpret, and language is essential to understanding. In contrast to Derrida’s emphasis on writing over speech, for Gadamer “language gains its authentic life only in conversation” (ibid., p. 4). Conversation can occur among whole groups and be overarching, as in the public conversation that occurs in the media, classrooms, or specialised communities through scholarly journals. Or it can occur in intimate styles and venues, as in inter/intrapersonal exchanges between self and others, self and internalised others, or self with self, as expressed in journaling, diaries, internal self-talk and dreams (Raoul, 1994).

**Foregrounding Horizons**

Foregrounding as a hermeneutic task suggests that all knowledge is firstly self-knowledge. Producing knowledge is a project of critical self-awareness. Gadamer (1960) states that “to understand a text means to apply it to ourselves” (p. 359). Foregrounding asks that one strive to consciously reveal existing biases and recognise them as flowing from prevailing traditions. Such biases can, Gadamer contends, be revealed through dialogue. Consciousness is never pure and never wholly free. His point resonates with Adler’s (1956) contention that the unconscious is present in the conscious (see Chapter 8).

Autobiography, or personal disclosure, is not necessarily the requirement in foregrounding, but awareness of how one’s personal or private issues may be relevant to the task at hand is essential. A researcher looking into the lives of transpeople, for example, must reflexively interrogate his or her own biases in regard to the subject at hand – connecting what is revealed to the prevailing traditions internalised, and using self-knowledge to press for glimmers of truth to emerge through a fusion of horizons. Gadamer imports the significance of meaning as contextual and the related ongoing striving for self-consciousness into the project of knowledge production. Zimmerman (1981) elaborates from an existential perspective:
The real "subject", then, is not the wordless and abstract ego which lives outside of time and change, but the concrete, historically situated, living human being who is always engaged in trying to give meaning to his [sic] own life. No final understanding of self or culture is possible because individuals and their cultures are constantly, if slowly, changing. (p. 10)

Foregrounding is related to the Socratic position of doubt, questioning what one purports to know in the ongoing struggle for glimmers of truth. In her fusion of horizons with Jungian psychology, Claudette Kulkarni (1997) suggests that the foregrounding task is akin to Jung's view that human subjects supposedly spend their entire lives becoming more and more conscious, with the goal of *individuation*, of becoming 'whole' (see Chapter 7).

Awareness, as foregrounding suggests, is not finite. One can never become fully aware of all of one's prejudices. As Gadamer (1960) elaborates:

... there is undoubtedly no understanding that is free of all prejudices, however much the will of our knowledge must be directed towards escaping their thrall. Throughout our investigation it has emerged that the certainty achieved by using scientific methods does not suffice to guarantee truth. This especially applies to the human sciences, but it does not mean that they are less scientific; on the contrary, it justifies the claim to special humane significance that they have always made. (pp. 490-491)

Some of the traditions one absorbs will undoubtedly not have been freely chosen, but, indoctrinated. Kulkarni (1997) concludes that subjects are irremediably bound to many of their traditions and cannot be dissociated from them. Hence, the liberal notion of 'choice' is itself an aspect of a tradition to which the liberal subject is bound. Yet it may actually not be choice at all since agency might be severely limited; but consciousness of its limits holds the possibility of generating new, if limited, understandings. As Kulkarni (ibid.) explains:

Foregrounding, as I see it, is a very conscious decision, akin to but distinctly different from the idea of the *epoche* or "bracketing" used in phenomenology. Bracketing is an attempt to set aside our presuppositions in order to keep them from interfering with understanding, thus assuming that such a thing is even possible. Foregrounding by contrast assumes that "neutrality" is impossible and that "the extinction of one's self" is inadvisable. (p. 25)
In relation to quantitative research methods in the social sciences, King (1996) suggests that the extinguishment of the self in the research process is not only inadvisable but impossible, a myth, that implies a self able to stand wholly aside as a hermetically sealed and isolated entity.

Gadamer, in contrast, suggests that foregrounding is one way to move into the requisite dialectics necessary for understanding, to enter what he calls the *hermeneutic circle*, the cumulative learning process in motion. Gadamer suggests that this takes place within the metaphor of the “play” of speech, that is the exchange of questions and answers with the goal of developing new questions. When new questions emerge, a fusion of horizons surfaces, and new understandings become possible (Silverman, 1991). For Gadamer (as cited in Kulkarni, 1997) “[a horizon is a] range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point” (p. 24). Kulkarni elaborates by suggesting that a horizon “is not a limitation; it is beyond whatever is closest to us so that we can actually see something ‘better’, that is, we can see it within a larger whole and in truer proportion” (p. 24). Foregrounding, then, is a means to unmask prevailing distortions, it “allows something to become visible which might otherwise be hidden from view” (ibid. p. 26).

When we foreground the horizons of our contingent traditions our task is to transcend them and to un-mask the distortions, to become aware of our standpoint. This is akin to what Jaggar (2004) defines a standpoint to be: “a position in society from which certain features of reality come into prominence and from which others are obscured” (p. 60). Gadamer’s philosophy is grounded in the dialectic. He takes his cue from Plato but ascertains that “whoever wants to learn from the Greeks always has to learn from Hegel first” (p. 460). Gadamer’s use of a dialectically-based understanding of one’s tradition clearly resonates with Marx’s (as cited in Buss, 1979) position, that:

> Men make their own history, but do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.  

(p. 54)

A hermeneutic understanding of trans experience does not seek to unravel a finished, finalised trans Truth, but rather the glimmers of ‘truth’ that trans ‘being’-in-the-world will reveal. I
content that researchers who seek to reveal a finished truth about or within trans embodiment, as Bailey (2003) tries to do, are misguided, since the aim of knowledge production is to produce more questions: "Discourse that is intended to reveal something requires that the thing be broken open by the question" (Gadamer, 1960, p. 363). The production of questions is a fundamental aspect of the dialectic. Buss (1979) also views dialogue as a process,

...where "truth" is increasingly approximated through a clash of opinions, and conflict is resolved at higher levels of analysis. An essential property of a dialogue is its critical function, where the questioning and testing of ideas are part of its very nature. (p. 76)

While many modernists, committed to Enlightenment ideals of reason, have been great exponents of the dialectic, the dialectic is not limited to that genre or Zeitgeist. Through her postmodern and feminist standpoint, Lather (1991) applies the dialectic to critique orthodox Marxism, revealing problematic and irredeemable structuralist assumptions. Lather, however, sees her postmodern standpoint as an implicit dialogue with Marx, acknowledging the value of Marxist thought in spite of its grand/master narrative assumptions. In challenging that grand narrative of progress rooted in streams of Enlightenment thought that espouse unified or holistic notions of a reasoned consciousness, Lather reveals an androcentric consciousness that erases the voice and perspective of women. Yet she also points out that it is "feminist discourse that has raised the most questions about the fractured, fragmented subject postulated by poststructural discourse" (ibid., p. 28). Poststructuralist theorists dismiss the hermeneutic quest for understanding, for unified knowledge, positing instead a fractured or sundered subject that is never whole. As we shall see, this universally fractured subject may be problematic when addressing the striving to overcome, to repair the mis-sexed body, as in TS pursuits for a healed self. Nevertheless, Foucault (1984) scoffed at hermeneutics: "knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting" (p. 88), for discursive dismantling. His distrust is revealed in an insistence that "the instinct for knowledge is malicious" (p. 95). Decrying the attempt to attain conscious 'glimmers of truth', he counters that "the problem is not changing people's consciousness – or what is in their heads – but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth" (p. 74). Knowledge, for Foucault, is an injustice that rests on the erroneous claim that truth can be found in being: "truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are" (p. 81).
In contrast to Foucault's historical approach, I remain in favour of Gadamer's quest for relative and contextual understanding. Despite his claims to the contrary, I believe that Foucault's answers tend to cut in such a way as to destroy the production of questions. If knowledge is only for cutting, then so are the "unjust" questions with which one attempts to construct knowledge. Gadamer notes that, "contrary to the general opinion, it is more difficult to ask questions than to answer them" (p. 362-363). Herein lies his hope and his central insufficiency. The basis for my fusion of horizons with the critical realism espoused by socialist and materialist feminism rests on the contention that matters of social justice cannot take the generation of questions as an adequate conclusion. The questions posed must yield answers that are sufficient to prompt action. Concrete, lived lives, subjugated by complex relations of ruling, do not necessarily have the philosopher's luxury of posing questions for the sake of it. This point was also made by Habermas, as Gallagher (1992) summarises:

Habermas ... charges that Gadamer's position remains politically naive to the extent that Gadamer fails to recognize the elements of distortion and deformation of interpretation imposed by force, compulsion, and coercion, that is, by extrahermeneutical factors. An adequate frame of reference for the interpretation of meaning must include not only language and its corresponding hermeneutic but also economic facts of labor and class and political factors of domination. (p. 17)

There is good reason to fuse the horizons of Gadamer's hermeneutics with other discourses that have the capacity to address the concrete, political forces that Gadamer overlooks. In excluding "extrahermeneutical factors", Gadamer's hermeneutics alone remains "inadequate to its task" (ibid., p. 18). One of the other horizons relevant to my topic is feminist standpoint theory, which I see as complementary to Gadamer's hermeneutic approach. As discussed previously in explaining my hermeneutic approach, understanding is foregrounded in this project as an epistemological problem. This resonates with a trans friend who commented to me, "maybe we don't want to be understood". This remark echoes Gadamer's (1960) contention that understanding as an objective, finished, final and absolute state remains not only an impossibility but not necessarily desirable. There can be no direct access to an a priori Truth, only the constant, never-ending work of interpretation towards more comprehensive understandings, from a range of perspectives. Indeed, it is noteworthy that transpeople themselves do not all share the same understanding of their situation and the reasons for it.
Situating the Research

‘Transphobia’ is colloquially understood in trans communities as a constellation of feelings, behaviour, attitudes, and pernicious ideas that points to one of the most challenging social barriers of our times. As the interviews conducted for this study confirm, the systemic repudiation of transpeople’s subjectivity is reflected in coercive social barriers as well as interior, psychic consequences. The general lack of acknowledgement of trans repudiation is evident in the absence of concerted efforts to eradicate the problem. The specific issues that transpeople raise as crucial are relegated to the margins in the struggle for broader social justice. Like many of those who are non-trans and ‘discover’ the extent of trans repudiation, I came away from my inquiry with a sense of shock at the ubiquity of the problem. The dynamics that surround the lived experience of transpeople are difficult to understand and to interpret, for them and for others.

When I first became aware of the extent of trans repudiation, I did not have a language to comprehend the issue. Rather, I was compelled to draw from my existing understandings of prejudice, discrimination, and stigmatisation in order to account for what I had encountered. In trying to make sense of transphobia over time, I have also been compelled to confront the many assumptions about transpeople that I too carried, assumptions that were generally faulty. By engaging with transpeople afresh as my neighbours, comrades, allies and fellow community members, I have come to know an extraordinary group of people, to whom I have submitted myself as their pedagogical subject. That is, transpeople made themselves available to dialogue with me, to teach me about their struggles and barriers and also the enrichment that exists in their lives.

Transpeople are citizens, members of my local community. Yet, there have been unfortunate occasions where I have witnessed appalling treatment that specific transpeople have endured at the hands of other people, events that have both disturbed and angered me. Reflexively, I realise that they angered and embarrassed me also by inconveniently reminding me of my own history of unthinkingly repudiating trans subjectivity. In the past, I too did not always accept the
genuineness of the claim to be mis-sexed. Through coming to know many transpeople over the years, I have been able to change my convictions and to acknowledge my non-innocent voice. This change in attitude was facilitated through feminism, the first place that I turned to as a queer but ‘gender-embodied-congruent male’, to begin a journey towards a better understanding of trans subjectivity.

Feminism has a long history of being intertwined with other social justice movements, beyond a project of achieving women’s emancipation alone. In representing the voices of the diverse transpeople I have interviewed, I do so with a vision of liberation in mind. This vision is aided by having listened to both non-trans feminists and transpeople alike: sexed and gendered embodied selves freely moving through the world, pursuing their personal fulfilment unfettered by the unnecessary constraints, prejudices, threats and violence of those who perpetrate sex/gender oppression. Such a vision is hard to sustain, given the continuing force of our present social traditions which pose a double bind for transpeople: we permit sex-change to occur in a context where transpeople often face pervasive sets of repudiation.

When I decided to pursue the topic of trans repudiation (initially limited to the more restricted term transphobia), the first thing I made clear to myself was that a missionary motivation would not be a factor. I am not out to save transpeople (nor could I anyway). Rather, I desire understanding, to be an ally, a friend, to use my ears, to articulate where possible the concrete concerns that emerge and relate these to a theoretical and social context. In refusing the ‘saviour attitude’, which assumes that a rescuing party can have adequate knowledge of subjugation, I have adopted the premise that transpeople are the first experts on their own lives. This premise is, regrettably, something that my background discipline of psychology has repeatedly failed to acknowledge, preferring to view transpeople as victims of a serious psychological disorder. In this sense, I am deeply grateful for the uncommon opportunity, as a male embodied person, to locate this research project within a feminist space and under the guidance of feminist scholars who understand the dynamics of repudiation to which I draw attention. As a ‘male-embodied-congruent’ person, I do not see from the multiple nodes of subjugation from which many transpeople are forced to view their circumstances and the world at large. Feminist standpoint
epistemology argues that seeing from the periphery can be an advantage, and a subaltern position grants possibilities to see something more clearly. As Sandra Harding (2004b) comments:

... thinkers with “center” identities have also argued that marginalized lives are better places from which to start asking causal and critical questions about the social order. After all, Hegel was not a slave, though he argued that the master/slave relationship could be better understood from the perspective of slaves’ activities. (p. 130)

My own queer position is marginal, but not as marginal as that of transpeople. In agreeing with the general premises of standpoint feminist philosophy, I believe it essential to consult with transpeople directly in attempting to understand aspects of their experiences of repudiation. Moreover, as a non-trans writer, I also contend that this does not prevent me from making a contribution to trans studies. Harding (2004b) broaches a similar theme of the question of whether or not men can contribute to feminist thought, suggesting that

... it cannot be that women are the unique generators of feminist knowledge. Women cannot claim this ability to be uniquely theirs, and men must not be permitted to claim that because they are not women, they are not obligated to produce fully feminist analyses. Men, too, must contribute distinctive forms of specifically feminist knowledge from their particular social situation. (p. 135)

Donna Haraway (2004) appears to implicitly concur with Harding’s position, suggesting that, “feminist embodiment, then, is not about fixed location in a reified body, female or otherwise, but about nodes in fields, inflections in orientations, and responsibility for difference in material-semiotic fields of meaning” (p. 92). These arguments are posed in relation to women and feminism, yet Harding also suggests (2004a) that “race, ethnicity-based, anti-imperial, and queer social justice movements [also] routinely produce standpoint themes” (p. 3). Dick Pels (2004), in a partial criticism of standpoint theory, suggests that one need not in principle have oneself experienced oppression to understand the lives of those subjugated. Drawing on Harding’s traitorous analyses, he argues that one can educate oneself and adopt a “traitorous location” which produces a “traitorous agenda” (p. 284). For those who consciously oppose transpeople’s embodied claims and subjectivity (such as some psychologists/psychiatrists, gays, lesbians, and

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14 The Centre for Research in Women’s Studies and Gender Relations, UBC, Vancouver.
feminists), my avowed solidarity with trans struggle is in part a "traitorous agenda", with this present study - a rationale for solidarity with trans struggle – constituting a "traitorous analysis".

Socialist feminists, some of whom are prominent standpoint theorists\(^\text{15}\), argue that women’s oppression is an outcome of both class and patriarchal oppression. The principles of solidarity are invoked as a means to achieve the ideal of women’s liberation. Their conception of solidarity is one that includes men’s direct participation, believing that they have a role in the struggle for concrete change relating to women’s emancipation, and that they have a role to play in producing feminist knowledge. This latter point has made for some very strong disagreements between socialist feminists and radical-cultural feminists, the latter opposing men’s direct participation in women’s struggles. For example, Becki Ross (1995) outlines the historic and often vexed divisiveness between radical-cultural feminists and socialist feminists in Toronto’s local history. Socialist feminists strive for unity as a strategic necessity, for solidarity as a tactical act of interconnection. These tactics have classically produced results such as the eight-hour workday, workplace safety provisions, maternity leave, holiday pay and other benefits won through struggle, through union solidarity. Transpeople, as an extremely marginalised group, could well benefit from the solidarity of others so that the external barriers they face might one day be eliminated.

As a feminist, Dorothy Smith (1999, 2004/1974) takes the standpoint\(^\text{16}\) of women’s lived experience under “ruling relations...the complex of objectified social relations that organise and regulate our lives in contemporary society” (p. 74). The patriarchal composition of ruling relations, which Smith asserts to be both institutional and materialist in character, take effect in many sub-sets of rule with their power to subjugate multiform categories of other-ness. Yet ruling has a gendered aspect to it, one that Smith ascertains as evident in the ordinary

\(^{15}\) For Hirschmann (2004) standpoint theory is in accord with its Marxist roots by situating itself as epistemologically dialectical. This dialectical engagement is construed as an ongoing project, one that is not finished. Standpoint theories have not reached final answers and there is no final consensus among adherents.

\(^{16}\) It bears mention that there are significant differences between standpoint theorists. Donna Haraway argues that one’s location places limits on what one can know (hence knowledge becomes situated/partial); Sandra Harding tends to argue that certain locations lend an epistemic advantage by providing a “better view”; while Dorothy Smith disagrees with both Haraway and Harding. For Smith, if one begins research inquiries outside of locations that authorise knowledge, new problematics and questions will surface that aid understanding in how women’s lives are orchestrated by globalising processes of ruling / governing (Dawn Currie, personal communication, 2006).
experiences of women’s everyday/night worlds. Her perspective is clearly feminist in analysing how women are ruled through institutions and structures that contain, among other things, the “visible predominance of men” (Smith, 1987, p. 4). In analysing gender relations in the social world, Smith (1999) further states that she has “started with a sense of problem, of something going on, some disquiet, and of something there that could be explicated” (p. 9). Similarly, I have started from a similar premise in addressing the lived everyday/night worlds of transpeople.

Standpoint feminism, and in particular the materialist feminist sociology of Dorothy Smith, provide important analytical insights into how ruling relations subjugate gendered subjects in their everyday/night worlds. This is clearly evident in the work of Viviane Namaste (2000, 2004) whose institutional analyses of transpeople’s social position closely follows Smith’s sociological conceptions. However, as disciplinary analyses, both Smith’s and Namaste’s explications overlook the interiority of the psyche and the complexities of identity that discourses such as depth psychology deal with. In continuing my foregrounding, attention now turns to what they leave out.

**Critical Psychology and Depth Psychology**

In contrast to most representations of transpeople in psychological and psychiatric literature, I have taken a non-pathological stance towards understanding trans lives. This is not to suggest that all transpeople do not or have not suffered from their trans status. Nor is it to suggest that all transpeople do not need psychological or psychiatric services. Rather, it is to go against mainstream clinical representations that diagnose sex/gender identity deviance as an outcome of pathological processes that ultimately invalidate the mis-sexed claim, yet recognise that in many cases SRS is the only viable treatment.

For the most part, I do not locate my position as a psychologist within psychology’s mainstream epistemology and methods. The philosophical grounding of most psychological research in Anglo-American contexts favours the Humean empirical tradition, positivism, and associated experimental methods that largely produce quantitative findings (Danziger, 1990). Using the PsycINFO data base, Rennie, Monteiro, and Watson (2002), in a meta-analysis of empirical
publications in psychology, found that 0.45% (or 9% of the whole) were devoted to projects that used qualitative analysis and that most of these qualitative studies in psychology have been published in the last two decades. More than 90% of research published in psychology is quantitative.

As a critical psychologist, clearly I do not locate my research project in psychology’s methodological mainstream. Nor is it located in its qualitative margins, rather it is at the peripheries of the qualitative margins since a hermeneutic approach to trans narrative rejects method itself as a means of establishing fixed truth claims. I am not concerned with this radical location, recalling feminist standpoint theory’s suggestion that a peripheral location might give one a better vantage point from which to view the processes that surround social subjugation. I do not believe that methods from within mainstream psychology are able to capture the repudiations to which transpeople are subjected in their everyday/night lives, since psychology and psychiatry as empirical disciplines are unable to move beyond the moral positions which ‘neutral’ empiricism denies holding.

Critical psychologists are “generally quite cautious about defining their area” (Kitzinger, 1999, p. 52). However, there are some common themes that most of them acknowledge. Unlike mainstream psychology, which is avowedly disciplinary, Parker (1999) suggests that critical psychology

... stretches across the boundary marking the inside and outside of the discipline. It is not only ‘interdisciplinary’, in the sense that it must draw upon arguments across the academic and professional landscape, but ‘transdisciplinary’ in the sense that it both questions the ways in which the borders [of psychology] were set up and policed... from the further most edges of the psy-complex to the centres of psychology. (p. 10)

Prilleltensky (1999) reviews the main tenets of critical psychology, noting that these discourses are as concerned with psychology as they are with society. He suggests that critical psychologists should reject the persona of the neutral, ahistorical scientist, and instead foreground the inseparable position of being both psychologists and critical citizens. Like most critical psychologists, Prilleltensky argues that psychology should take a new moral position (which would entail acknowledging and then rejecting its present one), that “strives to work for, and not
against the oppressed” (p. 100). For example, Kitzinger (1999) notes that, historically, psychology has used its methods to reinforce heterosexism in presenting ‘evidence’ to validate the thesis that homosexuality is a psychopathological disorder. In America, ‘Gay and Lesbian psychology’ has, in recent years, made use of the same positivist methods to counter these claims. Yet this has often been pursued in ways that point to essentialist universals (‘the gay gene’) or problematic explanations that similarly reproduce “psychology’s power to label people as ‘sick’”, as in diagnosing someone as suffering from “homophobia” (p. 58). Kitzinger acknowledges that gay and lesbian psychologists have been successful in using positivism to bring about changes, like the 1973 decision of the American Psychiatric Association to remove homosexuality as a mental disorder from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual and the 1993 removal of homosexuality from the World Health Organisation’s International Classification of Diseases. However, ultimately the use of positivist psychological methods maintains psychology’s individualising tendencies that obscure social, historical, and political dynamics.

Prilleltensky (1999) argues that critical psychologists should acknowledge the values that underpin the work of those psychologists who work for social justice: “Values should be grounded in the context of the daily living realities and subjectivity of the people with whom we wish to establish bonds of solidarity” (p. 101). As a critical psychologist who strives to establish bonds of solidarity with transpeople, an extremely oppressed group, I note the fact that the psyche-complex (psychology, psychiatry and their practices) continues to generate research, discourses, and therapeutic practices that largely pathologise transpeople.

In considering multiple schools of depth psychology (Freudian, Jungian, and Adlerian) as a critical ‘foundation’ for returning the gaze of trans repudiation, a noteworthy paradox is apparent. Depth psychology itself has often produced sometimes extreme repudiations of those considered to be sex/gender deviants. I contend that this is due to the tendency of these discourses to wax and wane into psychology’s centre and out to its peripheries. Freudian psychoanalysis especially, when it moves towards the centre, tends towards political conservatism, as will be argued in Chapter 6. When it does so, it loses its radical theoretical capacities. Nevertheless, the concept of a dynamic unconscious replete with defense mechanisms poses challenges to psychology’s mainstream, surface empiricism. These discourses, moreover,
in acknowledging and utilising the force of irrationality in human subjectivity, are capable of accounting for the sometimes extreme reactions of ‘gender congruent’ people that transpeople encounter. The tension between surface empiricism (psychology’s centre) and discourses that make use of the concept of depth (which also encompasses what is pushed to the margins) are very much rooted in the formalization of psychology as a discipline in the late nineteenth-century. A historical sketch is warranted in justifying my preference for locating myself as a critical depth psychologist, alongside my use of hermeneutics and feminist discourses for understanding trans repudiation.

Critical psychology, as opposed to mainstream empirical/clinical psychology, begins with the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche [1844–1900]. That Nietzsche is popularly considered first and foremost to be a philosopher obscures his self-declared position as a psychologist, “Ich bin ein Psychologe” (as cited in Golomb, 1999, p. 1). In his later period, Nietzsche repeatedly emphasises his status as a psychologist, remarkably defining himself as one “without peer or precedent… unlike those clumsy [empirical] ‘English psychologists’ ” (Conway, 1999, p. 51). His position was at times provocative, as when he claims that “there was no psychology at all before me” (ibid., p. 51). Unsurprisingly, Anglo-American psychology rejects Nietzsche’s claim, as evidenced in texts tracing the historical development of the discipline that generally elide all references to Nietzsche. Indeed, Nietzsche was certainly not a psychologist as conventionally understood, not an experimentalist, a clinician, a pedagogic scientist, a lover of measurement, or a statistical analyst. However, his influence on psychodynamic depth psychology, in contrast to empirical psychology, was profound. It was Nietzsche who first posited a “depth psychology”, a precursor to the development of the later psychodynamic psychologies of Freud, Adler, and Jung, who were all familiar with his writings.

For Nietzsche, human subjects cannot be known in the empirical sense, rather the human subject is “a thing dark and veiled” (as cited in Golomb, 1999, p. 2). His version of psychology is not concerned with describing who and what we are, rather how it is that we are moved to do what we do. In searching for motives, Nietzsche, like Freud, challenged the autonomy of the free will and insisted on the material foundations of consciousness. His “art of knowing other people, of understanding [motivation]…” renders him “an instinctive and accurate ‘reader of the souls’ of
other human beings”, illustrating a much older form of psychology than the one that developed as a ‘science’ (Holub, 1999, pp. 154-155). This instinctive knowledge counts reliance on ‘method’ as naïve, an illusion deployed as a means to produce psychological ‘knowledge’. Rather, Nietzsche follows the introspective position of philosophy, which modernist psychology classically disdains (Danziger, 1990). In this sense, Nietzsche’s theory of psychology can be seen as opposed to proving or “capturing” absolute ‘truths’. Rather, his psychology is said to be like a “scaffolding”, a theory that is provisional, to be removed once it has met its contextual aims (Golomb, 1999, p. 11). This is a paradoxical position, as Nietzsche’s deterministic aspects reveal (such as his continuing references to “instinct”).

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche (1972/1886, aphorism 1, part 3) describes psychology as “the great hunt”. Its hunting grounds are the terrain of the human mind and the body it purports to control. Empirical psychology contends that the mind is knowable, it can be subject to capture. This type of psychology is committed to sensing and then displaying by means of description what it claims to have captured. It often succumbs to unthought-out moral polarities, especially the binary of true/false (Cadello, 1999). Nietzsche points out that this binary has repeatedly entrapped metaphysicians. In contrast, he argues for a psychology that engages “dangerous maybes” (ibid., p. 28). Psychology’s faith in moral oppositions (good/evil, true/false, sane/insane, normal/abnormal) constitutes a prejudice that produces “the shipwreck of psychology” (Nietzsche, as cited ibid., p. 28), a hunt steered naively in the direction of “crusades for... truths” (ibid., p. 34). Such a psychology buries “much of the full range of human inner experience in silence” (ibid., p. 29). Although I disagree with Nietzsche’s determinism, I endorse his problematisation of the pervasive binaries that mainstream psychology tends to reproduce. I also contend that psychology has failed to sufficiently consider the “dangerous maybes” that transpeople, for example, pose.

My approach owes a great deal to the body of scholarly writing that has emerged over the past decade to consolidate critical voices in psychology. The issues clustered under the umbrella of *critical psychology* include the following categories:
- **Philosophical/theoretical:** Critiquing psychology's dominant epistemological assumptions (which are defensive of disciplinarity, and aligned closely with the status quo), which lead to 'findings' that claim to be ahistorical and 'neutral/objective', but tend to produce pervasive reifications. These are evidenced in essentialist attempts to justify overt or assumed superiority claims on the basis of race, class, sex, sexual orientation, ability, and so on.

- **Methodological:** Critiquing psychology's privileging of positivistic methods based on models and research sites that lack ecological validity (e.g. the university laboratory). Anglo-American psychology generally eschews alternative methods, such as qualitative or action research. In privileging positivist methods, psychology emphasises the empirical over the theoretical, and the usual (normativity) over exceptions.

- **Clinical:** Critiquing individualist aetiological formulations and the focus on adjusting an individual's symptomatic distress to accommodate the status quo.

- **Political:** Critiquing psychology's confluence with (neo)liberalism, as in industrial psychology's emphasis on managerial techniques, psychometric psychology's production of corporate standardised testing for use in educational settings, or cognitive psychology's research refining the manipulative capacity of media advertising, propaganda, and other influencing techniques.

At the birth of psychology as a discipline two foundational figures, the American William James [1842-1910] and the German Wilhelm Wundt [1832-1920], were opposed to a wholly empirical project of psychology. Aspects of their work have either been elided or repudiated by a predominantly modernist stance, the still dominant force in Anglo-American psychology. Only those aspects of James's and Wundt's work that support psychology's present aims are historically commemorated and resolutely followed. James's (1955/1890) tripartite volumes, *Principles of Psychology*, laid out much of psychology's disciplinary terrain and most of the problems that twentieth-century psychology pursued. He did so, however, in a pre-disciplinary or perhaps interdisciplinary manner. On the other hand, Wundt, who provided psychology with the celebrated model of the experimental laboratory, was selectively imported into Anglo-American contexts. Wundt's *Völkerpsychologie*\(^1\) - which provided a non-experimental counterbalance to laboratory research - was almost completely ignored in Anglo-American contexts. This is surely
due to the fact that Wundt’s school, the first Leipzig school, and the second school of Leipzig that followed him (the *Ganzheitspsychologie*18, which emphasised holism) contradicted the increasing territorial development of psychology into a discrete, objectivist discipline. The first and second Leipzig schools holistically emphasised the significance of subjective experience and the force of values on human subjects. This emphasis compromises Anglo-American emphases on retaining mind-body dualism and its commitment to a Humean based, British empiricism. Anglo-American psychology misappropriated Wundt’s ideas and subsequently entrenched the view that ‘objective’ claims were the only kinds worthy of scholarly merit. Psychology solidified around positivism, which ‘provided’ psychologists with the authority to make ‘hard Truth’ claims, circularly enhancing the esteem of the emerging discipline (Danziger, 1990; E. Sullivan, 1990; Tolman, 1991, 1994, 1996).

Psychology set up structures to self-police the discipline so as to largely exclude phenomenological, subjectivistic, narrative, and qualitative accounts. These frowned-upon epistemologies and methods managed to emerge only in other academic departments, such as education, where counselling psychology could flourish without disrupting the scientific gaze of mainstream psychology. Psychoanalysis was a forerunner to contemporary critical psychology. In its orthodox form, it was opposed to a singular, common-sense, empirical epistemology. It also challenged the idea of disciplinarity that psychology relished in its pursuit of fortified territorial boundaries. Post-Freudians, such as Lacan and the post-Lacanians, also expound a variety of critical psychology that has commanded attention in interdisciplinary fields such as Women’s Studies. Other critiques have emerged from the *New School for Social Research* (formerly the Frankfurt School), whose interdisciplinary associations include psychoanalysis, social psychology, sociology, and philosophy. The school’s concept of *critical theory* was one of the notable precursors to the critical psychology movement. *The Authoritarian Personality*, one of the more famous studies to come from this school (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and

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17 Diriwächter (2004) points out that the term roughly translates to mean psychology of a people or “folk”.
18 The *Ganzheitspsychologie*, consonant with German idealism, emphasises an overarching whole. This whole posits the individual within community, society and, more spiritually, the “cosmos” (Diriwächter, 2003). It is an approach that is largely forgotten, aspects of which were exploited and subsequently tainted by the Nazis, who distorted the theory to support nationalism and fascism.
Sanford, 1950), constitutes a remarkable critical contribution to psychology and the critical social sciences at large.

Another important theorist often cited in contemporary critical psychology is Michel Foucault [1926-1984]. Foucault, who saw himself as a “specialist in the history of systems of thought” (Macey, 2000, p. 133), began his career as a psychologist and made a very important contribution to the critique of psychology/psychiatry through his volume *Madness and Civilisation [Folie et Dérainson]* (Foucault, 1967). Foucault received a license as a psychologist from the Sorbonne in Paris and further qualifications from the Institut de Psychologie de Paris [1949], where he specialised in pathological psychology. He served as a psychologist at the Sainte-Anne mental hospital and was also employed at the prison hospital at Fresnes, moving on to lecture in psychology at the Ecole Normale Supérieure. He also held other academic appointments as an instructor in psychology. His early publications included a lengthy introduction to a major text on the history of psychology between 1850 and 1950 which was published in 1953. Like Nietzsche, texts that trace the history of psychology over the twentieth century rarely mention Foucault as a psychologist, a professional title that, unlike Nietzsche, Foucault abandoned.

Other alternatives to Anglo-American mainstream psychology also emerged in France, including the work of the Martinique-born psychiatrist and activist Frantz Fanon [1925-1961], a foundational figure in the development of postcolonial and anti-racist studies. Fanon (1967) made use of the ideas of Freud, Adler, and Lacan to critique the colonial heritage of psychiatry and the problems of internalised racism, demonstrating the social and political relevance of depth psychology.

Finally, feminist psychologists such as Sue Wilkinson (1997) and Celia Kitzinger (1996) have made contributions to critical psychology that challenge representations of ‘objective data’ that frequently mask patriarchal norms, including heteronormativity. Feminist critical psychology reads psychology’s production of knowledge claims as political texts that are far from objective.

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19 I am grateful to Dr. M. Bendle, University of Queensland, Australia, for his assistance in summarising the genesis of Foucault the philosopher/interdisciplinarian from his roots as Foucault the psychologist.
In clinical psychology, representations of psychopathology, for example, point to moral polarities around sex/gender which tend to distort the effects of patriarchal prescriptions on the mental health of gendered subjects (Busfield, 1996).

Contemporary critical psychology is an umbrella field that includes the interdisciplinary traditions of critical realism and materialist analyses, feminist re-readings, historical accounts, genealogical/archaeological analyses, and other postmodern / poststructural standpoints. As a psychologist who identifies with critical psychology, I view this new and innovative field as an academic tool with which to pursue social justice. Organisations such as the International Society for Theoretical Psychology and Critical Psychology International are opening up scholarly spaces for psychologists and other academics to pursue new questions excluded by traditional psychology. In favouring critical psychology, I concur with the Nietzschean position argued by Cadello (1999):

> The psychology of the great hunt does not attempt to sort out correctly or finally who we are or how we are constituted and composed psychologically; it gives up the quest for psychological identity, sacrificing the belief that there is a psychic world that can be made present, accessible, attainable, available, that can be exposed and decisively secured by the supposedly appropriate moral – metaphysical (set of) binarisms used to access it. (p. 34)

The aim of this chapter was to foreground the epistemological positions I have taken in examining trans repudiation from a non-trans-embodied position. The fusion of horizons presented includes hermeneutics, feminist standpoint epistemology, socialist feminism, materialist sociology, depth psychology, and critical psychology. A fusion of horizons of these varied fields is appropriate for a hybrid project whose aim is to pursue an understanding of trans lives. Trans repudiation emerges as constituting a primary moral and pragmatic issue in the quest for social justice, in establishing bonds of solidarity with a subjugated and oppressed group. All these dimensions are relevant to an investigation of transphobia, or what can be better expressed as the widespread repudiation of transpeople and related trans issues, as illustrated in the interviews conducted.
In Part II, I consider political modes of repudiation, before embarking in Part III on an analysis of depth psychology in attempting to understand the almost ubiquitous repudiations transpeople face. This analysis begins in the next chapter by questioning the idea of trans/phobia itself: is it a sufficient term to explain the multiple layers of discrimination that produce trans subjugation? What do transpeople mean when they speak of transphobia? In answering these questions, I shall excerpt further stories from my interviews with transpeople, incorporating their perspectives into this dialogue between disciplines.
Part II

‘TRANS/PHOBIA’ AND THE POLITICS OF REPUDIATION
Chapter 4: Repudiation and Transphobia: Concepts, Theory, and Experience

Repudiation

This chapter considers the concepts of repudiation and transphobia. I have introduced the term *repudiation* into my analysis of the issues and barriers that transpeople face as an analytic category that goes beyond transphobia. In going beyond transphobia, I do not purport that there is no such ‘thing’, on the contrary, transphobia does appear to exist as a dynamic factor in transpeople’s lives. However, I intend to critically appraise the concept and demonstrate its limitations. Favouring “repudiation” as a concept and a process will, I believe, strengthen the legitimacy of the experiences that transpeople disclose when they speak of ‘transphobia’.

To repudiate is to reject, refuse, condemn, repel, disown, renounce and back away from that which engenders repulsion. Repudiation entails dynamics of denial, and for psychoanalysis is primordially related to the early experiences of separating from the mother, for example, by rejecting her breast. In the moment when the infant rejects the mother’s breast, s/he also repudiates it, making it ab/ject (refuse-d, thrown out). The etymology of repudiation is linked to the Latin *repudiare* and *repudiatus*, pointing to the foot (*ped* or *pes*), recoiling, backing away from something or kicking it away. Harper (2001) also links the origins of the word to *pudere*, or that which causes shame. The word migrated into Old French by means of *repeller* from *re* or back, and *peller* meaning to strike at or to drive back the “repellant”. It was linked to eighteenth-century medicines created to treat tumours, which had a rank flavour, a vile taste that was repelling.

Butler (1993) suggests that repudiation is a crucial act involved in the formation of subjectivity:
... the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all, “inside” the subject as its own founding repudiation. (p. 3) Kristeva (1982) speaks of abjection as located “at the crossroads of phobia, obsession, and perversion... overtaxed by a ‘bad object’, [the subject] turns away from it, cleanses itself of it, and vomits it” (p. 45). She contends that repudiation is a form of negation, “negation and its modalities, transgression, denial, and repudiation” [Italics original] (p. 6). It can be witnessed in the repulsion that is expressed in food loathing or the urge to vomit on seeing something repulsive. Repudiation is complexly linked to desire, to being pulled to an object that one simultaneously loves and hates, “repudiation affects desire itself” (ibid., p. 7). It is also linked to the precariousness of self and identity, a response to a sense of threat. The prohibition against eating foods such as shellfish or pork in some cultures has little to do with the food items themselves, rather it becomes symbolic of identity and threats to identity, of engulfment or annihilation.

The reasons for a specific repudiation, importantly, may have conscious or unconscious roots. Stephen Frosh (1994), in his psychoanalytic study of masculinity, notes the tendency to repudiation: “identifying and feeling at ease with men’s ‘own’ sexuality seems to be something both necessary and hard to manage, at times producing violent repudiation of anything too threateningly ‘other’ ” (p. 93). Jukes (1993) believes that the formation of male selves, traced to traumatic separation issues with the mother, is the source of “male misogyny” (p. xxvii). He contends that misogyny is a “potential” in all people, male or female, though more “debilitating” in males, who may remain unconscious of their enmity towards women. Jukes suggests that relational circumstances “call out” misogyny, where it may spill into rage or crystallize into a more conscious sense of hatred. The object of such enmity is viewed as a threat to the self and, in more extreme cases (such as the complex of phobia as in transphobia), fear and paranoia become so intense that they must be projected outwards onto an object. Loss of the self, so laboriously ‘built’, is threatening to the subject, hence s/he marks the boundaries of an “unstable identity by reifying and repudiating the other” (Frosh, 1994, p. 122). Whether this Other is a woman, queer person, or transperson may not matter, since for the most phobic they all may threaten the (male) self.
McAfee (2004) suggests that abjection, an early form of repudiation, is part of a tenuous self-formation in the process of separating from the mother, of drawing lines between “you”, and “me”, “the state of abjecting or rejecting what is other to oneself - and thereby creating borders of an always tenuous ‘I’ ” (p. 45). The phenomenon is saliently dramatised in the film *The Crying Game* (Jordan and Wooley, 1992). Fergus is dating Dil, an anatomical male assumed by Fergus to be a natal female, while Dil believes he knows she is trans embodied. When he discovers Dil’s penis he assaults her, then violently vomits. He vomits out her penis, abjecting it. This is akin to Kristeva’s (1982) observation that some cultures engage in purification rites and other religious practices that establish boundaries between certain groups (e.g. men and women) to prevent pollution or defilement. And yet the abject also exerts a fascination, similar to Fanon’s (1967) phobogenic object. McAfee suggests that it is “both sickening yet irresistible” (p. 47). In our culture trans repudiation is rife, yet the success of films like *The Crying Game*, magazine articles, television spectacles, pornography, etc. that portray transpeople, is evidence of a fascination with transgressive gender/sex bodies.

Since the term transphobia is used in trans communities, I make use of the term in my interviews, but in theorising subsequently on these interviews as a whole, I tend to use the term repudiation. In doing so, I see transphobia as an aspect of repudiation, but repudiation is more than just fear; it conveys an ongoing narcissistic need to preserve the ‘purity’ of the self, to draw borders between the self and others. Moreover, I am aware of sociopathic syndromes, such as those discussed in Duncan Cartwright’s (2002) study of violent, imprisoned offenders, where dehumanization of objects occurred during sadistic acts (such as murder) and there is little or no evidence of emotionality (inclusive of fear). In some cases, tracing the childhood history of such offenders reveals physical and sexual abuse, where identification with the aggressor defensively protects against fears of annihilation. In this case, fear may have sedimented since that time, yet not all sadistic offenders have such histories (ibid.). Most sadistic, violent offenders are men and all of the participants in Cartwright’s study were men in prison. In the West, men commit at least 90% of violent crimes (Campbell and Muncer, 1995), which may indicate that their male/masculine identity is experienced as in need of protection or assertion.
Repudiation is a term related to a number of concepts in depth psychology. For example, it shares aspects of Freud’s concept of Verwerfung [from the verb: verwerfen, to throw away], often translated as “distortion”. Freud used the concept to evoke differing meanings, as Laplanche and Pontalis (1972) summarise:

(1) In a rather loose sense of a refusal, which can, for example, occur as repression; (2) … a casting-out in the form of a conscious judgement of condemnation; (3) [in the Lacanian re-reading] … the ego rejects (verwirft) the incompatible representation… and behaves as if the representation had never occurred to the ego at all. (p. 187)

Repudiation of trans subjectivity can be seen on a spectrum ranging from a conscious yet unexpressed distaste through to extreme forms of reaction that precipitate violence and destructiveness based on rage (sudden and explosive) or hatred (stable, integrated aspects of enmity towards an object). In Instincts and their Vicissitudes, Freud (1915) writes:

Hate, as a relation to objects, is older than love. It derives from the narcissistic ego’s primordial repudiation of the external world with its outpouring of stimuli. As an expression of the reaction of unpleasure evoked by objects, it always remains in an intimate relation with the self-preservation instincts. (p. 11)

There is the potential to theorise the unconscious and defensive mechanisms of repudiation, especially concerning transpeople. Yet, to date, very little appears to have been done. A preliminary attempt to theorise trans repudiation, as described in the depth psychologies, will be made in Chapters 7 and 8, which will provide an overview of the relevance of the schools of depth psychology in relation to gender/sex, mechanisms of defence, and phobic reactions. While issues related to transpeople are rarely addressed in these discourses, several central concepts are useful in the attempt to understand their experiences.

**Problematising trans/phobia**

The term transphobia, while understood within trans and queer communities, generally remains unfamiliar everywhere else. A search in the randomly selected 2005 edition of the Oxford Canadian English dictionary does not reveal the word. The term transsexual is listed, and
transgender has been recently added to this reference tool (as recently as 1998, “transgender” was not in the Oxford dictionary). Trans and phobia are separately outlined in different categories, both of which provide clues as to the potential meaning of the term transphobia. Trans\textsuperscript{20} is defined as follows:

Trans- / traenz, -ns / prefix 1 across, beyond (transcontinental; transgress). 2 on or to the other side of (transatlantic) (opp. cis-) 3 through (transcutaneous). 4 into another state or place (transform; transcribe). 5 surpassing, transcending (transfinite)... [from or after Latin trans across] (p. 1540)

Trans carries with it a sense of motion, movement, process, and so on. This connotation explains the term’s appeal in critical fields such as feminist and postcolonial theory. These discourses have begun to consider the action-oriented and dis-locating power of trans through transdisciplinary inquiries into transnational and transcultural issues. Transgender is now sometimes included among these theoretical categories. Trans, in its conceptual and etymological complexity, is a term ripe for social, theoretical and praxis implementations.

In the interviews with the twenty transpeople consulted for this study, none of the participants problematised the term transphobia; all agreed that it connotes an identifiable, menacing force that is often perceived as permanently present, or that may have traumatised them in the past. Regardless of the multiplicity of identity configurations that emerged in the study, participants identifying as Trans, transsexual, or transgender, all acknowledged the problem of transphobia. Indeed, it is one of the major points of consensus that has emerged from my research. That transpeople themselves have not necessarily problematised transphobia may have more to do with the urgency of the political issues that transphobia signifies, rather than academic debates surrounding its semantic interpretation.

Transphobia ultimately suggests a causal explanation of the subjugation of trans lives, by positing that trans people incite fear. I have no doubt that an element of fear is dynamically manifest in many instances of trans discrimination, but it is not universally so. In fact, it is

\textsuperscript{20}I have omitted the Oxford sub-definitions of trans numbers 6a and 6b as they relate specifically to trans as used in chemistry and physics.
transpeople who more often have reason to be afraid. There clearly are political ideologies, for example, that do not accept the legitimacy of trans lives. Subscription and faithfulness to a conscious or default political ideology do not necessarily point to the primacy of fear as the motivation for hostility. Hence, repudiation, a process of disavowal and negation that includes fear but also other dynamics, is a less limited explanatory position. Repudiation evokes conscious and unconscious dynamics that are inter/intrapersonal. It constellates other affective elements such as enmity, hatred, and repulsion which are aggressive qualities that may or may not be laced-in with fear/threat. While phobia is caused by fear of an object, repudiation is more of a dynamic quality, a process of relating. In this sense, I privilege process over cause in investigating transpeople’s experiences of overt hostility, barriers, or negativity.

Nevertheless, there are those in trans communities who have drawn attention to the desirability of alternate designations, perhaps because of the problems that a related term, homophobia, seems also to manifest.

Kitzinger (1996) points out the insufficiencies of the concept of homophobia:

> Unlike terms such as sexism or heterosexism, which were developed within the Women’s and Gay Liberation Movements and modelled on political concepts, the word homophobia derives from (and is used within) the academic discipline of psychology: *phobia* comes from the Greek for “fear”...The notion that some people might have a phobia about gay men and lesbians first began to appear in psychological writing in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and homophobia was defined as ‘an irrational persistent fear or dread of homosexuals’.

(p. 8)

Kitzinger argues that there are two critical dimensions to the concept of phobia. Firstly, as with other neuroses, psychology exercises its individualising power under prevailing social conditions in ascribing a personal diagnosis such as phobia. Rather than prioritising historical and cultural aspects to an aetiology, the mental distress is addressed solely as an individual problem in need of diagnosis and adjustment through individual treatment. Homosexuality, itself formerly considered a sexual neurosis, is an apposite exemplar of the problem. Historically, psychology conceptualised homosexuality as a sexual deviation or dysfunction, a fault within an individual, requiring individual treatment and adjustment towards an unproblematic, normative
heterosexuality. This view, Kitzinger argues, shifts the emphasis and responsibility from the oppressor to the oppressed. It is the homosexual who must change. Her second point is that there are legitimate reasons for the heterosexual establishment to fear, for example, lesbians (since she argues that lesbians hold revolutionary power). Yet ‘homophobia’ tells us, following affirmative models of therapy, that this is an irrational fear. One need not be afraid of lesbians according to the discourse of homophobia, suggesting that it is just an irrational phobia, that can be tended to like any other ailment. While there is no diagnosis of “homophobia” in the DSM-IV-Tr (APA, 2000), there are legal precedents of arguing for “homosexual panic” as a reason for mitigating hostility and violence, relating to the idea of homophobia (Steinberg, 2005).

A phobia is an irrational fear that is out of proportion to the danger at hand, though some of these fears have a sound foundation in the historically lived experience of both humans and animals. Fears of snakes and spiders, for example, are legitimate, but only ‘psychopathologically’ significant if they rule a person’s life beyond what is reasonable. Undoubtedly, there are people whose fear of lesbians, gay men, or others constituted as queer may cause them to experience palpitations, sweat, shortness of breath, alarm, and so on. Whereas one would be hard pressed to find a rational evolutionary or individualised reason to justify a fear of queer people, examples abound of institutionalised enmity of them in the social world. This is the root of the problem: ‘homophobia’ is not rational, rather it mirrors historical problems, related to the ruling of bodies, internalised by subjects through the social world. While it is a psychological problem, there is no homophobia that can be attributed simply to the psychologised individual. For this reason, like Kitzinger, I therefore prefer the term heterosexism over homophobia. I also acknowledge, however, that homophobia is useful as an everyday term and its entry into common parlance renders it a simple if inadequate referent. It is easy to surmise that this too is a rationale for why transpeople continue to use the concept transphobia: it approximates “homophobia” in ways that can readily borrow the latter’s increased familiarity as a political issue commonly discussed in public discourse.

Transphobia points to the “daunting array of obstacles” (Califia, 2003, p. 1) that transpeople face in the course of their everyday/night lives. And while homophobia and transphobia overlap, they are also quite distinct in some ways. For example, many transpeople are straight in their sexual
orientation and it is therefore erroneous to posit homophobia or heterosexism as the social force that explains their oppression. And yet the fearful antagonist who makes transphobic insults may very well be unaware of being transphobic. The matter is also complicated by the probability that perpetrators may either mis-read transpeople as queer or reject the heterosexual transperson’s claimed orientation and impose homosexuality on them. As Califia (ibid.) argues, “straight culture reads much of the public expression of gay identity as gender transgression. To them, we’re [trans] all part of the same garbage heap of sex - and - gender trash” (p. 256). The issue is that of gender transgression, of refusing to be what one ‘is’ or was ordered to be and inscribed as, of resisting the Law of the Father\(^\text{21}\), the binary.

Wilchins (2002a) uses the term *genderism* rather than transphobia to describe the systemic oppression that queer and transpeople are subject to. On the model of ‘racism’, she describes genderism as provoking the “civil rights movement of our time” (p. 17). Wilchins (2002b) places herself as an activist in the transgender camp, arguing that the binary gender system is the object for overthrow: “binaries…They are not really about two things but only one, power” (p. 43). However, her analysis tends to overlook the conscious use and approval of the binary by some transpeople. It also overlooks the fact that many transpeople are not, will not, or cannot be TG activists. Others, such as Namaste (2005), oppose ‘transgender rights’, suggesting that a rights strategy often conceals imperialism\(^\text{22}\). She looks at early twentieth-century Canadian feminists such as Nellie McClung and Emily Murphy noting that many of these feminists were racist and entwined women’s rights with the project of British imperialism and empire building. Furthermore, Wilchins comment on, “civil rights movement of our times” wrongly suggests that the racialised struggles of yesteryears have been resolved, or only belong to another time. It is important, I contend, that the struggle for trans liberation not be separated from other struggles, or placed above them, including the ongoing struggle to end racism.

\(^{21}\) Although the phrase “Law of the Father” has specificity in Lacanian discourse, my usage pertains to the general internalised conception of the superego as one that has patriarchal roots/implications in a feminist sense.

\(^{22}\) Namaste (2005) defines her use of imperialism: “Imperialism... (1) economic practices outside the United States that are destined to benefit the interests of American business... (2) to designate the imposition of a particular world view and conceptual framework across nations, languages, and cultures” (p. 103).
In a limited sense, transphobia as a dynamic concept certainly has some utility. Burnham (1999), in her study of the social barriers confronting transpeople, writes about the prominence of

... “transphobia; lack of support and understanding” and “fear of losing spouse, family, friends”, “fear of an unpredictable future”, “fear of losing job”. These barriers are based on fear and ignorance and addressing them involves a monumental effort. If there is a solution it might be education.

(p. 29)

Burnham makes an important point, yet conceptually the use of the concept transphobia requires cautionary limits. For example, it cannot be the universal or ultimate explanation for all dynamics of trans repudiation. A totalising ‘transphobia’ erases ‘race’/culture as analytic categories. Roen (2001), in her discussion of a Maaori trans woman, illustrates the complexity of intersecting identities and how the repudiation of Indigenous ‘trans embodied’ people has further ramifications, for example in view of

... the Maaori conception of identity as something which is never based in the individual alone but relates to the extended family (whaanau) and to genealogy (whakapapa). She argues that to deride her for being transsexual would be to denigrate her entire ancestral line: a far more risky and grave action than merely discriminating against an ‘individual’.

(p. 259)

To repudiate a Maaori ‘transperson’ is to repudiate an entire extended family and a long lineage of ancestry, evoking a collective solidarity akin to the inclusive North American First Nations statement of salutation and honour, all my relations. Transphobia, as a Western concept, can mask the history of Western colonialism and imperialism if one assumes that it connotes merely a fear of transgressing the dominant Western sex/gender binary. Moreover, ‘transphobia’ conceals the Western denigration of Indigenous Others, including cultures and histories that often celebrate what the West views as gender transgression, as in Two-Spirit tribal roles and statuses. In this case, the repudiation is actually refusing a whole culture and not just an individual’s sex/gender ambivalence.

When it does occur, there is necessarily a relational quality to transphobia. As Dorothy Smith (1999) writes, “it is the relations that rule, and people rule and are ruled through them” (p. 82). Smith is specifically referring to ruling relations between men and women. What is needed is a
better understanding of how the same/other binary itself rules transpeople. This is a complex undertaking, as many transpeople themselves are enmeshed in the gender binary and do not wish to overthrow it, perceiving themselves simply as mis-assigned. Hence this study raises issues around belonging and being rejected simultaneously, of being on both sides at once. If someone is TS for example, living as a man or a woman legally and postsurgically, yet meets with consistent barriers that reject that person’s embodied and phenomenological claims, can transphobia wholly account for such obstacles?

Narratives of Trans Repudiation and Transphobia

During the interviews I conducted, the issue of the sex/gender binary often arose in a more broadly centred discussion of transphobia. The complexity of the issues of barriers and passing, based on adherence to the binary or defiance of it, suggests that Wilchin’s “genderism”, while perhaps a solution for some transgendered people, is not a universal solution for all transpeople. In my interview with Trevor, for example, I asked how passing relates to transphobia:

Trevor: I think there are two dimensions here. One is that passing is the avoidance of transphobia and the other is, where is your comfort level in terms of your own brain wiring? Like early on I had a lot to say about queering the binary, I don’t have anything to say about that now. I realised as I moved along that I was in a box and that I wanted to be in another box. And I am aware of the limitations of that and it’s also where I’m comfortable. For me that’s what fits with where the brain got wired. And part of me groans as there are lots of issues that I can take with that but that’s where I’m comfortable. And I’m a man and I’m quite happy to say this with all its limitations and all its problems, I’d rather be there than not there. I’m quite fine with being in that box.

(entry# 60)

For Trevor, one side of the binary is where his existential unfolding takes him. He is happy with the essentialism of “being a man” and feels most comfortable in that location. For him, the issue of passing is no longer an issue at all. As he explains, he had a greater sense of trying to “pass” when he was living as a woman:

Trevor: For me it doesn’t feel like passing. Before I was living in a pretend place, and now I am living. I would never call it passing, it’s living. Passing is about putting out the
façade not about the reality that’s there. I passed to the world for decades, now I’m not passing, I’m being… now I never think, am I being perceived as a man? I mean that was a moment-to-moment conversation when I was trying to live as a woman, I mean every interaction I had as a woman I had this internal dialogue, “Is this how a woman would respond? Would a woman say it this way? This person is seeing me as a woman so how would a woman respond?”

Chris: So passing was an issue for you when you were trying to live as a woman?

Trevor: Always, all the time. I mean I didn’t even know that dialogue was there until it stopped. It was so deeply ingrained. And then I thought, “Oh my god I’ve been doing this all my life.”

(entries# 66-74)

Another interviewee, Jenny, decries the requirement that many gender clinics have, that those requesting SRS live in their aspired gender role for one (or in some cases two) year(s) prior to surgery, a requirement construed as a test that one can pass:

Jenny: I hate the word “passing” because not passing denotes failure, that’s why it’s just a lousy word. Almost by saying “passing” you’re implying, if I’m not passing I’m failing. I think being able to look at yourself in the mirror after you start going full time and like the person that you see, and if you like that person it doesn’t matter what anyone else thinks… It’s like a test, you’re going to pass or fail. Even the word ‘real life test’ is a bad one too, because it implies that it’s not an actual experience. Like today I’ll be a woman - tomorrow I won’t, I did pretty good, ‘A’. The life I came from was no life and there is no going back. It’s always just going forward and I think for a lot of the girls that’s what it is, the life was so miserable that this is the only choice. And to call it a test belittles it, let’s see, let’s test to see how much you like yourself. (laughter).

(entries# 170 and 172)

Passing is a complex and politically loaded issue in trans communities. Those who pass well generally move through society with little stigma unless they are out as trans, although the ability to pass does not make a person completely immune to trans repudiation. Nevertheless, Califia (2003) notes that an inability to pass risks making someone a constant target for harassment. On this basis he argues that transitioning earlier in one’s life (assuming this allows one to pass better than a later transition) is to a trans person’s benefit. He also notes that some transgender activists view passing as a privilege and disparage the practice as conformist. This point is echoed by Elliot and Roen (1998), who argue that “both crossing and passing unwittingly reify positions of sexual and/or gender identity” (p. 234).
For Hank, successful passing is a conundrum with benefits and its own set of problems:

Hank: I think the day-to-day, when you’re on the bus or just trying to get a cup of coffee, that that level of transphobia would die down the better you pass. But then the worry around disclosure, I think, would increase, because the better you are at passing then the more stake there is in that claim. Whereas when I’m not very successfully passing people aren’t that surprised to find out I wasn’t born male. (entry# 90)

Roz also had some interesting advice to share on her experiences with passing:

Roz: The minute I stopped worrying about trying to pass and trying to be that immaculate woman, my whole life brightened up. I just stopped trying to hide and got to this place saying, “Well I’m Roz and I’m outrageous and my life’s outrageous. I have this journey and mission to tell my story and be who I am and it doesn’t matter anymore, you know?” (entry# 89)

Passing is often an issue in educating the public around trans issues, as in providing workshops. In those that she conducts, Roz plays on the stereotype that all transpeople are MtF by colluding with a ‘passing’ transman to make her educational points:

Roz: Most of the time when I do my training I like to have a trans guy there as much as possible because most of the time people assume transsexuals are male to female. They seem to forget about female to male, so what I used to do in the early stages of my presentation is say, “I hope you don’t mind but my friend so-and-so is here to hold my hand because I’m really nervous and he’s here to support”, and blah, blah, blah. And I’d go into my spiel and show a documentary, answer questions, and at some point in the question thing I’d say, “Oh by the way this is – who is – female to male”, and everybody would go “Whoa!” and it was like they forgot about that part of the equation. (entry# 97)

Passing tends to take on a different dynamic among TG and Two-Spirit people. Nick speaks of his experience of being a transgender and two-spirit man/woman:

Nick: There’s this weird kind of ‘You’re not trans enough’ thing, there’s some people who are into that. Here’s an experience, no word of a lie: Someone I know was doing a trans group and I had phoned because I know the guy, he’s a transsexual and was running the group, so I said I was interested and he phones back and says, “Do you realize it’s for transpeople not just people who identify as butch?” I phoned him back and told him it would be better for him not to say things like that and I tried to explain to him why and
he phones me back and apologizes and says he didn’t mean it that way. So he couldn’t even admit he was being transgender-phobic, that really what he wanted in his group was transsexuals who all were into surgery. But that’s not what the group was saying it was, it said it was open to all transgendered. So he was wanting to make sure that I was clear this was for transgendered and not just butch people because he stereotyped me as butch. I expected somebody who’s running a transgender group to let transgendered identify themselves. (entry# 74)

Alex, who also identifies as transgender, has had similar experiences:

Alex: I’ve also run into some stuff in the broader trans communities that privileges TS over TG, TS being the ‘real’ transpeople; that TG is just a phase or experimenting, or isn’t a real identity, or is about getting attention, or is ‘just’ a political statement meant to challenge the system. When I think of the stuff around ‘just’ a political statement, well what else accomplishes change? (entry# 38)

Alex speaks of a pressure to relinquish his TG identity and to be pushed into the TS end of the continuum. He recognises this pressure as TG repudiation and sees it as an impediment to solidarity in the trans community at large:

Alex: I feel sometimes like there’s pressure to identify as TS if you’re trans, or to focus on TS issues. And I’m happy to be an ally to TS folks, and to talk about or get involved in activism on issues and concerns that don’t directly affect me, but when I hear TG experiences being devalued, for all I know about how with any marginalized community infighting is a both a risk and a reality, it’s hard to not to take such negative stereotyping personally. (entry# 38)

Sabrina reminds us that Two-Spirit people embody two spirits:

Sabrina: I am who I am and my physical features are my physical features and I have no desire to change them. Some people see me as female, others have their doubts, others see me as male... I’m a Two-Spirit person, that’s who I am. (entry# 94)

Tami argues that it is generally harder for transwomen to pass in society than it is for transmen:

Tami: ...you know it’s so much easier for transsexual men to pass in public, you know take some testosterone, wear baggy pants, a pair of work boots, a baseball cap, buzz all your hair off, you know? The next thing you know you’re growing facial hair and your shoulders are filling out. For us we’ve got to shrink our shoulders, soften the facial
features, get rid of the facial hair, you know, do something with our hair, our nails and waxing and breast augmentation and on and on and on, right? Wow.

Chris: And do you think they experience less transphobia?

Tami: Very much and most will probably tell you that too. (entries# 144-148)

Indeed Tami is correct as most of the trans men I interviewed readily acknowledge that trans women generally have a much harder time passing.

Yossi: I know there are FtMs who experience sexualized violence from other men, there are FtMs who don’t have the same experience as mine. I don’t mean to dismiss them but in talking about broad patterns I think that trans women do have a much rougher time of it than trans men, especially in trying to access gender-specific spaces. (entry# 79)

Kimberly views transphobia as ubiquitous and provides the same rationale as Nick for why transpeople themselves are also prone to express it:

Kimberly: …transphobia is like one of those invisible things, it’s like racism or homophobia or sexism or ableism. It’s these unconscious things that we do and say in our everyday lives and they affect other people and they oppress other people, they limit other groups’ liberties and freedoms and that’s what happens with transgendered people. (entry# 40)

Frank speaks of his current position, having fully transitioned, and totally passing as a man in his self-perception and social experience. This existential and social shift provides him with a new standpoint from which to deal with transphobia:

Frank: I go under the radar, the transphobic radar in society, because I pass as a man, I look like a man now so no one gives me a second glance any more. I’m not offensive to society’s judgmental eye, I fit into one of its bloody slots. I think a lot of the transphobia is just superficial, visual, brutal as it is. If someone’s deemed offensive to someone’s eye then they’re going to get targeted. Fat people get targeted all the time for the same skewed reason; anyone considered ugly gets targeted all the time, anyone not fitting. Transpeople get targeted when we’re visible, period. You know though, trans friends of mine who pass as women, they don’t get targeted… they know they’re safe as long as nobody finds out. And as soon as my beard growth came in the assholes couldn’t find me and that’s a fact. I was all of a sudden privy to conversations I never even wanted to hear from these guys. The same guys that would be obnoxious to me up and down the street don’t even see me anymore, they’re like, “Hey buddy, how’s it going?” Because I look
alright to them, even guys that are obnoxious, guys who know I’ve had a sex change. I look alright, act alright, and it’s just not going to get deeper in there. They’re not deep thinkers, these guys; if it looks alright they don’t put up a fight. But before, all those decades before, when I didn’t fit into either of the binary slots, I was a target... some of the trans women, they were able to hide before transitioning if they wanted to... they could hide it, but now they’re a target. I think they are absolutely way more in danger, not to say that if I was in a group of men and it was discovered, say I was in a locker room and it was discovered, I believe then I could be in danger. My carpentry class, I believe I could have been in danger if those guys, knuckle draggers that they were, if they’d found out. I certainly was really invested in them not finding out, they were straight knuckleheads. They were really straight, really rough guys. I sure didn’t want them to know I peed sitting down, let alone that I didn’t have a penis then at all. (entry# 51)

Frank illustrates the trans aspect of transphobia, that depending on one’s place in the trajectory of transitioning, differing levels of repudiation may be experienced. In this sense, transphobia may be more of an issue at certain points in a transperson’s life than others. The self-knowledge of being trans, and the threat of discovery, may compel transpeople to constantly conceal their status in order to preserve their safety. Frank recounts the following story about a class he took with other males who were transphobic and did not know of Frank’s trans status:

Frank: In the carpentry class, there was a transwoman who came to teach the class one day. Many of the guys were making crude comments loud enough for her to hear. I wanted to wave both my hands and say, “Here I am, hello, I’m over here, it’s okay there’s another one in the room with you.” But I didn’t say a peep, I channelled it to her with interesting questions and sincere appreciation for the effort she put into the answers that she gave us. I interacted that way so she could get a really strong and warm supportive vibe off of me, she had no idea I was a transman. And with my questions I kept a couple of the guys in check, as if “Hey, that’s not cool.” Not outing myself and putting myself on the line but as one of their chosen brothers, if you like, I just sort of shamed them with a look or not laughing at their stupid jokes. So they stopped because they looked up to me, I was an older guy they respected... I was able to use some advantage of power over them without outing myself. (entry# 90)

Frank skilfully uses the social privilege of being seen as a (natal) man to help diffuse trans repudiation when it appears. In this case he acted as a hidden ally, attuning himself to the atmosphere of repudiation in the classroom, expertly taking the winds of repudiation out of the sails of crude, disrespectful and potentially escalating harassment.
For other transpeople such as Alex, who does not want to pass one hundred percent of the time as a man, different kinds of trans repudiation are often manifested. While the following example might be viewed as affirmative, it carries with it a covert transphobia:

Alex: The other day, after doing focus groups with a group of street involved youths, I was talking to one of the guys about the focus groups and out of the blue he said, “You’re a chick!” and at first I thought he said “you’re Chuck”, so I said no, my name is Alex. And then I realized he was referring to my gender, so I said no, actually, I’m trans, and he thought that that was really cool, he’d never met a trans person before, and he looked fascinated and kept on staring at me. So, while it wasn’t an overtly transphobic experience, having that kind of intense energy focused on figuring my body out rather than engaging in the conversation is disconcerting and makes me uncomfortable. (entry# 70)

Alex brings a particular perspective to the debate, since he sees the trans repudiation that he experiences as reflecting back to him the challenges his lack of gender clarity poses:

Alex: Because my identity is TG rather than man or woman, in some ways when people are confused whether I am a guy or a woman or when I am getting one person saying one thing and another person saying another, for all that there is some challenge in that, it reflects back to me my gender identity more accurately rather than if I was being perceived as just one or the other. So even, I think, when I am getting some stuff that might be in that transphobia kind of category, or in some ways if someone would want to be insulting or rude, I think in some ways it might reflect my gender identity back to me rather than if someone was identifying purely as male or more purely as female... it is more affirming than if I was getting only ‘sir’ or only ‘ma’am’, though, I hate, I really dislike ma’am – even before I identified as a trans man (laughter), so it is one of those things where it is a really interesting place. And there are some days when I want one response more than another which also makes it complicated. (entries# 102 and 106)

The undesirability of a person’s gender can pose problems even for those who want to be supportive:

Alex: It’s also challenging for my partner in ways that I don’t think the partners of TS people generally experience. Before I decided to go with male pronouns out of practicality, all my trans guy friends were calling me ‘he’, but other people in my life were calling me ‘she’. My partner varied what pronoun she used for me, and I was really comfortable with that. However, she felt like she got attitude from and was judged by transpeople and trans allies for calling me ‘she’, like they thought she was being an unsupportive, ‘bad’ partner. Also, for TG folks, I think partners’ responses to our bodies
can be different from what the partners of TS folks experience, once the TS folks are finished their transition process - particularly for trans women, since most trans guys can’t afford or for various other reasons don’t get genital surgery. Especially for TG folk who choose to take hormones or have some surgeries, but don’t fully transition - we have bodies that really don’t fit with binaries – whether it’s trans guys who have chest surgery but don’t take hormones and otherwise have a female body with no breasts, or trans guys who take hormones but don’t have surgery and may end up bear-ish with breasts.

(entries# 106-107)

Alex had experienced ambivalence since his childhood, and a sense of challenging stereotypes:

Alex: My mom was a feminist and had not been permitted by her dad to become the things she wanted to be, like being a doctor instead of a teacher, kind of thing, or pursuing non-traditionally female kinds of roles. So my mom, from the time I was a really little kid, had said: “You can do anything you want and girls should have just the same kind of equal opportunity as boys”, and, probably based on that, from a pretty young age I found myself challenging gender stereotypes about what boys can do and about what girls can and cannot do and that sort of thing. And I am not sure how much of that has to do with gender identity and the whole nature versus nurture stuff around gender identity... So yeah, I feel like I have been kind of butting up against what girls can and cannot do my entire life, and challenging that, like saying, “No, that is not right, that is not fair”.... So I think that... helped me strengthen myself, it has built my resilience about being able to be really out there about my gender identity.

(entry# 109)

For those TS people dealing with the surgeries, or waiting for them, the issue may take on heightened significance, as trans repudiation may surface at times in acute ways at different stages of the transition process. Jeb is taking testosterone but has not yet had chest surgery. He is frustrated with the delays and the long wait to get a mastectomy.

Jeb: It’s frustrating. Like chest surgery can be pretty important for people’s safety, and because I’m low-income I have to wait a long time to get it. I can’t hide my chest in the meantime...I mean... to wear eight sweaters in the summer and that seems ridiculous. I don’t know what the actual waiting lists are, but if I had to get breast reduction because I had back problems or something, I’m sure it wouldn’t be as long of a wait... I’m absolutely putting myself out there. And I think it’s worse than (before), like right now if people read me as female they think ‘dyke’. If I have a beard and a low voice with a chest, people will look at me and think ‘freak’, you know? It’s different.

(entries# 112, 114, 116)
Wynn speaks of similar difficulties as she moves through the earlier stages of transition, for example, in preparing for her electrolysis sessions:

Wynn: ...you have to grow your facial hair out too, to do it. So it’s pretty hard, people get pretty stressed out when you’re even slightly feminized, and having facial hair, I get stared at a lot. People give you disgusted looks in public constantly.  

Yossi acknowledges the complexity of the levels of transphobia and suggests a way to think of its stratification:

Yossi: In thinking about transphobia... it’s useful for people to think about it on an interpersonal level, and an internalized level and then a systemic level. So the interpersonal level, let’s say how we deal with interpersonal racism or classism, when they see a person acting badly towards another transperson they can interrupt it, challenge it, offer support to the person who’s been victimized, all the same stuff you would do. I find often transpeople have huge amounts of internalized transphobia.  

The issue of internalised transphobia, as Yossi points out, is a significant problem for many transpeople and I shall return to it in Chapter 9. Externally, Keenan draws attention to the ubiquity of trans repudiation in terms of the geography of space. Whereas queer people might find at least some queer positive space, mostly in urban centres, there are few places where transpeople can go to escape the glare and the gaze of trans repudiation. As Keenan elaborates: “As transpeople we are mostly forced to be in other people’s spaces, trans people don’t have their own space and this is transphobic”  

As already revealed in Chapter 2, trans repudiation spans all points of the political spectrum, from the right through to the left. Wynn describes her experiences with some ‘progressive’ activists:

Wynn: Some of my friends have been very supportive and lots have... been that kind of PC type, especially political people that I know... Like it’s not cool to be transphobic but they are and they just treat me really weird, especially a lot of the guys, they feel really uncomfortable around me now. They don’t talk to me much anymore and treat me like I’ve got 30 less IQ points, don’t act like I think about stuff anymore. Or a lot of them

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23 Politically correct.
will come up to me and like touch me and stuff now, it’s like they think that I want to have my gender identity validated by them, you know? So that’s been annoying, and then some people have been hostile in my life.   

(entry# 14)

John has an especially pointed view on the trans repudiation of government institutions:

John: One thing that makes me very angry and frustrated is the transphobia of institutions, the issue of gender identification on your driver’s license, your birth certificate, or in your SIN\(^{24}\) or medical records. I resent this very much. Depending on the extent of your physical transition, you may never be able to correct those records. I feel very fortunate because I’ve been able to get most of this changed. But there are a few important records that remain F, essentially because I have chosen not to have a hysterectomy. Those Fs are an invasion of my privacy and a discrimination against me as a man and as a transsexual person.

Chris: Do you have any idea why they want to take the gonads, the ovaries, to take them out, why is that so important to the authorities?

John: I don’t know, but I would guess that it has to do with who they decide will “count” as a man or a woman.  

(entries# 100-102)

In John’s case, trans repudiation exemplifies itself in textual coercion to have surgery (a hysterectomy) that he does not want, in order to be counted as male. In ruling and legitimating sexed bodies, the government at times repudiates some transpeople in highly essentialised ways. Robin, however, cautions that transphobia is often less obvious and even invisible. She had these final words to say on the topic:

Robin: Transphobia exists everywhere... it is more pervasive in society than most people will realize. And ... many of us have probably seen examples of it and have not even recognized it or have been able to walk by wondering...  

(entry# 162)

Trans Repudiation and Intersectionality

Analysis of the interview transcripts as a whole reveals that trans repudiation is often not experienced as a clear and one-sided expression of prejudice, discrimination and stigma. Indeed,

\(^{24}\) Social Insurance Number.
many of the interviewees, while able to clearly identify transphobia itself, indicate that it is frequently tied up with other intersectional issues based on race, class, sexual orientation and ability. Trevor elaborates:

Trevor: I mean if you are trans and you don’t have a job, you are living in poverty, a low income level, and depending where you have come from, the trans stuff is tied into all this other stuff. And if they are wearing kind of alternative clothing, are young or maybe they aren’t fully white, all that stuff gets mixed in there, race, class and so on. Like from the transpeople I know who experience that, they get it all at once in a ball of wax. And the person who’s throwing out the transphobia, they feel they have a legitimate right to kinda throw that into the mix as well. A lot of transphobia gets tangled into other stuff as well. (entry# 76)

The ball of wax metaphor that Trevor uses sums up the often complex dynamics of Othering, of targeting those marginalised on more than one level. Yossi, for example, speaks of living with a disability in addition to being trans, Jewish, and queer:

Yossi: My experiences as a trans person have been, I would say, relatively calmer than say my experiences as a Jew. You know my experiences as a Jew have been shit in this society, being trans has had its ups and downs and it’s certainly had lots of verbal harassment and some threats of violence but it’s not been the same kind of daily shame or stigma or feeling like a freak, you know? I experience that mostly around my ethnicity so by the time it came to trans stuff I kind of knew the process. (entry# 34)

Yossi draws attention to the ways in which intersectionality needs to be taken into account when considering the lived experience of transpeople. As we discussed the matter, Yossi continued to draw attention to further intersectional dynamics:

Chris: So in terms of dealing with people who have some kind of uncomfortable reaction to you, I guess you need to sort of sift through. You mentioned your ethnicity, so, “Is this a reaction to my Jewishness, is this a reaction to my being queer, or is this a reaction to my being a trans person?”

Yossi: Or being fat or having a disability. I mean, you know I often walk with a cane and people will often come up to me and say, “What’s wrong with you?” and I’m like, “on which level”, you know? (laughter), “what are you referring to?” They often mean the cane so it’s very difficult to know what’s actually going on and thus how to address it. I think the more visible your stuff is, that’s probably what people are responding to. So when I have the cane, I usually get ableism before I get transphobia. When I don’t have
the cane I often get homophobia and transphobia together because that’s the next most visible thing about me. (entries# 56-57)

Nick expresses the problems he has experienced as a transgendered person living with disabilities. He grapples with wanting to change his body, but faces obstacles that prevent him from doing so.

Nick: I want to try and physicalize more how I feel inside and I think hormones will help me do that, I can’t do surgeries for a lot of reasons. Politically, physically, my health, my disability. (entry# 42)

Nick would like to explore alternative and holistic therapies to assist him with actualising the changes he would like, but worries about the effects of pharmaceuticals on his body in view of his already precarious health.

In approaching the interviews from a hermeneutic perspective, I have underscored the position that trans repudiation, at least in part, is rooted in a lack of understanding. Understanding and its lack is a dynamic that often surfaces in trans’ lives. John speaks of the realisation that he came to in regard to a difficult relationship with his fundamentalist Christian father, that he could try to understand his father, even though the reverse did not happen:

John: You know it’s strange, because one day my sister said to him, “I’m sure you must have trouble with it because of your faith.” And he said, “No, it has nothing to do with my faith, I just don’t understand it.”... I had always assumed that it was a biblical issue, but he told my sister that it had nothing to do with that. He thinks I’ve done something unspeakably stupid. I have a sense that I’ve lost his respect and esteem as a good, intelligent person, which is painful. You want your parents to be proud of you, but you can’t arrange your life around what they want. (entries# 130 and 132)

The Problem of Trauma

The loss of understanding from others is just one of several areas of trauma to consider in relation to trans lives. First is the trauma of repudiation and the constellation of issues that emerge from it, including violence. Second, there is the trauma of the mis-sexed body, which is especially evident in TS people, a trauma that needs medical interventions in order to repair/heal
the person. Prosser (1998) draws on Freud’s 1917 essay *Mourning and Melancholia* to differentiate between the meanings of these two terms in relation to transpeople. In mourning, there is the resolvable grief surrounding loss, as with the death of a love object. In melancholia, the unconscious masks what is lost, not necessarily the actual death of an object but rather an unnameable loss, such as loss of love. Melancholia, so long as it remains unconscious, is unresolvable. The unconscious dynamic suggests that the individual is unaware of what has been lost.

When the mis-sexed body is prevented through repudiation from loving in the style and ways that it might, a sense of melancholia may prevail. In MtFs there might be a melancholia for loss of the gendered love that a daughter would have received rather than a ‘son’. In FtMs there might be melancholia for loss of the mother who did not love him as she would have loved a son. There might be melancholic loss of non-existent adolescent boyfriends or girlfriends, the missing and ghost-like figures of memory, of lost relations that could not develop, that might have otherwise been possible. And there might be melancholic loss regarding those years of having been forced to move through the world under a punishing binary that refuses to acknowledge the pain of incongruency, which in some cases is so threatening as to be banished, buried. So long as a person’s trans-ness is repressed, hence unconscious, there is danger of melancholia; the malady is nameless. Kristeva (1989) cites the nineteenth-century French poet Gérard de Nerval’s sonnet “The Disinherited”, grasping at his stanza *the black sun of melancholia*, in titling her book on the topic *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*. For Kristeva, melancholia is related to something un-utterable, something nameless, pre-symbolic. Perhaps, for transpeople (especially pre-transition TS), this nameless thing is the mis-sexed body. As will be further explored in Chapter 7 on Freudian psychoanalysis, the repression of trans feelings takes a chronic course, usually leading to a narrative of emergence when the person can simply no longer tolerate life under a black sun.

For Nerval, his black sun was inescapable, as he committed suicide after a final mental breakdown. For transpeople, their black sun may be extinguished with the emergence and integration of the repressed, and in some cases the healing of both the mis-sexed body and the associated melancholia. Cartwright underscores the necessity of healing trauma: “Psychic states
induced by trauma often cannot be contained and worked through adequately and thus cannot be
mourned. As a consequence, these experiences remain concrete volatile objects suspended in the
psyche” (p. 43). Melancholic loss is especially relevant in understanding those transpeople who
have long pre-transition histories of repressing their trans-ness. Those who try to deny their
trans-ness move through life with a pervasive sense of wrongness, of in-authenticity, of chronic
melancholia, with which a host of compensations such as alcohol and drug abuse may very well
be associated.

Freud held that an overwhelming event in one’s personal history could be internally censored
and repressed yet interminably return in the present under the guise of somatic symptoms, as in
hysteria\(^25\). So long as the forgotten event remains unresolved, it continues to haunt the present.
The traumas of the past do not necessarily disappear but can reverberate and menace the future.
Berger (1997) outlines the problem:

> But “trauma” is not simply another word for disaster. The idea of catastrophe as trauma
> provides a method of interpretation, for it posits that these effects of an event may be
> dispersed and manifested in many forms not obviously associated with the event.
> Moreover, this dispersal occurs across time, so that an event experienced as shattering
> may actually produce its full impact only years later. (p. 572)

The trauma of the mis-sexed body can be exacerbated by repudiations that psychically re-wound
the already troubled corporeal body. The sedimented histories of transpeople, when unearthed,
may reveal an extensive assortment of traumatic experiences associated with the mis-sexed body.
With so much emphasis placed in popular culture on the physical surgeries undergone by
transpeople, there needs to be more space made for transpeople to give voice to their trauma, to
heal not only the mis-sexed body but also the traumas resulting from the wounds of the past.

This discussion of trans repudiation hopefully will add to recognition of the complexity of issues
related to transphobia, which can come from all parts of the socio-political spectrum. These
aspects will be looked at more closely, before returning to the questions raised by depth
psychology.

\(^25\) What was known as “hysteria” has been reconfigured in diagnostic rubric as “conversion disorder” (APA, 2000).
CHAPTER 5:

THE POLITICAL REPUDIATIONS OF TRANS SUBJECTIVITY

Attitudes towards transpeople are complex and vary, as are the rationales behind transphobia and other forms of trans repudiation. In this sense, the political roots of the problem need to be acknowledged and better understood. The previous chapter considered the problem of locating all repudiations within the individual, based on the psychology of fear. While fear appears to be a strong factor in negating trans claims, it is not universally so. Faithfulness to political doctrines, whether overtly acknowledged or tacitly accepted, is intertwined in many trans repudiations. All points on the political spectrum are potentially capable of supporting trans repudiation, from the far right, through to the extreme left, from ‘redneck’ machismo to radical feminism.

The Conservative Repudiation

As Goodwin (1998) has pointed out, conservatism is not, in and of itself, a self-proclaimed ideology. Rather, it is a set of ideas that reacts to attempts to change the status quo in a progressive direction, hence conservatism is prima facie a reactionary doctrine. In recent times conservatism has espoused the defense of private property as an inviolable individual right based on an unrestrained free market. In this sense, conservatism has parasitically enjoined itself with some aspects of liberalism, rights, for example, being a liberal conception. Conservatives once believed that only aristocrats, or those of superior pedigree, could own property. To preserve private property and its privilege, they generally defend those traditions that elevate private property and its inheritance: the nuclear family in its traditional representation, hierarchy, elitism, nationalism, patriotism, and law and order. Moreover, conservatives believe in the supposed integrity of nature, her selective bestowing of endowments that ordains some to rule
and others, given their 'evident inferiority' or 'natural submission', to follow in organic harmony.

Conservatives dislike and distrust change and argue that the forces of tradition have naturally carried forward the good of the world. These forces are almost always conceptualised as metaphysical, God-given, or the products of a pre-ordained natural order, a selective favouring of evolution\(^\text{26}\) that favours the 'strong' and keeps the 'weak' in their place. Conservatism is the doctrine of essentialism par excellence, since this fixed and immutable order should not be trifled with, lest chaos be unleashed. Conservatives fear and reject the possibility of a utopia of the workers and seek submission to the pre-ordained Will. This means renouncing woolly-minded conceptions of an unrealisable egalitarian state, and striving for an alternative utopia of the masters. Since the latter seems out of reach, the interim strategy is to maintain the (capitalist/neo-liberal) status quo. As Goodwin notes, "if history is the record of change, and change is synonymous with decline, it follows that the best we can do is to resist change, halt mankind's decline and so – by implication – end history" (p. 151). Revolution threatens the organic integrity of society as Nature/God wills it. Hence, Burke opposed the French revolution for its transgressions against the fruits of tradition and violating that which "time refines" (ibid., p. 153), but does not change.

Time will apparently refine institutions and reward the deserving through a natural, organic process, as exemplified in the metaphor 'the cream rises to the top'. In contrast, human nature in general is untrustworthy. People (the masses) are weak, susceptible to selfish acts and prone to intractable irrationalism. They are unable to govern themselves and must be ruled, directly or by representation. The fallen nature of man mythologises his untrustworthiness and declares the inevitability of domination. People must, paradoxically, constantly be ordered into the ways which nature intends, they must 'know their place', and coercive institutions remind them of it should the temptation to go astray become too great to resist.

\(^{26}\) It is curious that conservatives sometimes rely on evolutionary conceptions when it suits their aims (e.g. conceptions of breeding, pedigree, etc.), especially in light of their broad rejection of evolution in favour of "intelligent design". It is also curious that conservatives reject history, yet embrace that which "time refines".
Inegalitarianism is the ‘common sense’ of nature. Men are assumed to be bigger and stronger than women and hence are thought by conservatives to be naturally superior in certain respects. Doreen Kimura (1999) argues that nature endows males with larger shoulders and bigger, more muscular arms, hence their capacity to throw faster and farther than females. Males are therefore superior to females under her common sense discourse, since they can ostensibly throw further. However, Kimura’s conservative arguments ignore how the historical division of labour comes to produce variations of the body. This is typical of how “the end of history” thesis entails the suppression of anything that challenges the official story, that confronts the limited (ahistorical) empiricism of ‘facts’. The moral positions that flow from conservative thinking appeal to the Truth of nature, re-routing progressive, emancipatory strivings back into the conservative politics of location: woman and man must remain in their fixed stations in life, and any deviation is by definition deviant and therefore dangerous.

The conservative gay writer Andrew Sullivan (1996) argues that conservatism is in a “deep etymological crisis” (p. 95), since the term has “come to be used to describe a disposition, a political party, a theological faction, Christian fundamentalism, and, most oxymoronically of all, a ‘movement’” (p. 95). Like mainstream liberalism, conservatism does not acknowledge its own position as being ideological, opposing what it views as ideology and politics in favour of the cult of inevitability (there will always be poverty, there will always be war, there will always be crime, and so on). Efforts to read social phenomena such as crime or the control of market forces as political constructions are dismissed by conservatives as ideological, a denial of the ‘real’. Conservatives do not consider their objections as political in nature. Instead, they claim authority over the ‘real’ and utilise the findings of science when they are politically suitable. Their appeals to science are contradictory, as traditionally conservatives have been scornful towards science’s ideal of progress (positivist utopianism), viewing it as dangerous, solipsistically humanistic, and potentially undermining the will of God/Nature.

Conservatives believe in reward and punishment in doctrinaire ways. Man will always be at risk of criminality, violence, debauchery, and so on, due to his fallen nature. Sexuality must be strictly controlled, and state interference in the affairs of social life is desirable only to defend against the fallen nature of man, and enforce the rules of hierarchy. Conservatives accept
democracy so long as it favours them or concurs with the will of Nature. They prefer, however, a system that is static or regressive, espousing entrenched values based on sentimental myths of the 'lost golden age', when the state of things was not questioned. This is especially so concerning gender roles, identities, and sexual orientation, characterised for example by the American popular culture character of the 1970s, Archie Bunker (in *All in the Family*), who bellows: "those were the days... girls were girls and men were men". The widespread conservative condemnation of gay/lesbian marriage is a case in point.

In regard to trans repudiation, the conservative justification is a simple one. Sex is a matter of substance, essence, and authoritarian inscription. One is a male or female because the doctor said so, because institutions that regulate the family said so, as evidenced through the appropriate documents, because one's mind must follow the rule of one's body, and because natural and immutable forces dictate that this is the way it is. Disciplines such as psychiatry, which often exhibit a conservative tendency, do not necessarily believe in the professed gender(s) of transpeople, but relent in the face of their own failure to alter the wayward mind from accepting concordance with the given body. Those with Gender Identity Disorder are irretrievable in their intransigence and psychiatry usually recognises this. The obligation to help compels psychiatry to take the only available recourse and permit hormonal treatment and surgery. Some psychiatrists and psychologists do accept that mind-body dualism itself has gone naturally astray in GID, and that the essence or substances of the body/mind split really are incongruent. In this instance there is no repudiation of trans subjectivity, but a begrudging pragmatism that accepts surgery as the only way to fix such an anomaly. Such persons are seen as victimised by a natural mistake not of their own doing, and deserving of the charity of congruent realignment along hormonal and surgical lines. This discourse suggests that transsexuals are to be pitied and can appeal to the expertise of medicine to do what is possible to correct an unsatisfactory state of affairs. In this instance, medical intervention is a justifiable practice, to restore what should have been in the first place, to rectify an error of nature.

There is a darker side of conservatism that expresses the reactionary stance of the 'nature' doctrine in quite anti-scientific and anti-medical ways. This thread rejects the humanism that believes Nature can make a mistake, and refuses the claims of transpeople. It is aghast at medical
interventions such as SRS, as an affront to the will of God. The Evangelical Alliance, an organization representing around one million evangelical British Christians, has condemned sex change surgeries, claiming that transsexuals have succumbed to "a fantasy and an illusion" (Southam, 2001, p. 1). This group believes that "authentic change from a person's given sex is not possible and an ongoing transsexual lifestyle is incompatible with God's will" (ibid., p. 1). The group advocates that transpeople be blocked from any marriage that does not conform with their given sex and from holding positions of power in the church. Transsexuals should seek psychological counselling to accompany prayer, with the knowledge that "God does not make mistakes" (ibid., p. 2). This position echoes conservative beliefs in the cult of inevitability. It is no surprise that in countries like Canada and the United States, right-wing Christian movements have been aligned with, or indeed central to, conservatism, since they hold many convergent points of view. These political movements are powerful and appear to be moving further to the political right. An example is the recent demise of Canada's "Progressive Conservative" party in favour of the new Conservative party, which came about as a result of a purge of so-called "red Tories".

In my interview with Frank the issue of conservative religion surfaced:

Frank: Yeah I've come across the religious thing with a family member who is a Jehovah's Witness. He's been very accepting, but when I pressed him, you know, "What does your church think of this?" He said, "Well, don't take hormones and let God sort it out." And I asked him where you draw the line between what God creates and what he didn't create. I mean, if there is a God, then He created the hormones and the doctors and the gender clinic and the whole process, too, right, or didn't He? [pause...] God made you this way...I mean you just run into it, everybody's got an opinion. (entry# 59)

Since leading threads of political conservatism (especially social/religious conservatives) openly support similar views, it is unsurprising that trans repudiation is commonly mis-perceived as exclusively aligned with right-wing ideas. This mis-association ignores those conservatives who support transpeople's need for SRS (for example, decades ago progressive conservatives/"red Tories' in Ontario permitted the practice) and the fact that trans repudiation exists across the political spectrum. The strongest but certainly not the only instance of trans repudiation among left wing progressives can be found, as already stated, in radical cultural feminism. Before
considering the problematics of this particular thread of feminism in relation to transpeople, a
general discussion of liberalism as the dominant force in the West, and Canada particularly, is
warranted.

The Ambivalent/Contradictory Politics of Liberalism

L. Susan Brown’s (2003) explication of individualism and her critical stance towards
liberal feminism highlights one contradictory aspect of predominant liberalism: the irreconcilable
tension between existential individualism and instrumental individualism. In celebrating the
individual, liberalism, as currently expressed in the West, is a forced ‘synthesis’ between these
two contradictory currents. In existential liberalism, the individual is prized as a free and
autonomous being connected in ‘voluntary’ association with others. One’s freedom is
intrinsically expressed in the concept of self-determination, and valued as an end in itself through
the honing of one’s free will. The freedom to express oneself creatively, to become one’s own
person, to celebrate uniqueness and individuality is, however, undermined by instrumental
liberalism. Conservatism has paradoxically become, over time, deeply entangled in this thread of
liberalism.

Instrumental individualism conceptualises the person as

... a competitive owner of private property, both in terms of real property and in terms of
owning “property in the person”. The liberal believes that individuals own their bodies
and the associated skills and abilities, the “labour power” that accompanies their bodies.
Liberal thinkers consider the right to buy and sell labour power as essential, just as they
affirm the right to buy and sell real property.  

(Brown, 2003, p. 3)

Brown argues that existential individualism is undermined by instrumental individualism:

The liberal belief in property, both real and in the person, leads not to freedom but to
relationships of domination and subordination. This faith in the appropriateness of
owning, buying and selling property, both real and in the person, I call instrumental
individualism.

[Italics original] (ibid., p. 3)
Brown conceptualises instrumentalism under liberal conditions as the right to pursue freedom as a means to fulfil one’s individual interests. This intrinsically includes the right to use others, as if they were an instrument, to fulfil one’s solipsistic needs. The liberal market facilitates the trade of one’s skills, talents, and abilities to enrich others’ self-interests, not necessarily one’s own. The resulting competition in the market of trading of property in the person, of trading labour power, places individuals in competition with each other and results in hierarchy. Since one sells one’s labour to an owner, periods of domination ensue. This arrangement is not necessarily freely chosen, as market forces produce an inequality which threatens material depravity. Many individuals are coerced to ‘consent’ to trading their property in the person. This is hardly a ‘voluntary’ state of affairs. For transpeople, who are deemed to own their body, the premise of existential individualism (the right to ‘be’) often collides with the expectations of instrumentalism (property in the person - the conservative conception) producing high unemployment in this group (see Chapter 2). The two threads, both conceived as “liberal”, contradict each other.

Brown’s solution to solving the contradictions between Being and exploitation, or existentialism and instrumentalism, is to synthesise existential liberalism with voluntary socialism and expunge the instrumental and dominating effects of private property and property in the person. This would ideally allow all individuals the opportunity to pursue their freedom without hindering the freedom of others. Intrusion on the freedom of others constitutes the limits of human freedom. The existential element, ‘to be’, ‘to become’, is of paramount importance: “Freedom, as an end in itself, depends on social respect and co-operation: all must be free if one is to be free” (p. 33). The project of existentialism equates to “freedom... as the individual’s capacity to be self-determining” (p. 33). Yet instrumentalism places limits on striving for becoming and freedom through self-determination. It also lays bare the contradictions which liberalism produces, explaining why many, especially in marginalised groups such as transpeople, do not necessarily feel ‘free’ under liberalism, a doctrine that paradoxically espouses freedom and democracy. The individualism that Brown espouses also fails to consider that the majority of human societies the world over are not individualist, but collectivist (Hofstede, 1997) and that Western-based existential liberalism is globalising itself with effects similar to colonialism.
This state of affairs challenges the liberal rhetoric of 'choice'. Brown, in defence of 'choice', claims that "individuals are free and responsible agents who are fit to determine their own development" (p. 2). However, this assertion assumes too much agency and the social construction of criminality, of barriers and marginalisation, is ironically mitigated by her statement. This assumption also overlooks the position of TS people, many of whom did not choose to be TS but recognise that they have no other option. Existentialism is a philosophical ideal that assumes that choice is conscious and rational. It holds little appreciation for the role of power in producing subjectivity and existentialism itself. I counter that individuals are potentially free agents. TS/TG people should and could be free to make their own choices, although they currently tend to experience obstacles to such freedom. For example, the unequal access to material resources based on class stratification, under instrumental liberalism, curtails the freedom of TS people: sex change surgeries remain financially beyond the means of many, even if they are technically available, especially in the United States and increasingly in Canada (Namaste, 2005).

**Liberal Feminisms and the Gender Binary**

Brown’s analysis of liberal feminism, as expressed by J. S. Mill and Betty Friedan, correctly points out that it is a strand of feminism that wishes to liberate women so that they may participate in the market and other institutions as equals to men. Yet liberal feminism conflates existential with instrumental individualism and succumbs, in the present, to the same pitfalls as contradiction-laden liberalism in general. Liberal feminism cannot existentially liberate women, and existentialism cannot liberate the masses. Second-wave feminists, whether socialist, Marxist, or radical cultural, fault liberal feminism’s reformist rather than revolutionary tendencies. Brown, while partially agreeing with these second-wave criticisms, also sees a new ruling tendency in radical cultural feminism, itself one of the second-wave discourses. She argues that this thread of feminism wishes to replace patriarchy with matriarchal rule. She concludes: “No hierarchy is acceptable, no ruler is allowable, no domination is justifiable in a free society” (p. 182). Matriarchy, no matter how preferable its values and ethics, is still a system that would be based on the exercise of power over others, as well as maintaining a rigid gender binary. Wittig (1988) notes a similar point:
Matriarchy is no less heterosexual than patriarchy; it is only the sex of the oppressor still imprisoned in the categories of sex (woman and man), but it holds onto the idea that the capacity to give birth (biology) is what defines a woman. (p. 440)

Rosemarie Tong (1998) outlines the ideological strata that differentiate radical libertarian, radical cultural and liberal feminist threads. The rise of radical libertarian and cultural feminisms is generally traced to the 1960s, to groups such as the New York based Redstockings. Unpacking the initial distinctions between these forms of feminist thought is complex. Tong identifies “rights” as the common thread, however, radical cultural feminism departed from the other two strands by insisting upon an essentialist celebration of woman’s “femaleness” (p. 47). This position elevates the ontology of being female over that of being male, citing women’s virtues and values: “interdependence, community, connection, sharing, emotion, body, trust, absence of hierarchy, nature, immanence, process, joy, peace and life” (ibid., p. 17). Extreme radical cultural feminists urged women to protect and cultivate these female values by excluding men, the biological creators and exponents of patriarchy. As Rudy (2001), a long time radical cultural feminist who now locates herself in queer theory, writes:

Radical feminism used an essentialist notion of identity to ground politics in what was thought to be the superior nature of women. Essentialism saw female identity as an ontological ground, a truth about nature itself and the virtuous nature of women specifically. The experience of being women, we argued, led to a unified identity that could ground politics. (p. 198)

This line of thinking contrasts with that of radical libertarian feminists, who do not see a value system or ethic essentially based on an assumed and immutable sex/gender difference. Hence the libertarians (such as Firestone or Millett) reject the biological differences that patriarchy promotes, whereas radical cultural feminists (such as French and Daly) are convinced that man’s desire to control the dyad of nature/woman leads inevitably to the triad of male destruction as expressed in war, rape and genocide. Other feminists, such as Wittig (1988), argue that “the category ‘woman’ as well as the category ‘man’ are political and economic categories, not eternal ones” (p. 443). Weedon (1987) elaborates on this debate when she speaks of the “totalizing strategy of radical-feminist discourse” (p. 134) that relies on Transcendental woman
through an immutable casting of patriarchy that “implies a fundamental organization of power on
the basis of biological sex, an organization which, from a poststructuralist perspective, is not
natural and inevitable, but socially produced” (p. 127).

Radical cultural feminists retort that to address the material and political conditions of life is to
eradicate war, rape, and genocide. This can be achieved by invoking transcendental woman and
her eternal matriarchy. Global and third-world feminists such as Mohanty (1991) disagree with
“the use of ‘women’ as a category of analysis... [since] such objectification (however
benevolently motivated) needs to be both named and challenged” (p. 57). What emerges as
radical cultural feminism’s supposedly transcendental woman is, more often than not, a white,
middle-class, Western woman. Hence, Mohanty alerts feminists to the more crucial dilemma of
intersectionality: “beyond sisterhood there are still racism, colonialism, and imperialism” (p. 68).
In addition, I would add heterosexism, ableism, and trans repudiation to the list.

Radical libertarian feminism fares no better than the culturalists in this critique. Ferguson (1984)
unveils the fundamentally existentialist individualism that underpins this branch of feminism,
which views the sexual repression of women, transpeople, practitioners of BDSM (bondage,
domination, sadomasochism), sex trade workers, and so on, as an insidious form of oppression.
The libertarian feminists seek to eradicate sexual repression as part of an overall strategy to
undermine patriarchy. This contrasts with the position of radical cultural feminists, who view the
libertarians as defending practices that are intrinsically sexist. The culturalists affirm egalitarian
and monogamous lesbian relationships and non-sexist heterosexual relations. The libertarians
countered the culturalists by pointing out the sexual repressiveness of such views, accusing them
of enforcing a new Victorian ethic dictating that the only proper sex is side by side and in love,
to the exclusion of all else. Moreover, the libertarian feminists challenge the separate spaces
(excepting rape and transition houses) that radical cultural feminists advocate as woman-only,
seeing this segregation as misguided. Such exclusion ostensibly confuses all men with
patriarchy, which in this perspective is a legal and institutional problem rather than a flesh and
blood one. For the culturalists, women must untangle and eradicate the insidious forces of
patriarchy with which all potentially violent male-bodied persons are contaminated. This
essentialist view is based on a belief in males as the sole perpetrators of destruction: women
engaging in destructive acts are male-identified, traitors to their sex. Female victimization is at the heart of the culturalist doctrine, and the sexual binary must be maintained so that men remain identifiable as men. Hence, the culturalists’ core thesis reinforces the fundamental binary upholding the sex/gender system that they claim to wish to overthrow. In her critical analysis of radical cultural feminists, Elshtain (1981) suggests that they tend to split-off their own masculine qualities and project them wholly onto men as a justification for building utopian, all womyn communities.

Both the radical-cultural and libertarian views suffer by failing to discern the problems of an embedded and contradictory liberalism. This contradiction contains both ‘existential’ aspects (the libertarian version of liberalism) and conservative aspects (in this case ironically expressed as an essentialist ‘culturalism’). Radical cultural feminism frequently rails against the insufficiencies, perils, and pernicious outcomes of liberalism, without acknowledging its own embeddedness within liberal discourses. Charnie Guettel (1974) contends that “most radical feminism, no matter how scathing its attack on existing institutions, is very much in the tradition of bourgeois liberalism” (p. 1). Guettel outlines a classic Marxist analysis that views male dominance as having risen through private property, tracing Engels’ classic, historical analysis of how men as a group long ago seized the community surplus, an opportunistic move that was accomplished through the division of labour. By trading in herd animals, acquiring land and territory, and instituting patriarchy to ensure marital fidelity and sexual control over women’s bodies, man tried to ensure that his children would receive his legacy. Conflicts over territory and interminable trade disputes led to the rise of the state to rule on ownership and facilitate the institutionalised seizure of more resources for even larger surpluses (imperialism and colonialism). Guettel, whose major error was to conflate all feminist thought with radical or liberal feminist varieties (a mistake often found amongst Marxists), was, however, able to connect both strands of radical feminism as distinctly liberal in aspects of their underlying ideology. It is my contention, however, that the libertarian thread is more liberal than the cultural. The cultural thread, ironically, is not radical in its view of gender plurality, rather it is both conservative and staunchly metaphysical.
Radical libertarian and cultural feminists jointly argue that patriarchal ideology has allowed men to oppress women through various institutions such as the nuclear family, religion, schooling, law, and so on. Through compulsory socialisation under these institutions, women have historically been subjugated, on both conscious and unconscious levels, to an institutional subordination to men. Just as some profeminist men press for feminist goals, some anti-feminist women collude with patriarchal men in instilling and enforcing women’s subjection as right and proper (as was illustrated by the conservative Canadian women’s group R.E.A.L. Women²⁷). Radical feminists believe that patriarchal oppression precedes other forms of oppression including those based on race and class (French, 1985). So effective is patriarchy at subjecting women, that some women themselves internalise it as normal and natural, inevitable. How is such a widespread collusion possible? One of the ways that patriarchy has, for example, been mystified, and rendered ‘natural’, palatable, and even desirable, is through the romantic ideal of male-female love. Under this distorting influence, women are ‘swept off their feet’ and an underhanded subordination instilled. The ideology of Romantic love is therefore something that radical feminism rejects (Kitzinger, 1987).

Socialist feminists such as Mitchell (1974) and Jaggar (2004) acknowledge a debt to radical feminism for its insights, organising, and critical work on sexuality. Radical feminism has served a crucial role in the women’s movement. Indeed, I owe my own initial radicalisation to radical feminists like Michelle Landsberg (1982) and Celia Kitzinger (1987). I hold a deep sense of gratitude to radical cultural feminism, as it helped me to comprehend what oppression is. Nevertheless, as a trans ally, I eventually have had to renounce this political allegiance, because of the hostility to transpeople that lies at the heart of much radical cultural feminist thought.

The Radical Cultural Feminist Repudiation of Trans and Queer

Whereas I generally prefer the term repudiation as less universalistic and individualistic than ‘transphobia’ (as discussed earlier), in referring to radical cultural feminism one must make an exception since it is often consciously transphobic. Janice Raymond (1994) and Sheila

²⁷ The acronym R.E.A.L. signifies the group’s political standpoint: “Realistic, Equal, Active, for Life”.

Jeffreys (2003, 2005) are key figures in the promotion of transphobia and repudiation among radical cultural feminists, inciting women to turn their backs on trans women who have been sexually assaulted, disavowing and repudiating trans subjectivity, and behaving in disrespectful ways towards transpeople, outcasting them, and advocating the abolition of sex reassignment surgeries as “mutilation by proxy” and “human rights violations” (Jeffreys, 2003, p. 111).

Some proponents of radical cultural feminism promote the view that the ‘creation’ of transsexual people by the patriarchal medical establishment is a money-making scheme, one that serves the interest of male power (Raymond, 1994). Patriarchal surgeons, for example, supposedly create mutilated “pantomime dames” or “men” who ostensibly masquerade as women, (Greer, 1999, p. 81). “Women are born women”, counter radical cultural feminists such as Lee Lakeman from Vancouver Rape Relief (as cited in findlay [sic], 2003). Germaine Greer (1999) argues that MtFs cannot be real women, suggesting that as a social phenomenon they would “disappear overnight” if they were forced to have uterus and ovary transplants alongside vaginoplasty and breast implants (p. 81). Greer claims that the MtF simply wants access to woman-only spaces: “he [sic] does as all rapists have always done... he forces his way into the few private spaces women may enjoy” (p. 93). Greer is similarly scathing towards FtMs: “a thousand years from now the archaeologists who dig up their bones will know that [FtMs] were women” (p. 93).

Raymond (1994) condemns trans women for apparently reinforcing feminine stereotypes, while enhancing the economic power of drug manufacturers who allegedly push synthetic female hormones. Meanwhile, “gay sado-masochists” like Michel Foucault, according to Jeffreys (2003), have spawned queer theory which “promotes sado-masochism” among lesbians and other gay men who go to “cutting and piercing studios” (for tattoos, nipple, penile and labial piercings), “disappearing lesbians”, who are now identified as “queer” (p. 55). Young lesbians are supposedly “cutting-up” their bodies (p. 138), an act said to be inspired by queer theory. Worse, queer theory is seen as promoting transsexual surgeries, perceived once again as the cutting of bodies through the “savage mutilations of transsexual surgery” (p. 46). Jeffreys, moreover, contends that FtM reconstruction is a process that represents a threat to the female body, its potential annihilation.
Queer theory has, Jeffreys accuses, made it more difficult for women to see violence against women, through the obfuscating lens of postmodernism, as violence against women. Rather, it promotes domination of women by celebrating a dangerous performativity. For example, the butch/femme duality among lesbians is seen as a variation on the domination/submission theme espoused by patriarchy. This constitutes a distortion of sadism insidiously masked as transgressive. Queer theory and trans activists such as Califia (2003) celebrate sado-masochism, which according to Jeffreys is neither egalitarian nor conducive to feminist aims to end violence against women. Yet from the perspective of transpeople, radical cultural feminists such as Jeffreys (2003) threaten them by insisting that SRS be outlawed as a “violation of human rights” (p. 37).

Jeffreys (2003) also asserts that all transpeople are evading homosexuality, referring to a “transsexualism with which young lesbians and gay men who are unable to accept homosexuality, or have reasons to hate and reject their bodies, can identify” (p. 47). As evidenced in my interviews with transpeople, Jeffreys errs in assuming that all transpeople are “gay men and lesbians who have been unable to cope with the idea of being homosexual” (p. 45). Conservative psychoanalysts have long made the identical repudiation, as will be discussed later. Both discourses misapprehend the subjectivity of transpeople who evince a range of sexual orientations: straight, gay, bi, lesbian, queer, and asexual. Jeffreys erroneously posits that queer theory, through a supposed affirmation of SRS surgery, is simply “celebrating the castration of those who love the same sex” (p. 49). In regard to FtMs, Jeffreys similarly sees them all as lesbians, who submit to the “destruction” of their bodies, and their “lesbianism” with it (p. 122). One surmises that gay transmen, according to her thesis, are simply unable to cope with their ‘heterosexuality’.

Jeffreys deepens her sophism by declaring that all FtMs are “victims of internalised homophobia” (p. 137). She accuses them of “not reclaiming their female bodies, but cutting them up” (p. 138), by means of “self-mutilation by proxy” (p. 139). Other factors that she depicts FtMs as succumbing to include “the oppression of women, child sexual abuse, hatred of female body parts, fear of being socially despised as a woman and particularly an ageing woman, and the allure of male power which they believe can be attained by imitating a male body” (p. 143).
In a strange contradiction, Jeffreys also emphasises the problems of a “lesbian - and gay - hating culture” (p. 137) in which all queer people are embedded. This culture is ascertained to be at the root of internalised homophobia. Sometimes she is sympathetic towards gay men, yet at other times contemptuous, accusing them of succumbing to the misogynist “ick factor” (p. 107), or hatred of female genitals. She reads gay men as universally disparaging lesbians as “disgusting” (p. 107). In faulting gay men for their misogynist male stratum, Jeffreys also simplifies the conflated identities that some gay ‘men’ hold. This position fails to consider that some gay men also simultaneously identify as queer, some only identify as queer, and others cannot fathom being ‘men’ yet retain, unlike transsexuals, bodily congruency. In faulting gay men as primarily men (essentially male), Jeffreys ignores the hegemonic masculinity of many heterosexual men who repudiate and subjugate queer men as not-men (Connell, 1995; Tacey, 1997).

I am not concerned with critiques of gay men that are levied in a manner that makes room for response/dialogue. However, I am concerned with universal/essentialist critiques that foreclose anything but irretrievable condemnation. Like other groups in society, gay men are located in a range of class positions and may be a part of the problem of class domination. For example, in the 1980s some gay men were key organisers in Vancouver’s West End to push sex trade workers, including some who are trans, out of their community and into unsafe, dark industrial areas (Namaste, 2000). In another example, the provincial MLA for Vancouver’s West End is a gay man, Lorne Mayencourt, who has supported Government cuts to social, welfare and medical programs including the closing of the Gender Clinic at Vancouver Hospital and Health Sciences Centre in 2001. He is what Goldstein (2002) characterises as a “homocon”, a gay conservative. Goldstein suggests that homocons are ashamed of being associated with queers: “if you’re gay its OK, if you’re queer, disappear” (p. 3). For gay men, conformity to masculine gender models brings prestige and wins them “a place at the table” (in corporate boardrooms, exclusive country clubs, etc.).

In her historical analysis, Meyerowitz (2002) argues that gender conservatives have been vocally part of the gay and lesbian movement in America since the 1950s. The quintessential homocon is Andrew Sullivan (1996), who wants gay men to adopt “a gentleman jock” model (Goldstein,
2002, p. 75), worshipping masculinity and the ‘real man’ discourse. Proper gays are concerned with traditional institutions like marriage, the right to serve in the military, or to hold political office. The lesbian world has similar figures, like Camille Paglia, who also worships the cult of the masculine and identifies with the aggressor (Goldstein, 2002). In this regard, Jeffreys’ mistake is to conflate the homocons with queers in general, erasing difference. She asserts that “queer politics...[are] a move towards a gay consumer market rather than a community” (Jeffreys, 2003, p. 54), and blames queer theory for the nascent body fascism and gay profit-driven capitalism that has exploded in recent years. Her grand theory (as described below) rules out plurality and imposes a sameness on all homosexual people. The subtext of Jeffreys’ analysis is that queers should be ashamed of themselves; indeed, she remarks that many lesbians still find the term queer “abhorrent” (p. 9).

Re-asserting the Power of the Binary

The singularity that Jeffreys and like-minded radical cultural feminists promote is rooted in maintaining the essentialism at the core of the female/male binary. If one is born female or male, one has that status for life, whether or not one is straight or gay. This is one of the reasons that transwomen have been denied access to some women-only spaces such as the Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter. Lee Lakeman, a founding member of Rape Relief (one of Canada’s oldest feminist organisations), speaks of the historical events that mark women’s lives, such as menstruation and getting their first bra, which apparently no transwoman can know (findlay, 2003). This assessment assumes that all women wear bras, and that this garment serves as a compulsory element to womanhood, that all women menstruate, and so on. What about the women in the 1970s who burnt their bras? What about women who take menses suppressing drugs for non-medical reasons? Is any flat chested female not a woman? Or what about those with Turner’s syndrome (chromosomal pattern XO) for whom menstruation is an impossibility? What about elderly women who lose their memories of these ‘foundational’ events? These questions are not posed in order to disavow the category of woman altogether, but to draw attention to problems raised by the essentialist construction at the core of radical cultural feminism.
The mirror position is that males too must have ‘foundational’ events that mark their manhood, a universal assumption that I disagree with. For example, in the Townships of South Africa, such as those in Cape Town, male Xhosa leave their families for a period of up to three months, living in tents, following their ritual circumcision. Before they can take their position as males in their tribal society, they must go through this experience. This is a cultural ritual ascribing ‘maleness’ and ‘masculinity’ that is valid for that cultural location. Cultural location and historical specificity are obviously important for understanding definitions and attitudes related to sex and gender. What is paradoxical in radical cultural feminism is its universal positing of biological essentialism as determinate of sex and gender, not culture, although Simone de Beauvoir already maintained in 1949 that “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman” (1989/1952, p. vii), recognising that male/female and man/woman are cultural constructions. Feminists remain divided on this central issue, as are transpeople (TS are more inclined to essentialism / TG to constructivism).

Monique Wittig (1988) argues that for feminists the category of ‘woman’ exists only to be dismantled. When the category of ‘man’ is dissolved, so too is the category of woman, one cannot exist without the other. Wittig points out that there can be no slaves without ruling masters. In this context she asks, “what does feminist mean?... for many of us it means someone who fights for women as a class and for the disappearance of this class. For many others it means someone who fights for woman and her defense - for the myth, then, and its reinforcement” (p. 443). The latter group that Wittig refers to undoubtedly includes radical cultural feminists, who would not agree with Wittig’s radical cry of ‘We are not women!’ as exemplified in her essay One is not Born a Woman:

... our survival demands that we contribute all our strength to the destruction of the class of women within which men appropriate women. This can be accomplished only by the destruction of heterosexuality as a social system which is based on the oppression of women by men and which produces the doctrine of the difference between the sexes to justify this oppression [Italics mine]. (Wittig, 1988, p. 447).

Radical cultural feminist groups like Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter and The Michigan Women’s Music Festival argue that transwomen must be excluded because they were not born women and can never become women. This exclusion is based on an essentialist
reading of the body. Other radical cultural feminists such as John Stoltenberg (1989) argue against essentialism. Citing Andrea Dworkin, Stoltenberg’s arguments go back to the days when radical cultural feminism was consonant with socialist feminism on the question of the origins of gender:

*The discovery is, of course, that ‘man’ and ‘woman’ are fictions, caricatures, cultural constructs. As models they are reductive, totalitarian, inappropriate to human becoming. As roles they are static, demeaning to the female, dead-ended for the male and female both.*  

This position seems to have been abandoned by the culturalists, only to be picked up by queer theorists who argue that the (fictive) sex binary is destructive. The binary’s function is to socialise males and females in permanently opposing directions. Since queer theorists do not believe it is grounded in biology, it can be dismantled and cast aside through political action and rejected through personal awareness. These two irreconcilable views (essentialism and constructivism) are at the heart of all debates about trans issues, as every section of the present study confirms.

Building on Dworkin’s analysis, Stoltenberg makes the stunning suggestion that “the idea of the male sex is like the idea of an Aryan race” (p. 29). In the early years of radical culturalism, gender was conceptualised as a pervasive myth and the binary was reconfigured as a continuum. Jeffreys (2003, 2005), a prominent contemporary voice in radical cultural feminism, paradoxically asserts essentialism on the one hand, and social constructionism on the other, apparently as it suits her argument. Jeffreys, Raymond, and Greer all refuse to acknowledge that socially constructed identity can be shed and people can become who they ‘really are’ as they see it. This implies that the individual can to some extent existentially self-determine, deciding, in postmodern terms, which fictional identity to perform. In contrast, Jeffreys states:

I will refer to FTMs with female pronouns and to MTFs with male pronouns in order to highlight their sex classes of origin. Use of the pronouns of the political class to which these people wish to be reassigned makes political analysis very difficult.  
(Jeffreys, 2003, p. 123)
Sex class of origin suggests an essentialist, determinist view of history, yet Jeffreys reveals her contradictory position when she conveniently conjures constructivism:

Sexuality is *socially constructed* for men out of their position of dominance, and for women out of their position of subordination. Thus it is the eroticized inequality of women which forms the excitement of sex under male supremacy.

[italics mine] (p. 27)

Although sexuality is seen here as denoting a political class, like other essentialists (e.g. Kimura, 1999), Jeffreys intentionally avoids the term *gender* in favour of *sex*. In fact, she suggests that gender differences be abolished in favour of the dualism of domination and submission: “I prefer to describe masculinity as ‘male-dominant behaviour’ and femininity as ‘female-subordinate behaviour’. No multiplicity of genders can emerge from this perspective” (pp. 43-44). Her hostility to multiple differences incites her to dismiss the work of Robert Connell (1995) and other pro-feminist men who have argued for the conceptual utility of terms such as *hegemonic masculinity*. This concept better accounts for the plurality of men’s behaviour, especially around violence, than does the assumption that there is only one male variety of gender domination.

Hegemonic masculinity is most clearly expressed when certain forms of masculinity rule others, where certain men regulate, dominate, violate, beat, rape, terrorise, or kill other men. Hegemonic masculinity is outlined by Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1987), who emphasise four of its dimensions: (1) hegemony as dominance and power is historically situated; (2) hegemony as persuasive; (3) hegemony as tied up with the division of labour; and (4) hegemony as negotiated and enforced by the state. In relation to masculinity, the authors note:

Hegemonic masculinity... [is] a question of how particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and wealth, and how they legitimate and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance... connected with the institutionalization of men’s dominance over women. (p. 92)

Connell (1995) furthers this definition by adding that “one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted” (p. 76). This points to differing expressions of masculinity, transforming the term into the plural *masculinities*. Though the plural usage of “masculinities” is a valuable contribution, and indeed conceptually more accurate than the singular “masculinity”, this should
not discourage the limited use of the singular masculinity where warranted. For example, in depth psychology, Horrocks (1994) suggests that

...the continued use of the singular term masculinity in men does have a unitary function. All shades of masculine identity, ranging from macho to the effeminate, have this in common: they convey the message: “I am not a woman”. (p. 33)

A limited, singular use of ‘masculinity’ can analytically account for the phenomenon of men trying to repudiate their own femininity. In depth psychology, when a forceful repression such as this occurs, it is thrown back out via projection, creating the Other, as will be probed further in Part III of this study.

The power that constitutes hegemonic masculinity is evidenced not just in oppressing femininity but also in identifying and then dominating other competing forms of masculinity. Kimmel (1994) states that hegemonic masculinity is “the standard against which all other masculinities are measured and against which individual men measure the success of their gender accomplishments” (n. 139). Hegemonic masculinity entails not only a dominance over women but also a coercive mode of dominance over other men that can take the form of violence. As Cartwright (2002) notes, psychodynamically: “Violence can occur in the service of the ego to defend and maintain a coherent sense of identity of which gender and sexuality are an important part... an attempt to uphold ‘phallic power’ ” (p. 47). Violence can be seen as defensive, as a reaction to “intolerable guilt”, a way of defensively “ridding the self of toxic mental states”, of “warding off attacking objects” (ibid., p. 53), or in ego syntonic ways that are aligned with external political aims such as violence used in war. Violence, whether overtly stated or threatened, is used to dominate and control, hence hegemonic masculinity.

Michael Kaufman (1987) outlines a triad of men’s violence: (1) violence against women; (2) violence against other men; and (3) internalised violence towards men’s selves. Feminism, particularly (though not exclusively) radical cultural feminism, has profoundly illuminated the first corner of the triad. Men’s movements, in their profeminist or mythopoetic forms, have drawn attention to the second corner by exploring and illuminating the tyranny and damage of violence between men themselves. Unfortunately, the ‘illumination’ offered by the mythopoetic
strand (e.g. Bly, 1990) is conflated with a conservative and reactionary analysis primarily rooted in the backlash against feminism (Tacey, 1997). The third corner has often been of concern to depth psychology. For example, Kaufman (1987) argues, “The failure to find safe avenues of emotional expression and discharge means that a whole range of emotions are transformed into anger and hostility” (p. 22). This internalised violence translates into some significant issues. For example, males of all age groups record the highest rates of successful suicide (in the USA in 2001, 81% of suicides were committed by males) and of alcohol misuse (binge drinking is twice as common among males as among females) (Helgeson, 2005). Men also produce the most serious car wrecks, in which alcohol is often a factor, and men are also more likely to be admitted to hospital with chronic disease (ibid.). Paradoxically, other social analysts have noted that a masculinity ethos in working-class boys often functions to prevent upward mobility. In this case, boys are more likely to fail in academic achievement in primary and secondary school when compared to girls (Salisbury and Jackson, 1996). What I conclude from these points is that masculine hegemony does not necessarily translate into better lives for all men and that a majority of men themselves have a stake in dismantling patriarchy.

Unfortunately, there is no room for a range of masculinities in analyses such as Jeffreys’. For her, all men are the perpetrators of male dominance and all women the victims, and it is clear which side any individual is on. Queer theory disagrees with this essentialist claim. Masculinity is not essentially grounded in sexed embodiment. A plural understanding of masculinities is one that also seeks to unravel masculinities in women and femininities in men. Domination and submission are, in Jeffreys’ analysis, essentially constructed, rooted by implication in the sex chromosomes that predetermine men to dominate, including queer men who, by virtue of being male, are assumed to be inescapable enemies of women. Hence Jeffreys does not conceptualise the difference between people and patriarchal institutions (historically contrived by men but non-living conglomerate centres of power) that are gendered but cannot – I counter - have a sex. She also does not conceptualise unconscious dynamics that cause gender certainty to collapse. Since queer theory disavows essentialism, it comes under attack by Jeffreys for championing “a cult of transsexualism” (Jeffreys, 2003, p. 1) and for promoting sadomasochistic practices as transgressing authoritarian rules that regulate the body. Transgender is not allowed either, since
it violates the *a priori* rules of nature: males are irretrievably bad, females are by nature good, and one cannot move from one realm to the other.

In contrast to a hermeneutic approach, Jeffreys also silences oppressed voices by means of erasure, by failing to engage in dialogue. Nowhere in her writings does one find the voices of transpeople. Like the trans repudiating work of evolutionary psychologist J. Michael Bailey (2003), such analyses are conducted by objectifying transpeople and silencing ‘deviant’ subjectivity, by eviscerating voice. One might also be concerned over the energy being spent on repudiating trans subjectivity (as in certain court cases, see Chapter 6), or inducing fragmentation between oppressed groups rather than solidarity. Instead of reaching out to a subjugated group who could be useful, for example, as volunteers at sexual assault centres, the culturalists relegate transpeople to the margins. *Alienation* as an outcome of this ostracism inevitably follows, no matter how much radical cultural feminists claim to be campaigning against it on the assumption that only capitalism and patriarchy produce it (Jaggar, 1983).

Radical cultural feminism contributed a great deal to the women’s movement and was a significant force (along with socialist and Marxist feminisms) in second-wave feminism. The backlash against feminism has been particularly cruel to radical cultural feminism, which is a constant target for critics who use this discourse in order to attack the legitimacy of feminism in general and Women’s Studies programs in particular (e.g. Boyd, 2004). Ironically, attacks on transwomen have had a positive effect in raising general awareness of the plight of transpeople, as the media have sensationalised the exclusion of these people by those who claim to be the champions of the oppressed. Since feminism more broadly is based on an ethic of care and social justice (Noddings, 2003), in the end the radical cultural feminist position on trans is paradoxically anti-feminist, reflecting a gender supremacist position, as Califia (2003) provocatively points out. Dorothy Smith (2004/1974) claimed from her materialist feminist position that “the world as it is constituted by men stands out in authority over that of women” (p.22). Similarly, the world as it is constructed by men and women subjugated by a pervasive sex/gender binary, including left-wing radical cultural feminists, stands in authority over transpeople, judging and condemning them in ways that ironically resemble the repudiation expressed by right wing conservative anti-feminists. The next chapter seeks to talk back to
conservatives, radical cultural feminists, and the liberal status quo. The overlapping issues that trans/queer people face in terms of widespread repudiations and consequent subjugation (though I maintain that most queer people are in a less vulnerable position than are transpeople) motivates me, as a queer though non-transperson, to take the risk of pursuing this attempt to talk-back, to counter repudiations from a range of sources that seem, despite their different rationales, to have common elements. Whereas transpeople are often mis-read as queer and subject to heterosexism and homophobia, conversely non-trans queer people can also be mis-read as trans and subject to trans repudiation and transphobia. Hence, I am joining with them to protest and present a different perspective (theirs), which is also not homogenous, as ‘queer’ may not be an identity that all transpeople can relate to. There is, however, enough common ground in these complex matters to generate substantial potential for solidarity.
CHAPTER 6:

TALKING BACK:
HISTORICIZING THE REPUDIATION OF TRANSSEXUALISM

Talking Back to Liberalism and Conservatism

As discussed in the last chapter, (neo)liberalism intertwined with conservatism is currently the dominant political force in Western societies. In talking back, it is necessary to read most trans repudiations as political, whether overtly (as stated in obviously conservative political positions, or in radical cultural feminism’s conservatism in retaining the sex/gender binary), or covertly, as when conservatism is masked as science (in psychiatry or psychoanalysis). In contesting the “end of history” thesis that conservatism posits, it is necessary to re-insert an historical analysis. Since (neo)liberalism favours ‘free’ market choice and individual pursuits, while conservatism resists individual rights that challenge traditional authority, the contradictions this political entanglement produces in perceptions of trans-ness require clarification. For example, how does the representation of the trans body in the mass media relate to such an ambivalent entanglement? And why do many authorities permit SRS, under a regime that generates an almost universal repudiation of trans subjectivity?

Meyerowitz (2002) analyses the impact of representations of the trans body through sensationalist journalism and other media such as film. Beginning in America in the 1930s, representations of trans bodies partly functioned to shore up the authority of science and medicine and contributed to the strengthening of the concept of the modern self, “a heightened value on self-expression, self-improvement, and self-transformation” (p. 9). In the United States, “Be all that you can be” took root as a mantra decades later, with the promises of medicine and science backing-up this ideal of the ‘self-made man’, which sensationally could also become a non-self-made man transforming into a woman. Until recently, MtFs ironically attracted more attention in entertainment fields than FtMs (who might be more accurately described as selves-
made-men). The entertainment field has been among the few arenas of labour open to trans women, as Namaste (2004) verifies in her historical analysis of MtFs who worked in Montréal’s popular cabaret and burlesque shows during the 1950s and 1960s.

Foucault (1984) speaks of the self as a product of bio-power, which sees bodies as useful to the degree that they become productive instruments, as “the body is moulded by a great many distinct regimes” (p. 87). Under liberalism, the productive body is one that self-improves, self-transforms, and self-locates. Dividing practices, which demarcate between healthy and sick bodies, differently sexed, classed, racialised bodies, and so on, demand that each fulfil a function, like a machine. Market consumption based on productivity, and the associated exploitation of labour required to reinforce prevailing economic conditions, needed dividing practices. Markets target those who have been divided and, functioning on an ethos of competition, feed upon internalised and subjective feelings of inferiority (Salecl, 2003). Mass media representations of ideal bodies produce the internalised sense of having an imperfect body. The cosmetics, plastic surgery, and diet industries are successful to the extent that they play upon and exploit the widespread inadequacies perceived as deficiencies in one’s body. Within divided groups, normative expectations of what it should be like are a part of the gendered, classed and racialised construction of the body.

Medical science is challenged to heal broken bodies, bodies that are transformed from healthy to sick, for example, as a result of exploitative work practices. Its task is to purge the body of disease, to bring it back into direct productivity. Repetitive strain injuries, industrial accidents, chronic back pain, stress related diseases, and so on, must be healed in order for bodies to be useful, to produce. The healed and ‘cleansed’ body, subject to market forces and the conservative values rooted in what Foucault (1984) calls the “Christian ethic of the flesh” (p. 294), are highlighted in the puritan Protestant work ethic. Bodies must retain a modicum of health in order to do work, regardless of the fact that the work itself may be a factor in producing ill health. The idealism intrinsic to the utopianism of science requires sustained faith in its power to cure. Medical science is essential to the functioning of the prevailing political economy, and to do its job, it requires widespread faith in its abilities to heal. That medical science can perform ‘fantastic’ procedures, such as sex changes through SRS, has the added effect of producing
admiration for its abilities, regardless of the controversies produced by SRS per se. SRS functions as a spectacle in and of itself, one that shores up the awe of medicine and health technologies.

The apparatuses that help to facilitate and construct faith in science as capable of ensuring a normative, productive body include an array of media, magazines, cinema, television, radio, newspaper articles, and so forth. Meyerowitz (2002) traces the representation of trans bodies in such media from the post World War II era, revealing concerted efforts that “routinely expressed admiration for the power of science and the wizardry of technology” (p. 41). The sensationalised reports of MtF Christine Jorgensen in the 1950s had the effect of reinforcing the magic of science in the cold war period, providing a distraction from the dangers and anxiety of atomic destruction by fascinating readers with science’s ability to conquer even the most seemingly immutable realms, such as sex. That American transpeople of that period could not get SRS in the United States was beside the point. The person who “changed sex” was exploited as a spectacle, regardless of the individual’s psyche or social situation (Namaste, 2004).

Transpeople continue to be an object of fascination, with the media regularly portraying their bodies. For example, a recent documentary in Canada on CBC television entitled Becoming Ayden portrayed transpeople as objects of sensation yet also ‘psychologically unstable’, the program conjuring an air of “look what these people are doing” (The Fifth Estate, CBC, 2004). One particular segment of the documentary focused on a group of FtMs at a conference where they lined up in a row to show their bare chests to an audience following mastectomy and chest reconstruction surgery. In focusing on these kinds of spectacle, the documentary failed to pay attention to the social barriers or widespread repudiations that transpeople face in their everyday/night lives. Indeed, a concerted effort was spent focussing on one young FtM named Ayden, interviewing his parents in an attempt to uncover the ‘pathological roots’ of “her” transsexual aspirations. I was struck by how disrespectful the program’s reporter (Hana Gartner) was towards Ayden, refusing to respect his boundaries and badgering him with impertinent questions after he had already made it clear that the questions would not be addressed. Moreover,
in her analysis of Ayden, Gartner refused to use correct pronouns, referring to him as “she” or “her”. This documentary exemplified a repudiation of trans subjectivity.

A somewhat dated yet relevant analysis of liberal/conservative media tactics in reinforcing the dominant ideology can be found in Guy Debord’s (1992/1967) philosophical treatise *Society of the Spectacle*. Debord’s discourse suffers at times from overly diffuse and enigmatic theorising, is gender blind and limited in its positing of universal historicity. Nevertheless, it provides a response, a talking-back to liberalism/conservatism’s *spectacular* negative effects on social life. He begins his thesis by arguing that the spectacle is not an *ad hoc* collection of images, but rather a complex social set of relations mediated by images. It manifests itself in various media (TV, magazines, film, newspapers) and forms of entertainment (such as sport) that have the effect of masking “the heart of this real society’s unreality” (aphorism 6). Constructed spectacles, with their excitement, drama, wonderment, or spell-binding fear (e.g. “dare devils”) draw one’s focus into a concentrated state of affect that mesmerises. Drawing on Hegel and materialist discourses, Debord claims that the spectacle is a concrete manifestation of capital, “accumulated to the point that it becomes images” (aphorism 34). The spectacle functions as a distraction by drawing spectators into a relation where the accumulated commodity “contemplates itself in a world of its own making” (aphorism 53), away from the drudgery of everyday/night life that often bedevils the masses. The spectacle’s effect is to produce illusions, the consumer becomes a consumer of illusions.

Salecl (2003) expands on similar issues through a Lacanian reading, theorising the marketisation of desire, identification, and consumer spending as a compensation for a sense of lack, of inadequacy. Spectacles are generated to inspire affect, desire, to entertain and to promote (on the peripheries - advertisement boards at football and hockey matches, commercials on television) material goods associated with these affect-generating spectacles.

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28 I acknowledge that the host of the program may not have read Ayden as having transitioned and may have actually displayed the difficulties we have in addressing pre-transition transpeople. This reflects a problem in language, of absences in conceptions of a world that has not yet relinquished the sex/gender binary.
Film, Television, and the Internet: The Contradictory Influences of Media

Media such as film, television and the Internet as sources of entertainment and information have a profound effect on questions of gender and identity. For example, Currie’s (1999) study on the effects of media, particularly magazines ("teen-zines") that target adolescent girls, reveal that these messages carry ideological aspects that convey what it means to be a girl and a woman. These messages are internalised and affect the construction of a gendered identity, aiding among other things the rightness of constructions of feminine beauty and appropriate social roles and modes of behaviour for young women. Women themselves come to reproduce these ideologies under the liberal status quo, (re)perpetuating unthought masculinist images of ideal feminine forms that fuel various forms of consumption (such as the fashion, cosmetics, and diet industries), socialising girls to participate in existing markets that profit from the pursuit of these ideals. Luce Irigaray (1985) outlined the problem in her concept of the masculine-feminine or phallic feminine, the feminine as men have reproduced and represented it, serving their ruling interests by those who are subjugated. That these motives are often not consciously understood as patriarchal and exploitative in composition benefits those in power. As Alison Jaggar (1994) writes

... the ruling class has an interest in concealing the way in which it dominates and exploits the rest of the population, the interpretation of reality that it presents will be distorted in characteristic ways. In particular, the suffering of the subordinate classes will be ignored, redescribed as enjoyment or justified as freely chosen, deserved, or inevitable. (p. 56)

Media images and representations have had a particularly contradictory (negative/positive) impact on transpeople’s lives: they provide an exploitative spectacle (freak show) on the one hand, versus the transmission of imperative information that healing of the mis-sexed body is possible on the other. On the negative side, transpeople have been portrayed in extreme ways, sometimes as fiendish and frightening characters that conflate gender transgression with those who are sociopathic. A famous example is the classic 1960 film Psycho, in which a murderer (Norman Bates) cross-dresses in a delusional attempt to somehow become his dead mother. Transpeople (both TS and TG) have also been portrayed as avenging rapists, as in Rachel
Welch's role as a trans woman in the 1970 film *Myra Breckinridge*, or as monstrous such as in the cult classic *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. The 1991 film *The Silence of the Lambs* depicts a trans woman as a serial killer. She is motivated to torture and then murder her female victims out of enmity/desire, subsequently harvesting the victim's skin in a deranged attempt to clothe herself in envied female flesh.

Until recently, very few films have portrayed the sometimes extreme and violent repudiations that threaten the lives of transpeople. An exception is the 1999 film *Boys Don't Cry*, which dramatised the real life, gruesome murder of trans man Teena Brandon. Other films, such as *The World According to Garp, The Crying Game, All About My Mother, Better than Chocolate, Southern Comfort* and the recent *Transamerica* all portray TG or TS characters as deserving of sympathy and as likeable people. These portrayals convey a much needed shift in representation that humanises the difficulties and strengths that transpeople experience in their everyday/night lives. Beyond cinema, trivialising television talk shows such as *Jerry Springer* have regularly featured fist-fighting transsexuals as spectacle. Erotic and pornographic images of trans bodies have likewise proliferated. In conducting Internet research using the term "transsexual" on a standard search engine, I was stunned at the overwhelming amount of trans pornography that this search yielded. For example, I found a notable prevalence of websites pertaining to pre-SRS or "no-op" MtFs as exotic and eroticised others: 'lady with a penis', 'she-males', 'tranny babes', 'chicks with dicks', and so on. The contradictions that all these spectacles produce are complex.

On the one hand, representations of trans bodies often convey derogatory messages such as 'freak' and 'psycho' expressing the fear and dread aspect of the "phobogenic object", while the erotic sexualisation of transpeople conveys the representation of the exotic other, of attraction, arousal, and desire. These media representations, nonetheless, are often important factors in assisting transpeople by providing initial information about the possibilities of sex change.

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29 Recently, this problem appears to have improved with more support and information sites appearing at the top of the Internet search results whilst pornography sites begin to appear 2-3 search pages down. That the word *sex* appears within the search word *transsexual* no doubt contributes to the pornography sites yielded.
Peter Ringo (2002) interviewed 19 FtMs on the role that the media play in the coming-out to oneself process and subsequent development of a trans and/or male identity. He found that the media helped transmen to generate a new awareness of their embodied selves, facilitating their initial emergence as trans men and helping to either construct or consolidate their identity. Media depictions of transpeople and issues mirrored and roused often latent feelings, stirring up the viewer’s deep sense of maleness or “transness”, as Ringo reports:

Some indicated that they experienced their gender identities as generated from physical, mental, and/or psychic depths, using such expressions as “boy inside”, “emerging male within myself” and saying, “something else deeper in my mind knew I was male”. Additionally, statements that pointed to media’s triggering of an inner process or accessing a type of subconsciousness were quite common: “clicked somewhere inside”, “seemed to speak to something very deep inside of me”, and “helped me to discover parts of myself that were hidden”. (p. 18)

The return of the repressed is embraced and incorporated into identity, an incorporation that is strong enough to “pre-empt” a life of socialization along a contrary gender line. Ringo concludes his study by suggesting that the

...media’s role can be understood as having encouraged its user’s ‘qualities of transness’ to manifest and strengthen, to become organized under the purview of identity and to mature through the processes of physical, social, intellectual, emotional and spiritual transition. (p. 20)

My interviews with transpeople confirm that for some the media did help to incite a change of sex/gender consciousness. Prior to transition and his “awakening”, John had lived a fundamentalist Christian lifestyle as a married heterosexual woman. Earlier, he had experienced feelings of being wrongly bodied but had learned to repress them. Television portrayals, books, and the Internet aided him eventually in becoming a man and adopting a gay male identity:

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30 Ringo (2002) suggests that the media provoke three general effects on pre-transition trans men (trans status as initially unconscious/repressed): “(1) Formative awareness: A respondent became aware of a gendered aspect or aspects of himself that eventually became a basis for his gender identity or identities; (2) Sudden awakening: A respondent experienced a comprehensive change in his understanding of his gender within a short period of time; (3) Gradual awakening: a respondent experienced a change in his understanding of his gender over an extended period of time” (p. 17).
John: I was raised in a fundamentalist religion and that certainly figured into the
“wrongness” or absurdity of my feelings. As puberty arrived, I had to deal with the fact
that I had a female body, I was a girl, and there was not a thing to be done about it. I
remember sitting in the bedroom thinking, maybe it’s not so bad, maybe it could be good
to be a girl. This boy thing was just a fantasy that I had to put away. And so I continued
into adolescence. I was definitely a tomboy, and I never did fully acclimate to female
things such as wearing dresses. I always had to wear a dress to church. I remember some
crying fights with my mother over this issue. Finally, when I was about sixteen, she
allowed dress pants... I never did master make-up; I remember trying it on the first day
of junior high and I thought ‘Ugh! This is too much trouble.’ I had such a sense of failure
as a female. And I remember the other girls, they would be so excited about wearing a
purse and they would come to church with their purses, and I didn’t really understand
that. So I just went along in my girl life and had crushes on boys - this, along with breasts
and menstruation, forced me to be resigned to being a girl. I graduated high school and
my parents sent me to a religious university. I met my now ex husband there. That was
the high point of my commitment to Christianity and being female. I had grown my hair
very long, for example, and I had gradually begun to think that skirts might be okay. My
mother gave me a purse at one point and I used it for a short while. So married life
continued more or less pleasantly, but there was still always this little thing that was
following me. Many things were starting to emerge at this time; even though I continued
to be involved in the church with my husband, yet being away from my parents and in my
own home for the first time allowed me a certain independence of thought... I began to
question a lot of things. I used to be one of those people who was very homophobic; I
really thought that being gay was a sin. It got to the point where I began to think: there is
in fact nothing wrong with being gay, and I’m only thinking it’s wrong because the Bible
seems to say that it’s wrong. So do I trust myself or do I trust the Bible? I began to trust
myself.

Chris: And you had no understanding of yourself as being gay at that time?

John: No, although things certainly would come up from time to time. I would see
something on television and it would stir up all these feelings inside and I would think,
“What does this mean, what’s going on?” and I would write about it in my diary. Since I
was sixteen, journaling has been important to me as kind of ongoing self-conversation.

Chris: So this sort of self-conversation kept you going?

John: Yes, and I’ve always been an avid reader, which probably helped counter the
fundamentalist message. I was always exposed to all these new thoughts and I was
thinking about birth control, I was rethinking abortion, I was rethinking sex; I was
rethinking so many things during my early to mid-twenties. And I was thinking about
myself and what does this mean, and I was thinking about my childhood and thinking
about my masculinity, which by then I was allowing to emerge. I was changing my style
of dress and noticing how comfortable and natural it was for me to wear gender neutral or masculine styles. I was coming to accept myself as someone who didn’t wear make-up or wasn’t necessarily into all the accoutrements of femininity. And I was reading and seeing things on television, and I remember once I saw a guy, a transgendered man, on TV; I think his name was Alex and he was going to Harvard. And I remember how it stirred up strong feelings, how alarming and weird and familiar this was. And I was writing about it, it was just such an intense time and it did cross my mind sometimes, “Am I transgendered? Am I a lesbian, or am I bisexual, what does this mean inside of me?” My orientation towards men was confusing; I had no idea at the time that gay FtMs existed.

Chris: So... you simply didn’t know that it was possible. And there had been all this stuff that you had to unpack over the years around religion and sinfulness?

John: Yeah, there were so many things being rearranged. I was flowering, I was starting to bloom inside. A pivotal moment occurred when I was twenty-five: I decided to stop going to church. I had been in church weekly since I was a baby. By the time I decided to stop going, I had become a very irritated Christian. I was writing things in my diary like, “I just don’t get this, it doesn’t make sense but I know that Jesus is the only way to salvation...” I was in a box and I couldn’t get out. Finally, I said, “I’ve had it, I’ve had it with this stifling, airless Christian sub-culture.” I stopped going to church and I stopped listening to Christian radio. There was a big bang inside and I started to expand, and I’m still expanding, seven, eight, nine years later. It was amazing, I felt like I could breathe. I’d left a very stifling atmosphere and I felt like I could breathe. It was frightening; it was like falling off a cliff. But my husband was amazingly supportive through all this. I continued to explore, read, and think, and then the Internet came into my life. And I began to explore a lot of things on the Internet, and I learned so much, particularly about transgender issues. It began to dawn upon me what I was. It was kind of slow going; I was still learning to trust my own sense of things, solidifying my self. I had even begun going to a therapist because I was wondering if I should even stay married. I married when I was twenty and I was not an adult at the time, I was still very much a child inside. I was starting to expand, even to outgrow my marriage, and it was very chaotic and very painful. But it was also right; the old order had to die and the new order had to come. (entries# 16-24)

John’s narrative exemplifies the positive impacts that various media have on transpeople’s acceptance of their selves and the formation of their identities. In contrast, some of the reactions that radical cultural feminists convey are based on negative representations. Germaine Greer (1999), for example, makes direct comparisons of MtF transpeople with the character of Norman Bates in Psycho in an incredible attempt to discredit MtFs as similarly deranged. Moreover, her comparison and conflation of MtFs with “pantomime dames” is an allusion to earlier vaudeville shows with spectacles of cross-dressing men. As with attention to drag queens, confusing the spectacle of congruent male-bodied comic actors with transsexuals distracts from the concrete,
embodied problems that those with mis-sexed bodies seek to overcome. Media representations that play on the transsexual theme as a means of entertainment do not generally consider that historically it has been extremely difficult for transpeople to access SRS. Contemporary neoliberalism, in its advocacy of the private market, is pressing for privatisation of health care, which would include clinics that provide SRS. Privatisation of an essential medical service makes the procedure no different from elective practices such as cosmetic surgery, which may be desirable to consumers who feel they have inadequate bodies, but whose position differs from that of those whose requirement for surgery is essential for their health. Moreover, privatisation would force low-income transpeople into untenable positions. These developments highlight a disjuncture between liberal representations of the possibility of SRS and the concrete, material limitations of access to the required services for trans embodied people. Conservatism, in reluctantly permitting SRS (and in other cases denying it outright), excludes those with a recent criminal record, or a dual diagnosis (e.g. borderline personality disorder), and on the basis of age. Transsexuals who have any engagement with the sex trade are likewise excluded from accessing SRS (Namaste, 2000). Billings and Urban (1982) also note racial prejudice, such as American cases of disqualifying SRS applicants who are Puerto Rican, allegedly for defying representations of white heteronormativity (looking too much like “fags”, p. 275).

Stereotypical images of masculinity and femininity are accepted and imposed by gender identity clinics. Namaste (2000) found that MtFs carefully construct their self presentations when visiting psychiatrists in order to meet normative expectations of femininity. It has frequently been the case that “doctors rejected candidates who would not conform after surgery to the dominant conventions of gender and sexuality” (Meyerowitz, 2002, p. 225). The conundrum that this double bind produces is exposed in McHugh’s (2004) reflections as a psychiatrist who once ‘served’ those with GID. He dismisses MtF presentations, saying these “subjects struck me as caricatures of women” (p. 2). The “caricatures” accusation recalls the attitude of radical cultural feminists who fail to appreciate the double binds that have historically ruled transpeople’s complex relations with psychiatry. Their attempts to cross the gender binary can paradoxically be successful only if they reinforce it.
Talking Back to Radical Cultural Feminism

Some of the claims that radical cultural feminists make in repudiating trans subjectivity concern the supposed “production” of SRS as a scheme contrived to materially enrich the patriarchal medical establishment. This claim, proposed by two male sociologists, Billings and Urban (1982), was cited by radical cultural feminists like Greer (1999) to lend credence to their arguments. Billings and Urban contend that the transsexual (i.e. someone who has undergone treatment to change sex) was solely produced through medical means that “heal neither the body nor the mind, but perform a moral function instead” (p. 266). For them, the practice of SRS produces an “identity category” (p. 266), one that legitimates, rationalises and commodifies SRS. Through liberal choice, transpeople are said to buy a body, as they would any other commodity. Such analyses elide the historical reasons for SRS and also the reality of SRS as sought through gender identity clinics.

In fact, SRS procedures such as vaginoplasty or phalloplasty were certainly not initiated or initially conceived to create a new market for surgeons to exploit. For example, the MtF procedure of vaginoplasty long pre-dates the “identity category” of transsexual, the English term coined in the late 1940s by David Oliver Cauldwell, who was vigorously opposed to SRS. Rather, vaginoplasty began as a technology of the body that addressed the requests of nineteenth-century adult women who were born without a vagina. Mayer-Rokitansky-Kuster-Hauser syndrome (MRKH) is said to occur as a congenital ‘condition’ in some females. The syndrome usually includes the absence of vagina, uterus, fallopian tubes, and cervix. The incidence of MRKH is estimated at one in 5,000 (Morris, 2005). Since there are no male organs present, the person is deemed to be female. It is not unreasonable that some females who are born with MRKH may want a vagina. Procedures such as mastectomies, hysterectomies, penectomies, and so on (for conditions such as cancer), or the development of phalloplasty for males who have lost their penis due to accidents or war (a procedure developed after World War I), were eventually applied to those with GID, but these procedures were not in and of themselves created for transsexuals.
Early twentieth-century medicine and biology inherited Darwin’s view that humans gradually evolved from lower, hermaphroditic species. In their evolution, humans retained vestiges of this hermaphroditism, usually in undifferentiated form depending on their chromosomal status. Gonads, clitorises, penises, breasts and nipples share a common embryonic origin that usually differentiates into the Wolfian (male) or Müllerian (female) ducts. The Austrian philosopher Otto Weininger [1880–1903] further popularised the theory of universal bisexualism (Meyerowitz, 2002). Freud, Adler, and Jung, as well as prominent sexologists such as Havelock Ellis, were certainly influenced by Weininger’s theories. Adler (1998/1938) wrote,

The fact is that all human beings carry traces of the other sex, just as there are also hormones of the other sex in the urine. This gives occasion for a surmise that seems rather bold; i.e. that there is a twin hidden in every one of us... the hermaphroditism present in everyone. (pp. 148-149)

Freud and Jung similarly espoused an inherent structural bisexualism31 of the psyche, as will be discussed in Chapter 7. What was radical for their period was how these notions ran roughshod over traditional and metaphysical binary understandings of sex and gender, hence many were aghast, particularly at Freud’s proclamations of universal bisexualism alongside all-pervasive (polymorphous) sexuality.

Outside of psychoanalytic circles, the increasing acceptance of the theory of universal bisexualism was lent a boost with the discovery of the sex hormones in the 1910s. Subsequently, when testing practices evolved in ways that allowed their quantitative detection in humans (1930s), the theoretical paradigm of universal bisexualism meant that eyebrows were not raised when males and females were found to have both male and female hormones (Bullough, 1994). Harry Benjamin [1885–1987], a German émigré to America, advocated for transsexuals on the basis of the universal bisexuality hypothesis. SRS poses fewer moral conundrums in terms of transsexual healing in the global medical scheme, if the distinctions between male and female are not absolute. Medical technology cannot reverse the developmental favouring of one set of embryological ducts over another, yet surgically and hormonally intervening to match the

31 Chiland (2005) argues that Freud’s use of bisexuality is confusing and that “it would be better were we to use a neologism such as ‘bisexuation’, [or] ‘bi-sexed’ disposition” (p. 49).
potential of the suppressed set of features, however incomplete this might be, poses less of a problem under the doctrine of universal bisexualism.

However, Benjamin’s task, to convince the medical establishment of the legitimacy of SRS, was a daunting one. Contrary to profiteering claims made more recently by radical cultural feminists, the practice of SRS was limited to a few rogue surgeons who faced tremendous opposition. Some doctors, Meyerowitz (2002) states, tried to stop the practice by arguing that “sex change surgery, especially castration of males, was illegal in the United States. They referred to local mayhem statutes, based on English common law that outlawed the maiming of men who might serve as soldiers” (pp. 120-121). Although this legal strategy failed to succeed, the general prohibitions against SRS nevertheless incited desperate transpeople to seek these procedures in other countries if they could afford to.

Initially, transpeople actively pleaded for the medicalisation of their incongruency as a means to legitimate surgical and hormonal interventions. As Prosser (1998) notes:

> Sexology provided the narrative setting for the transgendered subject to become medicalized. Without this medicalization of transgendered narratives, gender deviance would not have been hitched to the medical technology that “cures” the transsexual through sex change. To become transsexual, to make that somatic transition from gender deviant to sex-changed, the transgender narrative needed to become diagnosable. (p. 139)

Through the efforts of Benjamin and other sexologists, transsexuals found allies to partially persuade a very reluctant medical establishment, primarily made-up of men, to consent to a limited number of SRSs to be carried out in the USA. There were two reasons for this development. First, the idea of sex change had been sensationalised in popular culture in American media beginning in the 1930s, culminating with Christine Jorgensen’s return to America following her (in)famous SRS in Denmark in 1952. Such sensationalism gave the misleading impression that anyone might potentially do likewise. Second, with the knowledge that SRS was possible (yet paradoxically often impossible to get), physicians were being confronted with people, mostly MtFs, pleading for access to SRS. Almost all requests were declined. Unable to access SRS, some resorted to maiming themselves by attempting to remove their genitals with serious, if not mortal consequences.
The medical establishment eventually conceded and in 1966 the Johns Hopkins hospital in Baltimore opened its gender identity clinic, the first in America. They accepted less than 2% of all applicants for SRS, regardless of how desperate the requests were (Meyerowitz, 2002). In Canada, the situation was and is equally parsimonious. Out of hundreds of requests each year, the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry in Toronto still only recommends 6-7 SRSs per year (Namaste, 2000). The number of rejections promotes alternative black markets for hormones and the springing-up of private SRS clinics, an inevitable outcome since the establishment, by and large, dissuades rather than promotes or permits most sexual reassignment surgeries.

The thesis that the medical establishment is solely responsible for the production of transsexuality obviously collapses under historical analysis. When SRS was first applied to gender deviance, there was no English term ‘transsexual’, yet human subjects with a chronic sense of incongruity and a mis-sexed body certainly pre-date SRS. Prosser (1998) outlines a case of an FtM who pleaded with the German sexologist Carl Westphal in 1864 for medical assistance. Cromwell (1997) draws on the work of René Grémaux, who found that there were scores of female-bodied men living as men in the Balkans from 1800 onwards. He also notes that among the Siberian Chukchi there have been female-bodied people living as men and openly acknowledged by their fellows as “true men” (p. 132).

Finally, the thesis that the medical establishment creates sex-change as a feature consonant with Western, liberal, consumerist values elides the presence of transpeople who receive SRS in non-Western societies. Iran, for example, has permitted hundreds of MtF and FtM SRSs. Iran is hardly a society that is sympathetic to Western liberalism. Muslim judicial clerics under the Iranian Islamic government have permitted SRS and the legal change of birth certificates (Fathi, 2004). That this exists under an overtly patriarchal and religious system is very surprising, but illustrates the fact that transsexuality is not culture specific, though reactions to it are. One controversial example already mentioned will be examined in greater depth at this point.
Case Vignette: Kimberly Nixon and Vancouver Rape Relief

Vancouver Rape Relief, a feminist organisation, entered into the trans debate when it refused to allow a trans woman to participate as a volunteer in 1995. The story begins in 1993, when Kimberly Nixon, who had suffered physical and emotional abuse from a former male partner, sought assistance from another battered women’s support agency. The experience helped her to heal, and she decided to give back to her community by volunteering at Vancouver Rape Relief. In my interview with Kimberly (who did not wish to be anonymous), she recalls in vivid detail what transpired. I will cite her account at length, because it is very significant.

Kimberly: Vancouver Rape Relief was looking for volunteers for the Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter, and I thought that was the work I wanted to pursue. I did a telephone interview and then I was invited to do a one-on-one interview, and was invited to start attending the training. That was August 29th, 1995 and I went... that night to Rape Relief’s first training session... they took a break at about quarter to eight that evening and one of the women facilitators took me aside, and I thought “Uh-oh”... She asked me to come out to the courtyard and she sat down and started to question my gender, but then she said, “Oh my God, am I making a big mistake?” At that time I sort of knew the road she was going down and I thought, “Well, if she has that prejudice it must reflect in her work.” Being a transition house and operating a shelter and crisis line, I thought, does that mean transgendered people aren’t welcome here and do they not provide services to transgendered women in crisis? Which seems, after hearing they do all this anti-oppression work, anti-racism work, homophobia work and going down the list, and then they turn around and in this instance say I’m not welcome because I also happen to be transsexual? That didn’t make much sense to me, it didn’t seem right. I know that other groups historically have also experienced that from women’s organizations, meaning lesbians, women of colour, bisexual women as well.

Chris: Excluded because they were lesbian, bisexual or women of colour?

Kimberly: Yeah, and so that was it, it just floored me.

Chris: So she told you, “You are not welcome?” - when you disclosed?

Kimberly: I didn’t actually disclose, I said, “What if I was and what if I wasn’t?” I wasn’t willing to enter into discussion and then she said, “well, men aren’t allowed here.” I said, “I’m not a man.” She said, “Gay men aren’t allowed here.” I said “I’m not a gay man.” And she went down this list and none of them applied to me, I was there like any of the other women. It was a big shock, it was very distressing. I was pretty distraught, and one of the things around healing from emotional or physical abuse, the way to

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32 Important alternate discussions on the Nixon case have appeared in: Elliot (2004b), and Namaste (2005).
empower people and to help women heal, is believing them. Abusers constantly chip away at a person’s self-esteem and not being validated or believed definitely affects adversely a person’s self-esteem, self-worth, their dignity. At that time I felt that I wasn’t part of this world, it was pretty awful. I went away thinking that that was so wrong. That night they again said I wasn’t welcome to return to the group. There was about thirty-five women in the room and they were all wondering what was happening. I went back to see if the other facilitators agreed with what was happening and they said they agreed with her, so I said that I would leave on one condition: that I would be able to say good-bye to the other women in the group. I went into the other room where the women were sitting and waiting and I told them that I was not welcome in the group but that I was there for the same reasons that they were and that I felt that was very wrong. Then I said good-bye and was silent for a moment, waiting, and I was deep down wondering if someone would say, “What’s the matter?” or someone would stand up and say, “This is very wrong, what’s happening here.” There was a woman who spoke out and said, “Good-bye Kimberly”, and then I left. The next morning, I was so upset. I called two of my friends and they were so aghast at what had just happened and so disgusted with part of the community that they shared. They supported me that evening because it made me feel so like not wanting to be here anymore, the humiliation in front of all those women. Then the next morning I thought my only recourse was to make things different or try to change things for the right, so I filed a human rights complaint. That has been in litigation basically for the last ten years.

Kimberly proceeded to file a human rights complaint and won her case against Vancouver Rape Relief at the BC Human Rights Tribunal in 2003. In their decision, finding that Kimberly Nixon had been discriminated against, the Tribunal awarded her the largest cash judgement in its history ($7,500.00). Outraged, Vancouver Rape Relief appealed the decision to the Supreme Court of BC. They argued that Kimberly Nixon is not a real woman because, according to them, she does not have the history of living as a girl or a woman. Rape Relief insists that it has a woman-only policy (which Kimberly agrees with), and is entitled to define who is a woman and to disregard Kimberly’s legal and medical status as a woman, to discriminate against her justifiably, by excluding her from their organisation. Counsel for Rape Relief did not dispute Chief Justice Mr. E. R. A. Edwards (2003) characterisation of Rape Relief’s political position as “an article of faith which I believe we both understood to mean matters of received or accepted wisdom akin to religious beliefs, intuitively correct and not requiring logical or scientific demonstration for their validity” (p. 9).

Kimberly Nixon disputes Rape Relief’s claim that her history is a “male” history:
Kimberly: I would say from a very early age, when I was four years old, I realized that I was female and I would take every opportunity that I could [to dress as a girl], come home from school and come home at lunch hour... when my family went away on holidays sometimes I would stay home so I could be me and that was basically lifelong, through my adolescence and into adulthood. I’ve lived this way since my mid-twenties –

Chris: So you mean full-time?

Kimberly: Yeah, the so-called full-time was from when I was in my mid-twenties and I had applied to the gender clinic in 1986 but I had been living this way long before that.

Kimberly could not live with a masculine veneer, to meet society’s expectations of a boy and then a man. She sought and achieved medical interventions that allow her to live a congruently embodied and social life as a woman. Vancouver Rape Relief nevertheless repudiated Kimberly’s subjectivity and legal identity by imposing the signifier of “male” on her as a mark of disqualification. In this sense, Rape Relief’s attitude coincides with that of conservatives, like the Evangelical fellowship of Britain mentioned in Chapter 5, who view trans embodiment claims and associated subjectivity as a ‘fantasy and an illusion’.

In 2003, the BC Supreme Court overturned the BC Human Rights Tribunal decision in favour of Rape Relief. Chief Justice Edwards, in justifying his decision, notes: “Rape Relief’s exclusion of Ms. Nixon was private. That does not mean it was subjectively less hurtful to her, but it was not a public indignity” (p. 30). The judge was evidently persuaded by a clause of exemption in the Human Rights Code of BC that permits organisations the right to give preferential exclusion to certain organisations who, in their not for profit status, seek to assist marginalised groups. Moreover, the judge also claimed that: “No objective male to female transsexual, standing in Ms. Nixon’s shoes, could plausibly say: ‘Rape Relief has excluded me. I can no longer participate fully in the economic, social and cultural life of the province’ ” (p. 31). While Rape Relief rejoices in Justice Edwards’ ruling, Edwards further wrote, in his scathing judgements, a statement that must give them less satisfaction:

By reason of Rape Relief’s self-definition, perhaps reflected in its small numbers of members, exclusion from its programs is quite evidently exclusion from a backwater, not from the mainstream of the economic, social and cultural life of the province. It may be
an important backwater to its members and to Ms. Nixon, but that is a subjective assessment. (p. 32)

Edwards' repudiating judgement is not only prejudicial towards transpeople like Kimberly, but also derisive of feminist groups like Rape Relief. Like many feminist organisations in BC, Rape Relief struggles with the social fallout of policies initiated under a neo-liberal provincial government that has cut essential public funding to women's centres. While Rape Relief has adopted a particularly negative attitude towards transpeople, it has also helped many women to heal from physical and sexual assault at the hands of men. His judgement also sets a bad precedent, as the solicitor for Kimberly Nixon, barbara findlay [sic] (2003) notes, since "Disability organizations could refuse people with HIV/AIDS on the grounds that its members agreed that members must have been disabled from birth" (p. 24).

Kimberly Nixon immediately appealed the Supreme Court of BC ruling to the BC Court of Appeal. A subsequent decision, one that upheld Justice Edwards' ruling, was issued in December 2005. This decision, although favouring Rape Relief, nevertheless acknowledges Kimberly's legal status as a woman and that Rape Relief had discriminated against her. Kimberly's next step is to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. barbara findlay argues that the core issue is the extent to which groups that provide a public service can exclude or discriminate against those who are broadly included within that group's defined membership: "The unfortunate consequence of this decision is that now other organizations created to serve marginalised groups will also be able to discriminate against sub-groups they don't like and get away with it" (as cited in Hainsworth, 2005, p. 9).

White (2002) examined the issue of trans accessibility to sexual assault and transition houses. She notes that 72.5% of the 62 organisations in British Columbia who responded to her survey were accessible to trans women. She further notes that 22.5% were not accessible, while 4.8% did not give their position either way. Clearly, the majority of sexual assault and transition houses in BC accept the potential vulnerability of trans women to men's potential physical and sexual violence. Vancouver Rape Relief is among a dwindling number of feminists groups who retain the view that transwomen are still really men, having had a 'male' history. Such a view is rooted in the wish to preserve the Western commitment to a sexual binary that 'cannot be
transgressed’, which preserves the sacred notion of transcendental woman. In elevating Western conceptions of the sex/gender binary to universal status this view also conceals an unthought racism. Many non-Western (e.g. Indigenous) ontologies recognise Two-Spirit and gender liminal persons, whose colonial subjugation is further sustained by those who accept and perpetuate the imposition of a Western sexed binary. Namaste (2005) is concerned with the elevation of sex as a category over other aspects of subjugation.

Becki Ross (1995) argues that exclusionary feminist politics have a harmful effect on marginalised women:

Exclusionary parameters police populations and operate to compartmentalize constituencies as acceptable or unacceptable. I argue that no movement for gender and sexual liberation can afford the evacuation of a male-to-female lesbian transsexual, a leather dyke into s/m fantasy, a lesbian (or any woman) who is HIV+, a softball-playing and factory working gay woman, a rural lesbian who has never heard of Susie Sexpert, or a lesbian of colour who refuses to splice her self into identity-pieces with lesbian on top. (p. 228)

Califia (2003) refers to these dogmatic tendencies as constituting a “fundamentalist” variety of feminism, mirroring the “religious cast” of “the New Christian Right” (p. 89). A former radical cultural feminist and an FtM, Califia notes that one of the false attractions of fundamentalism lies in its strategy of initial digestibility and plausibility, its common-sense appeal. These dogmatic tendencies appear, however, to be increasingly rare, as most feminisms are neither dogmatic nor fundamentalist, eschewing such forms of thought.

Non-fundamentalist feminists, some of whom formerly produced ‘transphobic’ analyses, illustrate a self-correcting ethos, premised on an ethic of care (Noddings, 2003). Newitz (2004) recalls how she had previously analysed the ‘predominance of MtF transsexualism’, assuming that there are more MtFs than FtMs, as constituting what she termed gender slumming: “Slumming can mean going into ethnic ghettos to experience ‘authentic’ – and usually cheap – food, music and crafts produced by disadvantaged minority groups” (p. 14). Slumming can also mean wealthy first-world people travelling to more impoverished parts of the world where they may choose to live in poor districts and “enjoy slum culture” (p. 14). Newitz had extended this
analysis to MtFs, suggesting that they were choosing to identify with and fantasise about being a part of a disadvantaged group: women. She concluded her initial analysis by stating, “When they dress up in other people’s bodies and clothes, transgendered people and slummers play at living in a world where social mobility is possible for everyone” (p. 17). Six years after writing that article, Newitz apologised: “While there is no excuse for my ignorance... I would nevertheless plead with my readers to consider how much more information exists in the public sphere about transgendered identity now than in 1993” (p. 3). She evidences a willingness to learn from her experience by naming what underlies her initial, flawed analysis: “Like many phobias, my transphobia here, I believe, came from discomfort with my own gender role, and an unacknowledged identification with FtM transgendered people” (p. 4). Newitz had assumed that wealthy MtFs were exercising liberal choice and buying a female body. Greer (1999) and Jeffreys (2003) made parallel assumptions. These positions fail to account for class divisions and material poverty among transpeople. While Newitz acknowledges her mistake, one waits in vain for Greer and Jeffreys to do likewise.

The ‘wealthy male consumer’ thesis fails to distinguish between instrumental and ‘existential’ individualism, as discussed in Chapter 5. Brown (2003) makes the point that choice is an existential problem which, under liberalism and conservatism, is deemed to be governed by an instrumental, consumer-based capitalism. ‘Real’ choice is not commodity-driven in the sense that Jeffreys’ analysis, or Newitz’s earlier one, attribute to transwomen’s desire to change. Rather, for many transpeople, the ‘choice’ to transition is the only option in order to live in a body that is habitable. Without transitioning, transpeople are often consumed with ideas of suicide which lead to actual suicide in some cases (APA, 2000). To suggest that MtFs have succumbed to consumerism by ‘buying a body’ they just happen to prefer is a political sleight of hand. It is a refusal to consider the facts in order to protect the doctrinaire qualities of a thesis, no matter how attractive or persuasive other aspects of the thesis may be (e.g. how to end violence against women).

In order to shed further light on why trans repudiation is so widespread and has evolved in right, ‘centre’, and left political realms, it is useful now to turn to a different but related set of discourses, depth psychology. Depth psychology is sometimes viewed as an impractical,
dogmatic, and oppressive class of ideas and associated practices (Popper, 1976; Webster, 1996). In 1968, 'The New Left' denounced psychoanalysis as both elitist and conservative (Macey, 2000). However, such condemnations overlooked the syntheses that dialectical theorists such as Reich (1946) and Marcuse (1955), for example, put forward. Indeed, psychoanalysis has been reclaimed and theorised in innovative ways by socialist feminists and others (e.g. Mitchell, 1974; Rose, 1986; Kurzweil, 1995; and Elliot and Roen, 1998). In leading up to a more focussed return of the depth psychology gaze in Part III, it is vital to establish why such a return is necessary. Conservative, clinical psychoanalysis, often conflated with psychiatry, has had much to say about the alleged causes of Gender Identity Disorder, providing explanations based on a fundamental repudiation of trans claims to being mis-sexed. These repudiating proclamations call for: 1) a return of the gaze and 2) a talking-back. In the first instance, a return of the gaze refuses the visual objectification of the body by those in positions of power who wish to preserve the normativity of the sex/gender binary. For example, those who do not ‘pass’ (or are not expected to following hormone treatment and SRS) are seen, as we shall see, as especially deviant. Those who refuse to pass or adopt a stable sexed/gendered position have also been subject to a judgmental gaze of deviance/disorder and are classically refused requests for partial surgeries. In the second instance, transpeople and their allies, in the act of “talking back”, exert a necessary agency in resisting those who dismiss, ignore, or diminish transpeople’s voices through the discourses of psychopathology.

The Double-Edged Scalpel: Psychiatric and Psychoanalytic Repudiations

As reflected in the interviews cited earlier, transpeople who seek surgical and hormonal intervention usually require the initial services of a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist. Psychiatry especially becomes, under status quo conditions, a necessary practice to ‘help’ transpeople over the hurdles they need to jump in order to be re-assigned. Through referrals psychiatry authorises or denies transpeople access to medical specialists who can address their mis-sexed embodiment. Psychiatry and clinical psychology have control over the diagnostic referents of ‘mental illness’, as listed in DSM-IV-Tr (APA, 2000), and like medicine more broadly, they claim authority over non-normative bodies/minds. Hence, in Canada, a justification for healing the mis-sexed body can be made that permits, in most cases, the publicly funded
coverage of medical services such as psychiatry, endocrinology, and surgery. I am cognisant of a need for caution here, since if the binary of the abnormal/normal body disappeared, making transpeople no longer the clear subjects of psychiatry, matters could practically be made worse for them. For example, there might be no further justification for public money to be spent on transpeople’s healing. This could have the effect of casting transpeople out into the inequity of the private market, a situation where those experiencing material poverty would be prevented from accessing medical services. Nevertheless, the conundrum of transpeople’s ‘need’ for psychiatric assessment in order to obtain treatment remains problematic, since they do not necessarily want to see a psychiatrist, whose role as gatekeeper either grants or denies access to hormones and surgery.

In Canada, depending on the province of residence and the patient’s citizenship status, transpeople are usually insured for psychiatric and medical services under the public health ‘care’ system. Canadian liberalism, which brokers between politically left and right ideas (with a socialist universal public healthcare system existing within a free market, capitalist political economy) lays bare its contradictions. Canada is a class-based society where materially poor or debt-burdened middle-class transpeople might very well fear losing their qualification for publicly funded health services should their diagnostic referents (DSM-IV-Tr diagnoses numbers 302.6, 302.85, 302.6\textsuperscript{33}) be lost. Inequities still exist, with non resident status patients (e.g. refugees), those without proper documents, and those in provinces that do not fund various procedures, being denied services that would otherwise heal the mis-sexed body. Those who do qualify are, nevertheless, placed in another double bind, a dysfunctional relationship that forces most transpeople to acquiesce, to submit to the psychiatric gaze. The conundrum for many transpeople in Canada is that they need psychiatry, yet largely dislike and disdain it (Namaste, 2000). This issue frequently surfaced in my interviews, for example with Dean:

Dean: Yeah, I had to go to the clinic, the gatekeepers. I had to see two shrinks there, both I found kind of condescending. You know, for people that were the gatekeepers to life changing decisions, they weren’t very personable. They should have been surgeons that just dealt with people that were asleep. (entry# 8)

\textsuperscript{33} 302.6 = GID in Children; 302.85 = GID in adulthood; 302.6 = GID-NOS (‘not otherwise specified’) where some IS and TG people are ‘placed’.
Diagnostic Repudiations in DSM-IV-Tr

The DSM (APA, 2000) represents embodied gender incongruity, under the guise of Gender Identity Disorder, as a “disturbance” that is “strong”, “persistent”, and based on “identification” (p. 576). The individual experiences “distress” or “impairment” and exemplifies “marked preoccupations”. In children, disorderly conduct such as playing with wrongly gendered toys, refusing to urinate in the proper posture/position, or pretending that one’s genitals are or will eventually become otherwise, are all indicative of a “mental disorder”. Under the general heading of “Associated Descriptive Features and Mental Disorders” (p. 578) GID is said to correspond in “many” transpeople with social isolation and low self-esteem, and in ‘boys’ with “marked feminine mannerisms”, a “preoccupation with appearance”, and the risk of “impaired” relations with parents. In “males” (DSM authors are speaking of the essentialist sex assigned at birth), there is a risk of MtF “prostitution” and hence of “HIV/AIDS”. Drug misuse is also commonly noted as a feature of the “disorder”. Worse, GIDs place transpeople at risk of “suicide” (p. 578).

In the DSM adult, MtF “males” are broken down into two clinical categories. The first syndrome is termed autogynephilia. The DSM declares that this sub-type is characterised by marked fetishes, for example, masturbating while visualising the self as engaged in stereotypical feminine activities “such as knitting” (p. 579). Such “males” are viewed on a spectrum of perversion, including a kind of frozen or permanent version of “transvestic fetishism”. Whereas the transvestite usually reverts to the proper social role as a man after orgasm, the autogynephile remains irretrievably fixated on the incongruent body, “the thought or image of oneself as a woman” (p. 578). These “males” “pathologically” fail to revert, to allow the fantasy of femininity to be extinguished with orgasm. The inference is that the autogynephile is basically a heterosexual male stranded within a permanent fetish, a fetish that has blanketed the whole body and frozen itself, the self as an objectified sexual object (which is what Freud saw women as anyway, as will be discussed in the next chapter). Bailey (2003) repudiates the mis-sexed claim:
“No, autogynephiles are not women trapped in men’s bodies. They are men who desperately want to become women” (p. 169).

The other sub-type of MtF is defined as sexually attracted to “other males”. These MtFs are gazed upon and repudiated by psychiatry as “homosexual males”, those who wish to alter their bodies in order to mystify the straight male partner “he” desires. The inference is that ‘he’ wishes to trick a ‘normal’ heterosexual and potential male partner into believing that ‘he’ is a biological female. This sub-type is not a ‘real woman’ either, but a “male” who cannot fathom/accept his own maleness. “He” is like the flower whose colour scheme matches the stripes of the bumblebee, to manipulate the bumblebee into a sexual act, hence, the “homosexual male” MtF is out to attract a ‘real male’ by a pathologically situated means of self/other deception. Bailey (2003) argues that “homosexual transsexuals are a type of gay man” (p. 178).

The DSM characterisations of both types of MtF constitute representations of mental illness. The psychiatric establishment is generally unconvinced of the realness of transsexual claims yet, importantly, convinced of their persistence and associated suffering. The claim of being mis-sexed points to an acknowledged reification of the trans self, manifest as not pathological in body but pathological in identity. The swing of the psychiatric pendulum will not un-convince trans-embodied minds to relinquish the ‘fantasy’ of their intransigent identities. Psychiatric chemotherapeutic alliances have also failed to invent a drug to cure such mismatched defiance, to force the gendered mind to acquiesce to its sexed body, to construct a concordant and normalised gender identity.

The DSM subheading “Associated Physical Examination Findings and General Medical Conditions” provides evidence of psychiatry’s fixated gaze on trans embodiment. Transpeople diagnosed with GID apparently exhibit “normal” genitalia. This gaze also sets up an implicit comparison with the ‘abnormality’ of IS genitals, exposing psychiatry’s concurrence with paediatric surgeons, who generally refuse to relinquish the justifications for modifying the genitals of IS babies (Chase, 2000, 2002). When the psychiatric gaze shifts to FtM embodiment, the gaze of repudiation follows: FtMs are described as often having “distorted breasts” or “breast
rashes” from associated binding. This psychiatric gaze also laments post-surgical complications in both MtFs and FtMs:

... in genetic females [these] include prominent chest wall scars, and in genetic males, vaginal strictures, recto-vaginal fistulas, urethra stenoses, and misdirected urinary streams. Adult females with Gender Identity Disorder may have a higher-than-expected likelihood of polycystic disease. (ibid., p. 579)

Psychiatry views mis-sexed bodies as unruly. Bona fide transsexuals, those who meet diagnostic criteria of having a faulty identity, are however recognised as chronically suffering people who need psychiatric and possibly other medical interventions for alleviation. The DSM conclusion posits the phenomenon of GID as evidence of a “profound disturbance” (p. 580).

Other notable aspects of DSM nomenclature include the supposed social dynamics and demographics of the phenomenon. “Females” or FtMs are said to experience less social ostracism, less peer rejection, than “male” MtFs. The DSM also states that the “disorder” is more prevalent in “males”, citing 1 per 30,000, as opposed to “females”, said to be found in 1 per 100,000. Those who meet the “chronic” outcome of a GID diagnosis justify the surgical and hormonal interventions to which psychiatry reluctantly, but by no means universally, consents. The disorder “represents a profound disturbance of the individual’s sense of identity with regard to maleness or femaleness” (p. 580). Any critical reading of psychiatry, a discipline that is, like psychology, part of what Foucault (1984) conceptualises as the psy-complex, needs to take into account the double-edged scalpel that psychiatry represents for transpeople: necessary allies / unnecessary foes that mis/serve this population. Within this pairing, there is no overarching consensus amongst psychiatrists on causes or representations of GID, independent of DSM nomenclature.

The “dangerous maybes” within contested theorising on GID aetiology provide evidence of theoretical splits in psychiatry and between psychiatry and other branches of medicine. Not all psychiatrists accept the pathological postulates of ‘perversion’, such as Bailey’s (2003), or like the inferences represented in the DSM. Rather, some psychiatrists and sexologists lean towards an exclusively essentialist explanation: GID may be caused by the pre-natal brain that is sexed in

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34 c.f. pg. 91, discussion of Nietzsche (1972/1886) and psychology.
the wrong direction from the body (Zhou, et. al., 1997). This thesis argues that pre-natal womb baths cause mind/body incongruity along sexual lines, which exonerates the transperson from environmental psychopathology. Others posit an exclusively environmental explanation, as put forward by Money (1986). In this case, gender identity is environmentally configured, fixed, and irreversible, forming and subsequently freezing in early childhood (usually around the age of three). This aetiological thesis exonerates the transperson from a curable psychopathology. Some psychiatric theorists evoke hybridity in theorising the cause, drawing on the interplay between biology and environmental factors (Gooren, 1993). Finally, those with psychoanalytic training traditionally favour an explanation rooted in poor mothering, as is the case with Stoller (1968)\textsuperscript{35}. Psychoanalytic theorising on transpeople warrants particular consideration, especially as I maintain that depth psychology is useful in understanding trans repudiation. All theories of aetiology, however, attribute little agency to transpeople, pointing out things that have pathologically run astray in ways that cannot be considered the transperson’s fault (either biologically or environmentally in early childhood). In most psychiatric discourses, transpeople are not considered responsible for their disorderly identities, and this rationale contributes to the reluctant permission to authorise consent for radical, corporeal interventions.

**Conservative Psychoanalysis**

In orthodox psychoanalysis the central and universally posited importance of the Oedipal phase rests on Freudian assertions that its navigation is the basis for both mental health and psychopathology. The mechanism of identification (that is an unconscious investment in parental objects) facilitates all the important aspects of ego development, based on gender and sexual identity. Adult psychopathology such as perversion, gender identity disorders, narcissism, paranoia and so on are traced to this period of psychosexual development. Hence, transpeople are not seen as ontologically constituted by an intrinsic integrity, but rather the product of environmental pathology. In regard to masculinity and femininity, the movement through the Oedipal phase leads to both masculinity and femininity as representative of "important

\textsuperscript{35} Some psychoanalytic theorists favour Stoller's view, but by no means all.
constituents of adult personality” (O’Connor and Ryan, 1993, p. 243) with both being present in any given psyche, one usually being in large part repressed.

In relation to the topic of trans subjectivity, the central arguments in psychoanalytic theorising and clinical practice that amount to clinical repudiation are demonstrated in the work of Robert Stoller (1968). Though he is certainly not the only psychoanalytic theorist to have discoursed on trans subjectivity, it is Stoller’s ideas that are usually recapitulated in other conservative psychoanalytic accounts. His 1968 text, *Sex and Gender: The Development of Masculinity and Femininity*, is a psychoanalytic repudiation of trans integrity, a monograph of mother-blaming and a pessimistic account of gender deviance. That Stoller advocated for adult transsexual surgeries is not due to his endorsement of transpeople’s mis-sexed claims, but to a resigned acknowledgement that these individuals are, essentially, lost souls for whom nothing else will work. Stoller argues that a nascent trans identity can be halted in childhood through early and sustained psychoanalytic intervention, but that even an intense analysis is of little use to adult subjects.

Stoller credits D. O. Cauldwell’s 1949 book *Psychopathia Transsexualis* as the modern source where transsexualism was first named and documented as a “mental disease”. Stoller borrowed the term “gender” following John Money (who had previously borrowed it from linguistics). Stoller’s understanding of gender is solidly rooted in classical psychoanalytic theorising, and consistent with Freud’s biologist he makes a minimal allowance for biological - aetiological influences. In outlining the genesis of GID, however, he argues that when it solidifies in adulthood it constitutes “a malignant condition irreversible by psychological methods” (p. 140). In MtFs, Stoller blames an over-loving mother who affords too much bodily contact with her male infant and encourages, indeed seduces, his identification with her.

Stoller tends to universalise trans experience as MtF, and assumes that it leads to post-surgical heterosexuality. The FtM is virtually absent from Stoller’s theorising. In reference to the pre-operative MtF, he insists that “His [sic] day is completely spent immersed in fantasies of becoming a normal woman who is married to a normal man” (ibid. p. 190). Stoller views the healthy, ‘normal’ person as having a congruent, traditional, and heteronormative life. His work is
one of the influences that, for decades, have normalised a heterosexual outcome as a criterion for referral for SRS.

For Stoller, GID is always traced to an excessive and symbiotic bond between mother and child and ending this kind of relational dynamic between mother and son is the essential and universal treatment aim. He writes that, “since the boy’s father has failed to do this, the therapist must. First, one must convince the family that the condition is pathological” (p. 253). This sets up the task of indoctrinating the family, if necessary, on the deviance of the child, and assigning blame: “by the time such boys are four or five, their mothers can recognise the damage they have done when an authority clearly points it out to them” (p. 253). By tracing GIDs to faulty mothering, Stoller locates the ‘pathology’ as something that she inadvertently causes. Mothers are seen as having failed to reproduce the proper gender identity, and accused of having breached the rule of the binary, of failing to conduct their parenting in accordance with the Law of the Father. One wonders how many mothers left Stoller’s office in despair, feeling that they had messed up their children? How many mothers and fathers adopted the uncomfortable role of becoming the gender police, on the ‘good’ doctor’s orders? Stoller clearly states that: “the goal of treatment should be to make the child feel that he is a male and wants to be a masculine boy” (p. 252).

In Stoller’s formulation, poor mothering produces GID, and since it cannot be reversed in adulthood, it must be identified and halted in childhood. Effeminate male-bodied children are the prime suspects. Stoller’s treatment plan for ‘effeminate male’ children is exemplary of conservative political views in regard to the appropriateness of the sex/gender binary. Stoller’s unthought aim reflects the ideology of reinforcing the traditional nuclear family, proposing gender conformity as a marker of sanity. The treatment aim is to obstruct gender deviations and reproduce gendered subjects that obey the rules:

… treatment aims (1) to help complete the process of separation between mother and son; (2) to support the mother as she goes through this traumatic separation, and to change her character structure sufficiently so that she can not only survive the separation but also salvage her own sense of identity; (3) to have the therapist of the child serve as a model for masculine identification; (4) to support the child during the process of separation and to treat the ensuing anxiety states; (5) to involve the father in the family’s life so that he will become a source of masculinity for his son. (Stoller, 1968, p. 253)
Stoller’s influence endures within psychoanalytic accounts of GID. Myra Hird (2003), a feminist, recounts her experience at a conference sponsored by the eminent London Tavistock Clinic, on “Atypical Gender Identity Development: Therapeutic Models, Philosophical and Ethical Issues”. Her report indicates that little has changed since the days of Robert Stoller. She comments that explanations of gender deviance (childhood/adult) persist under the intense clinical gaze of presumed pathology. The binary is preserved as the only marker of gender sanity. This is in defiance (or ignorance) of scholars such as Fausto-Sterling (2003) who outlines Western society’s fallacy of re-writing history in the act of sanctifying only two True sexes, denying the potential multiplicity of sexes which the Western binary suppresses. Plato argued that there are three sexes (the third is the androgynous or what is now understood under the intersex designation), and the Talmud and the Tosefta - the Jewish books of law - also acknowledge three sexes; Fausto-Sterling excavates five sexes, and so on. Hird (ibid.) reports that speakers at the Tavistock conference continued to be faithful to Western penchants for reifying sexual dimorphism, stating that “none of the presenters acknowledged the long-standing feminist critiques in psychology of concepts such as ‘gender role’” (p. 186). She concludes that clinicians continue to subscribe to “the assumption that gender identity develops from a stable morphological base [which] allows therapists to delineate between a majority ‘normally’ gendered population, and a minority ‘deviant’ population suffering from a gender identity ‘dysphoria’” (p. 189). That many transpeople must consult clinicians who hold such views, in order to obtain surgical consent forms, is a cause for heightened concern.

The influence of conservative psychoanalysis on the lives of transpeople has been immense. In his account of transpeople whom he saw as the psychiatrist-in-chief at Johns Hopkins Hospital and a professor of psychiatry at the associated university, Paul McHugh (2004) points to the psychoanalytic research of Jon Meyer as crucial in the eventual closing of the Hopkins Gender Identity Clinic. McHugh’s acceptance of the ‘autogynephile’ and ‘homosexuality’ theses, syndromes that are said to be the underlying pathological reasons for SRS requests, led him and other psychiatrists at Hopkins to stop recommending SRS for transpeople. This effectively closed down the gender clinic at Hopkins and led to a ripple effect, with other university gender clinic closures elsewhere in the USA (Meyerowitz, 2002). In their stead, private SRS clinics are
now the main option for SRS there. McHugh (2004) condemns the practice of SRS: “we have wasted scientific and technical resources and damaged our professional credibility by collaborating with madness rather than trying to study, cure, and ultimately prevent [GID]” (p. 9). He also implicitly derides the private clinics: “we at Hopkins hold that official psychiatry has good evidence... to close down the practice [of SRS] everywhere” (p. 7).

McHugh’s repudiation of trans subjectivity concurs with the psychoanalytic work of Charles W. Socarides (1969). Socarides, up until his death in 2005, was a vocal opponent of SRS, which he views as a request rooted in a deeper, more pathological homosexuality: “only the most ill homosexuals resort to the desperate course of offering their bodies for mutilative processes” (p. 173). For Socarides, sex is an essential fact of life that cannot be altered. The fact of sex is decided upon conception, a genetic determination that cannot be amended. He argues that GID can only be eradicated if homosexuality is treated to reconfigure a sane heterosexuality.

Socarides contends that there is no fundamental distinction between transgender / transsexual / homosexual, all are aberrations that demand a psychoanalytic cure. Hird (2000) points out that views such as these constitute a moral exercise. These positions moreover defy the fact that no credible evidence for a psychoanalytic cure has emerged, and that the psychoanalytic success rate for ‘curing’ bona fide GID is zero (Meyerowitz, 2002).

In France, a similar psychoanalytic gaze of repudiation has appeared more recently with only minimal improvements over that of McHugh or Socarides. Colette Chiland (2005), Psychiatrist-in-Chief at the Alfred Binet Centre and a training Analyst at the Paris Psychoanalytical Society, also repudiates trans subjectivity. She notes, however, that

... some transsexuals who have had the operation do request psychotherapy or even psychoanalysis – sometimes several years after the operation – and are indeed capable of deriving some benefit from it. They still maintain, all the same, that they could not have done without the operation itself. (p. 37)

Chiland is not pleased with those pre-operative transsexuals who consult her for analysis:

Once their complaint and their request is expressed, they have nothing else to say. They protect themselves against engaging in a transference relationship. They feel that the
Chiland argues that transsexuals are in a state of denial regarding their real sex and suffering from a "narcissistic disorder" (p. 45). She claims, nevertheless, that she has managed to "dialogue with them on equal terms" (p. 47). This does not, however, modify her opinion that "the very idea of changing one's sex is a mad idea" (p. 47). Chiland declares that "transsexuals put us [psychoanalysts] to the test... at every moment our counter-transference is mobilized" (p. 73). Her compromise to transsexuals is to acknowledge that "compassion justifies to some extent the practice of hormonal and surgical reassignment" even though, she counters, "nobody can change his or her sex – sex is not an opinion, it is a reality" (p. 76).

Conservative psychoanalysis is intolerant of the transperson’s narrative claims. Rather than accepting these accounts, they analyse them away, revealing "psychoanalysis’s mode of reading – its tendency to reauthor the patient’s personal narrative" (Prosser, 1998, p. 151). Such an attitude is noted by Namaste (2000), who argues that the psychoanalysts’ position amounts to "condescension, disrespect, and contempt for transgendered people" (p. 192). Hence, the double-edged scalpel. Thankfully, not all (perhaps not most) psychiatrists follow a conservative psychoanalytic discourse. This is evidenced by the existence of psychiatrists who do not repudiate transpeople, or try not to. Rather, they aim to heal the mis-sexed body by being helpful and affirmative to those who meet the diagnostic criteria.

As my interview with Kimberly reveals (see Chapter 2), some transpeople readily endorse the psychiatric assistance they have received. Nevertheless, psychiatry has represented transpeople, as textual documents such as the DSM exhibit, through an overall discourse that pathologises them by recourse to the concept of disturbance. Transpeople’s body/mind incongruity will not yield to the talking cure, the straight jacket, the wide array of tranquillisers, anti-depressant/anxiety medications, and so on. Psychiatry cannot cure the trans incongruency that it details in the DSM.

The meaning of “disturbance” starts with dis or negation. A population that disturbs is bent upon negating something. The Oxford dictionary definitions of disturbance include: “an interruption”,

person sitting opposite them wants to entrap them and make them abandon their project; they are ready to take to their heels. (ibid., p. 41)
“agitation”, “worry”, “a tumult; an uproar”, and finally, “the process of being disturbed, of disturbing”. Psychiatry, I contend, has been disturbed by the intransigence of the trans body, because such a body will not convince/allow the mind to adopt a ‘proper identity’. This has led psychiatry to project disturbance onto trans embodied people, to repudiate the actuality of the mis-sexed claim. The agitation, interruption, tumult and uproar psychiatry cites convey the threat that trans embodiment holds for society as a whole. As an institution, and a largely conservative one at that, psychiatry has been empowered to regulate the collision provoked by the dis that transpeople present for the sexual binary. Psychiatry will not ultimately permit transpeople to contest the legitimacy of the naturalised sex and gender binary; rather, it ultimately blocks such wayward individuals from being socially sanctioned (as being valuable in their own right) by pathologising them. It misinterprets the truth of symptoms, rejecting the pain that the binary inflicts and preferring causal explanations for gender deviance as based on an individualised mental disorder. Psychiatry, hence, is not a depth psychology in the Nietzschian sense, since, as Cadello (1999) writes, “a psychology that is able to descend to the depths is so because it does not mistake symptomatology for truth” (p. 33), that is, it does not take the expression of psychic pain as the end location of ‘aberrance’.

Psychiatry is empowered by the state to act as a referee with considerable authority to regulate the body through which “sexual difference is enforced” (Hird, 2000, p. 359). On the whole, it is disturbed by transpeople, for trans-ness represents a monumental break from one of the key assumptions that Western civilisation rests upon, the infallibility of the binary myth of woman/female and man/male. That embodiment can break with the historical force of this institution is indeed disturbing for conservatives, who can only view such waywardness as a profound disturbance/deviation. Psychiatry’s limited compromise with transpeople is to permit them to engage in SRS, to consent to allow movement – a movement that is limited to shifts between the poles of the binary itself.

Not all practitioners of depth psychology use a model of pathology in their clinical work with transpeople. Jung’s (1931) school of “analytical psychology” in its traditional form is very conservative towards matters of sex and gender, but contemporary Jungians have re-deployed Jung’s ideas to assist transpeople in healing the mis-sexed body. For example, Rachael St. Claire
(1999) demonstrates how Jungian conceptions can be utilised to understand the mental health needs of transpeople in ways that do not see their status as an expression of psychopathology.

Bearing in mind the contemptuous analyses of transpeople that psychoanalysis has produced, I turn in the next section to the depth psychologies that have conveyed this gaze of repudiation. To break free from the chains of a conservative binary, psychoanalytic theorists such as Julia Kristeva (Kristeva and Spire, 2003) return to the revolutionary potential of psychoanalysis, as a means to promote inner revolution based upon the “psychic need for revolt” (p. 23). She argues that “the word ‘revolution’ also means the revelation of new solidarities” (p. 23). This is consistent with one of the aims of the critical psychology movement, to build solidarities with oppressed groups (Parker, 1999). It will be no easy task, yet in the tradition of socialist feminism which likewise makes revolutionary use of psychoanalytic ideas, I proceed in hope that an inner revolution (Kristeva and Spire, 2003; Mitchell, 1974) might lead to greater social solidarities.

St. Claire argues that pre-transition transpeople may hold adverse internalised feelings, placing them at risk of “paralytic fear” leading to self-destructive behaviours including suicide. She contends that: (1) the trans self/soul is independent of culture; (2) the trans self manifests regardless of the Western sex/gender binary system; (3) transpeople inevitably come into conflict with the binary; (4) trans children are at risk of learning that gender transgression is “bad”, which may facilitate repression through forms of splitting and relegation of split-off material into the “shadow”; (5) a false gender identity takes the place of the split-off identity, functioning to hide one’s transness from others and oneself; (6) a “transphobia complex” forms that can produce self-deprecation; and (7) the transgendered self must integrate its split-off parts in order to heal, to reclaim it from the shadow. In doing this “the false gendered ego-identity dies” to be replaced through an authentically integrated “gendered persona” (p. 5). The process is not, in St. Claire’s experience, an easy or comfortable one. She argues that “the journey from self-hatred and paralytic fear, through death, transformation, and re-birth is daunting” (p. 8).
Part III

PSYCHOLOGICAL REPUDIATION:
RETURNING THE GAZE OF DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY
CHAPTER 7:

PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY AND DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY

Clinical psychoanalysis, as the previous chapter demonstrated, has often been used to repudiate trans subjectivity through an imposed relationship whereby transpeople are often forced to confer with clinical professionals, some of whom hold psychoanalytic views. A psychoanalytic project of repudiation reauthors transpeople's narratives in order to pathologise them (Prosser, 1998). Under the conservative psychoanalyst's gaze, the 'mis-sexed' body is not really mis-sexed but is, rather, a mis-interpreted and mis-experienced body that has succumbed to infant or childhood psychopathology. This chapter cautiously invokes psychoanalytic and other depth psychology discourses, wary of their frequent tendency to produce a repudiating clinical gaze. In drawing on the depth psychologies, it is not my intention to re-psychoanalyse transpeople, or to unearth an affirmative set of propositions to counter alleged psychopathology. Rather, instead of reauthoring trans narrative to fit a clinical pattern, I raise the possibility of using psychoanalysis to theorise the interplay between the exterior social world and the interiority of the psyche. What are the possible dynamics that support the conscious and unconscious tendency towards trans repudiation? I contend that psychoanalytic discourses hold the potential for theorising possibilities that can account for aspects of the troubling and frequently unthought disquiet that haunts so many transpeople's lives, as well as those around them.

There are several conceptual threads drawn from the fabric of the depth psychologies as a whole that, when unravelled, can be re-sewn in ways that may contribute to a hermeneutic project of understanding trans repudiation, the resulting trauma, and potential healing. Since these discourses have long considered the psychological importance of sex/gender, it is unsurprising that depth psychology is already a pertinent, though limited sphere of re-theorising in trans studies. These thematic threads will be used to analyse ideas not only from Freud and those
influenced by him, but also from the two other founding figures of depth psychology, Jung and Adler (the latter is considered in Chapter 8). The bringing together of multiple discourses of depth psychology reinforces a pluralistic view, one that fosters conversation and understanding of different perspectives that share an interest in comprehending the effects of the unconscious on subjectivity and interpersonal relationships. My own training is in the Adlerian school, yet I find Freudian, post-Freudian and Jungian threads integral to the overall discussion. Belying the common historical trend to sectarianism in the depth psychologies, I find much to value and appreciate beyond Adlerian borders.

**Feminism, Depth Psychology, and Gender: The Forces of Irrationality and the Unknown**

The refashioning of psychoanalysis to suit a quest for better understandings of marginalised people’s gendered lives has been undertaken by a number of feminists. Juliet Mitchell (1974) proposed a feminist appropriation of psychoanalytic ideas in order to illuminate women’s oppression on the level of interiority. Since Mitchell’s influential study, psychoanalytic and gender feminism have probed the psyche as the repository of coercive inscription, of patriarchal induced trauma, and of internalised oppression. Such probing seeks to repudiate the conservative psychoanalytic gaze, providing a means to understand the complexities of women’s interiority and the unconscious effects of patriarchy on identity. Mitchell not only returns the gaze to the conservatives, she also outlines the necessity of feminist involvement in depth psychology so that the sedimented interiority of the psyche may, like the oppression experienced in the external social world, also be understood and liberated.

Mitchell persuasively returned a feminist interest to psychoanalytic discourses after some influential feminists had rallied women to reject Freudian theory. Kate Millett (1977) and Shulamith Firestone (1972) scorned psychoanalysis and faulted Freud for casting a range of disparaging views on women and femininity. In the spirit of Mitchell’s critical return, in the present study psychoanalytic discourse is re-considered in order to better understand trans repudiation. This is justified by the need to (1) return the gaze of repudiation of conservative psychoanalysts; (2) account for other repudiations in everyday life; and (3) consider the importance of understanding internalised oppression, ultimately arising from the social world,
that may obstruct transpeople’s choices in life (for example, in relation to parenting). This discussion hopes to throw light on an under-theorised area in trans studies concerning complex fracturings of identity, quests for integration, and the unconscious causes and effects of repudiation.

In engaging with depth psychology, I must emphasise the fact that the founding figures (Freud, Adler, and Jung) were essentially gender conformists and held moral convictions and clinical views on appropriate gendered behaviours, setting a precedent that carries on in debates, discussions and revisions to this day. To illustrate this conservatism, Jung (1957, para. 243) stated categorically: “A man should live as a man and a woman as a woman”. This reflects his very definite ideas with regard to the appropriate gendered life of a male or female bodied person, who must adopt an identity consistent with the binary, although he also recognised feminine elements in the male psyche and vice versa.

Paradoxically, depth psychology more broadly disputes and theoretically undermines moral, common-sense, and rational ‘understandings’ of sex and gender. Emphasis on the force of guiding fictions and emotive, conflictual irrationality in the context of the un-known, the not-understood, destabilises the ground upon which gendered convictions are erected. For example, in childhood fantasy plays a vital role in constructing subjective gender ideals and in mediating sexual and aggressive psychic material. The style and means with which this is conducted may be traced to early cultural and bodily relations introjected, including relations with one’s parent(s) that usually lie buried in the unconscious, that is, beyond conscious recall. In invoking non-rational forces in the formation of identity, such as fantasy, depth psychology challenges a naturalistic, common-sense discourse of gender, sex, and sexuality that it elsewhere appears to espouse (Rose, 1986).

Depth psychology stands in sharp contrast to the more surface oriented, positivistic, empirical and individualistic sub-disciplines of psychology. In spite of claims to the contrary, empirical studies of sex roles produced by social psychology or sociology do not reflect an impartial, ‘scientific’ observation of pre-existing facts. For example, in sociology sex role studies stem from the earlier work of Talcott Parsons and role theory. In examining what constitutes a sex role
in these research studies, Pleck (1987) and Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1987) came to reject the notion. They fault the abstraction of sex roles as based on crude stereotypes and reification, with characteristics of a particular context measured and posed as if enduring outside of space/time. In women’s studies and masculinity studies, theorists have also challenged the surface sex role paradigm, rejecting it for similar reasons. Indeed, the common-sense sex role paradigm rests upon a notion of conformity to social norms that fails to consider historical shifts, subjectivity, power dynamics, and changing gender relations. As Frosh (1994) notes, because “masculine and feminine are constructed categories, they never hold firm, but are always collapsing into one another” (p. 65). In a hermeneutic sense, sex role data represents a limited collection of cultural stereotypes from a given historical location, situated in a specific period. Such snapshots tend to conceal more than they reveal, with the unknown familiar becoming apparent only from a different angle. How is it possible to measure some/thing that is not firm, but contradictory and often unconscious?

Sex role research, unlike depth psychology, fails to capture the paradoxical elements of gender. Indeed, some of the more prominent sex role advocates from the past have come to reject this paradigm. Researchers such as Sandra Bem, who developed the widely used Bem Sex Role Inventory, no longer consider the inventory helpful in elucidating gender issues (Wilkinson, 1997). The rejection of sex roles led some feminists to discard previously celebrated concepts such as androgyny, a concept often based on splicing the ‘good’ qualities of masculinity with femininity, qualities ascertained from sex role research (Weil, 1992). Other researchers, such as those working in education, began to pay attention to contradictions in surface behaviour. Salisbury and Jackson (1996), drawing from their work with boys and schooling, insinuate the unconscious compensatory dynamics that underlie gender stereotypes in boys. They comment that “there is a lot more going on in boys’ lives than the literal surface impression would suggest... insecurity, fear and self doubt co-existing with boys’ boasting and swaggering” (p. 9). This insecurity can be understood as part of the compensatory process, a process that relies on the unconscious to throw out of the self (and onto others) undesirable aspects conflicting with the ego ideal: in short, a paradoxical view of gender relies on concepts such as unconscious projection to account for the complexity of the phenomenon.
On the surface, those who repudiate transpeople differ considerably, and may include gays, lesbians, and some feminists, to social conservatives, psychiatrists, psychologists and so on, as discussed earlier. The root of the problem of trans repudiation, however, will not be located in a surface profile of those who perpetrate it but rather requires comprehension on a much deeper level.

The Relevance of Psychoanalytic Concepts to the Repudiation of Transpeople

However flawed and context specific one considers Freud’s original account of psychosexual development, it has undoubtedly had widespread influence. As for its relevance to transpeople, some elements of Freud’s account may potentially help to understand some aspects of people’s reactions to transpeople, and in particular their intensity. Freudian concepts may also be deployed to comprehend difficulties that some pre-transition transpeople reveal in accepting their status as trans. This discussion will focus on a quintet of concepts in particular: repression, projection, envy, defense, and abjection. All of these are essential to maintaining sexual difference, which Freud sees as necessary but constantly under threat.

Frosh (1994) claims that “psychoanalysis at its very core is about sexual difference; it is constituted in it and through it, acting it out as it tries to pronounce upon it” (p. 12). The key element embedded in Freudian theorising on sexual difference is to be found in its foundational concept of repression. Classical psychoanalysis contends that human subjects actively seek pleasure and avoid pain, particularly in the first few years of life. In neurosis, the pain most often avoided is that associated with anxiety. Anxiety serves as a warning signal, alerting the ego (consciousness) to the danger of overwhelming anxiety or panic (flooding). Anxiety may surface, should an unconscious wish break through the barriers guarded by the censor and subsequently overwhelm the ego. Once the ego has been warned of impending danger, of flooding, the individual may then (unconsciously) seek a particular mode of defense. Anxiety is often related to uncertainty about one’s gender identity – an uncertainty built into the problematic binary established only with difficulty by both sexes. Samuels (1993) suggests that the deeper, unconscious roots of a conscious gender certainty produce patterns that are “rigid, conventional, and persecuting” (p. 130). This position is echoed by O’Connor and Ryan (1993): “the
unconscious challenges the circle of certainties by which the human recognises itself as ego” (p. 140). Psychoanalysis contends that the human infant is born undifferentiated or polymorphously perverse: initially there is no gendered aim to innate sexuality. Through stages of maturation and experiences such as breast-feeding and toilet training, the infant comes to direct her/his sexual impulses onto certain objects. With regard to the acquisition of a particular gender, it would appear that Freud’s phallic stage (ages 3-6) is paramount. Repression becomes a feature as the child moves through stages of psychosexual development culminating in the latency stage (beginning around ages 7-8), a period of more comprehensive repression.

In the Oedipal phase, castration anxiety in boys is said to develop through the discovery of the difference between male and female genitals. This phase is the most significant for any child’s development of gender identity and sexual orientation (Freud, 1925). Proper resolution of the phase ensures the establishment of ‘correct’ sexual objects, the foundation of erotic attraction in adult life. The Oedipal phase emphasises the development of the superego, a mental agency that operates through self-recrimination (guilt), said to be of more significance to boys due to castration anxiety. The judicial function of the superego was controversially asserted as evidence of male moral superiority and female lack of moral rectitude, something that feminists have strongly contested (Gilligan, 1982). For girls, penis envy is said to characterise this phase, motivating a shift in erotic attachment from mother (women) to father (men). In boys, identification shifts from mother (desired object) to father (feared object) due to the threat of castration associated with the incest taboo. Submission to the father ensures the safekeeping of the boy’s penis, and offers the incentive of masculine privilege. This too was contested by women psychoanalysts such as Karen Horney (1937), who suggested that (un)conscious “womb envy” in males is of greater influence in gender politics than penis envy in females. Contemporary psychoanalysts are less one-sided than Freud on the issue of envy of the other sex. As Colette Chiland (2005) notes, “Many three- or four-year-old boys have wept when they learned that they would never be able to carry a baby in their tummy, or that their breasts would never contain milk” (p. 66).

Transpeople (and homosexuals) are deemed by some psychoanalysts to have failed to resolve the Oedipus complex. These male-bodied children (MtF) remain attached to their mothers, failing to
shift their identification to the father. Female-born transpeople (FtM) are said to have failed to resolve their penis envy, falsely believing that if they shift identification to father, they will (in tandem) grow a penis. Their mistake is to have identified with the father, rather than with what he represents (the correct erotic desire of difference). ‘She’ fails to shift, as the Electra complex demands, ‘her’ clitoral arousal to the vagina remaining active rather than becoming passive. In both instances, failures in sexual identification are the primary culprit that produces GIDs.

Since Freud’s death in 1939, psychoanalysis has undergone significant challenges from both within and beyond the movement. Critiques of Freudian psychology, emerging from feminist engagement and elsewhere, have been particularly salient in exposing his unacknowledged misogyny and his faithfulness to patriarchy (‘anatomy is destiny’). Freud was not hermeneutic in style or disposition and resisted dialogue, insisting upon his version of Truth: “Truth cannot be tolerant” he declared (as cited in Jacoby, 1975, p. xviii). The intolerable must be repressed.

Repression is primarily an unconscious force, which the depth psychologies see as fundamental to any understanding of a dynamic unconscious. The concept varies according to which school/discourse is used to comprehend it. Nevertheless, evidence of the phenomenon is apparent in my interviews with transpeople, especially when they were reflecting on their pre-transition lives which they often attempted to live in accord with their socially ascribed ‘birth sex’. These attempts were often at their own peril. Repression of trans-ness usually leads to an eventual impasse, and the strategy is no longer feasible. For example, a toll is taken on an individual’s health by misuse of alcohol or drugs or burnout from distracting strategies such as workaholism; addictions, depression, anxiety, and other symptoms often develop. When the impasse is reached, a narrative of emergence is usually recounted. These narratives of trans emergence, of coming out from periods of repressed existence, point to acceptance of a repressed trans side, leading to a rebirth. Such release gives transpeople hope of a life worth living, to use Prosser’s (1998) metaphor, “in a skin of ones’ own”.

Repression of something so major as a deep and pervasive sense of being mis-embodied can have serious mental health consequences. In the conclusion of this study, I will draw attention to these problems in discussing self-oppression (repression) as a dynamic factor in many
transpeople’s pre-transition lives. In the case of a TS ontology, the trauma of having been mis-sexed does not evaporate, one cannot consciously wish the incongruity away; repression merely conceals the issue with bouts of being hounded by the abject, the occasional re-emergence of the repressed which must be expelled. The problem of repression, as evidenced in trans (auto)biographies, is an issue that has been insufficiently addressed.

Freud viewed repression as a fundamental facet of psychodynamics which becomes especially prominent during the Oedipal stage. Like Adler, I do not accept the universality of castration anxiety nor the associated Oedipus Complex, but I do accept that the concept can be useful at times: for example, in some cases where transpeople (usually MtFs but also some FtMs) have been severely beaten, raped, and even murdered by male perpetrators. The occurrence of such intense violence, whereby they are not only killed, but mutilated beyond recognition, suggests a force of enmity that implies extreme repression and subsequent projection on the part of the attackers, who may be motivated by their own severe, unresolved Oedipal conflict.

Projection, as illustrated by trans repudiation, generally serves a social and political function. Gay men, for example, face a projected condemnation for defying heteronormativity. They may be subject to being viewed collectively as representing the prohibitions of ‘promiscuity’ and ‘buggery’. Or, they are assumed to be carriers of disease and, like their lesbian sisters, a threat to the nuclear family. As a group, they may rouse the judgement of those with a tightly laced heterosexual superego, condemning all homosexuals as emblems of sinfulness. Similarly, in Western society collective projections are frequently inflicted by the ‘white’ hegemony towards racialised others. For example, bell hooks (1990) elaborates on the historical representations of black men in American media:

Images of black men as rapists, as dangerous menaces to society, have been sensational cultural currency for some time. The obsessive media focus on these representations is political. The role it plays in the maintenance of racist domination is to convince the public that black men are a dangerous threat who must be controlled by any means necessary, including annihilation. (p. 61)

Middle Eastern, Muslim, and Central Asian peoples are also in danger of being forced to carry unwanted projections as ‘(potential) terrorists’, in post 9-11 times. The concept of projection as a
process of abjection is drawn from the discourses of depth psychology. It is also a means to explain the interpersonal dynamics of race, class, and sexuality, and an essential concept for understanding trans repudiation. Such unjustified, irrational fear or hatred is often perpetrated by those whose own identity (racial, sexual, etc.) is not secure, who repress aspects of their own psyche and project those aspects onto others who are deemed “different”. Paradoxically, they may also envy the “abject” other(s).

*Env*y is also a useful concept for considering a range of trans repudiations, from slight discomfort through to more extreme repudiations such as those witnessed in violent attacks. Psychoanalysts such as Melanie Klein (1975) claim that a range of destructive forces is contained within the sedimented psyche, including potent affects such as envy. Barrows (2002) argues that “it is difference that arouses envy” [Italics original] (p. 20). In psychoanalytic theorising, envy is considered a deeply uncomfortable affect that can be experienced consciously, yet is also a powerful unconscious force. Conscious envy, especially that caused by social deprivation (poverty, material inequality), is an understandable reaction to social injustice. However, unconscious envy, such as that expressed in an intolerance of difference, is a more complex dynamic to understand. Envy appears in early childhood and can manifest itself at any age. In children, Kate Barrows outlines various “objects” that stir up envy, “The penis... for its potency, the breast for its feeding capacity, the mother’s body for being able to contain babies and both parents for being, in their different ways, sources of life” (ibid., p. 19). Psychoanalysts suggest that envy is a painful emotion, so much so that it must be disowned through defensive manoeuvres such as *projective identification*. Drawing on Klein, Cartwright (2002) suggests that projective identification is about the infantile “splitting off of ‘part-objects’ that have become ‘bad’ through their association with destructiveness” (p. 14). In attempting to comprehend why some sadistic, violent offenders have no previous history of violence or instability, Cartwright suggests that the seeming irrationality of such acts can be understood by recourse to psychoanalytic theory. He ascertains that “hatred and dread are central to primitive [sic] experience and it is only if these can be contained in some way, that love and the ‘good object’ can be found” (p. 17). I suggest that a range of trans repudiations might be linked to the problem of envy for a number of possible reasons. Transpeople may be envied for shifting into bodies that the hostile perpetrator may unconsciously desire to have. Or envy may incite rage to crystallise
into hatred, as Adam Jukes (1993) suggests regarding misogyny (which he believes to be a universal problem in males and females), an often unconscious hatred of women that, when roused, threatens “the psychological well-being of the subject” (p. 5):

Hatred is essentially a state of enmity for an object, with its attendant wishes to dominate and control it. In most cases these impulses are reinforced by a – not always unconscious – desire to exterminate – that is, kill – the object if one fails to dominate it. (ibid., p. 6)

In some cases of extreme trans repudiation, transpeople (FtMs) may be perceived as women encroaching on the laboriously built and defensive boundaries of masculinity, and therefore be subjected to a violent retribution; in others (MtFs) they may be perceived as becoming or approximating the unconsciously hated object in ways that are also perceived to trigger betrayal (as in the unconscious fiction: ‘men must never become/approximate women’). In both cases, misogyny is a dynamic element. Whether or not one accepts the legitimacy of the trans-embodied claim, that misogyny probably operates as a factor in many repudiations of transpeople is more than sufficient cause to mobilise feminist solidarity.

Male perpetrators of violent attacks on those perceived by them as sexually deviant often claim self-defense as the reason. This “defense” is related to the psychoanalytic concept of defense mechanisms. As detailed in Chapter 2, the interviews that I conducted with transpeople confirm that serious incidents of violence remain both a threat and a reality in many transpeople’s everyday/night lives. The case of a murdered teenaged transwoman in the USA, Gwen Araujo, exemplifies this problem of violent repudiation and the subjective dynamics of defense that are roused, pointing to the forces of irrationality, projection, and rage that often accompany perceived threats to sex/gender identity. On 3 October 2002 four young men discovered that their friend Gwen was a genetic male with a penis. Three of these men had previously engaged in sexual relations with Gwen, not knowing that she had male genitals. They subsequently:

... kneed her in the face, slapped, kicked, and choked her, beat her with a can and a metal skillet, wrestled her to the ground, tied her wrists and ankles, strangled her with a rope, and hit her over the head with a shovel. (Steinberg, 2005, pp. 1-2)
At trial, one man pleaded guilty, another denied any direct role in the murder, while two others sought to mitigate their crime using a "trans panic" defense, an extension of the homosexual/gay panic defense. The latter two argued in court that Gwen had betrayed them by deliberately being deceptive about her ‘true’ sex. Steinberg summarises their defense in court:

...two defendants’ immediate reactions to the “news provoked emotional reactions”. One defendant appeared “disillusioned” and had a “look in his eyes... like his illusion as to normality and the way things are supposed to be had been shattered”. He acted as if he had heard “the craziest news you could ever hear”. A second defendant cried, and “throughout all the events was very emotional”. While killing Araujo, he exclaimed, “I can’t be fucking gay, I can’t be fucking gay.” Defense counsel claimed that the men acted out of “shame and humiliation, shock and revulsion”. [Italics mine] (p. 16)

In analysing the case, Steinberg argues that the reaction of these men to Gwen’s trans status entailed a feeling of threat to their (hetero)sexuality, exemplifying “a desire to hide from imperfections and a wish to be perfect, whole, and impenetrable” (p. 19). She counters the trans panic defense as a mitigating factor, suggesting that “to the extent that one’s own dislike of another person is related to a vulnerability in his own personality or identity, it is illogical and unfair to mitigate punishment for his violent acts towards that other person” (p. 20). This unwarranted defense of the unthought fragility of the perpetrator’s masculine identity and heterosexuality is, the author argues, not substantially different from past legal defenses (used until the late 1970s), whereby a man sought to defend or mitigate “homocidal rage” committed upon the discovery of marital infidelity, to defend his “manly honour” (ibid., p. 21). The case of Gwen Araujo also interestingly portrays the complex intertwinements between interiority and exteriority with the internal defense mechanisms of the accused paralleling the external institutionalised role of the defense counsel.

Defense against a perceived threat to self-identity or fictions of honour plays a clear role in extreme repudiations. This merits further exploration of psychoanalytic ideas into repudiation as

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37 In the USA, Steinberg (2005) notes that the trans panic defense has been successfully used by perpetrators and their counsel to mitigate punishment of their crimes. This was not the case in the Gwen Araujo murder; two of the defendants were found guilty of second degree murder on 13 September 2005 (a successful “trans panic” mitigation would have produced a judgement of manslaughter) (Marshall, 2005). However, the prosecution had unsuccessfully sought conviction for first degree murder and confirmation of the hate crime status with which the perpetrators were initially charged.
an aspect of defense. Both Anna Freud and Melanie Klein contributed psychoanalytic innovations that may further understanding of the dynamics of repudiation in general and the refusal or denial of trans subjectivity in particular, especially in relation to defense of the ego or containment of destructive affects.

**Anna Freud and Melanie Klein**

Following Freud's death, rivals Anna Freud (1895-1982) and Melanie Klein (1882-1960) became dominant voices in psychoanalysis, especially in Britain. Both women pioneered the application of psychoanalytic treatment to children while remaining more or less loyal to Freud's core principles, such as his thesis of the instinctual and psychosexual bases of human nature. Anna Freud inherited the crown of psychoanalysis as Freud's daughter and hand chosen successor. In taking the lead of the psychoanalytic movement, she shifted the emphasis among more orthodox adherents on the unconscious to the defense mechanisms of the ego. It was in her famous and illuminating treatise *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense* (1966/1936) that Anna Freud revealed her mastery of psychoanalysis. She did this through a further psychoanalytic legitimisation of ego investigation. Psychoanalysts had traditionally ignored or dismissed the defense mechanisms, not denying their occurrence but viewing them as a hindrance to a more transparent view of the unconscious. Anna Freud in turn emphasised that the defense mechanisms were in fact silent and invisible, defending the entire structure of the personality, while the ego itself remains unaware of its defensive role. The explication of the ego and its defense mechanisms was an important contribution to the development of psychoanalysis. Anna Freud argues that all people, regardless of whether they are neurotic or not, employ a range of defense mechanisms. Defense mechanisms are posed as a general feature of human subjectivity and are relevant to the phenomenon of repudiation towards any object. The general implication of Anna Freud's concept of ego defense in relation to trans repudiation can be summed up in the fact that most perpetrators do not know or understand the defensive nature of their reactions.

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38It should be stated that Alfred Adler had, many years prior to Sigmund Freud and Anna Freud, outlined the importance of defense in his work on safeguarding, see Adler (1956).
In parallel, Melanie Klein’s (1975) version of drive psychology emphasised the role of aggression as an “urge” and its manifestations in fantasy (conscious) and phantasy (unconscious). These f/phantasies may centre around the savaging of the parent’s genitals and the mother’s breasts, devouring, tearing and consuming them while simultaneously immersing oneself in the parent’s body. The opposite could also be f/phantasised, as when the parent’s genitals take on devouring qualities of their own: the vagina could be imaged as a devouring and castrating organ capable of biting and tearing, threatening total annihilation (vagina dentata). For Klein, the source of these erotic, masochistic, and sadistic f/phantasies lies in the infant’s splitting of the mother’s breast into the “good breast” and the “bad breast”, which leads to psychic fragmentation. As O’Connor and Ryan (1993) note: “Klein stresses the impossibility in every psyche of ever achieving complete and permanent integration: there are always residues of paranoid and schizoid feelings and mechanisms” (p. 82). This profound splitting in the infant’s psyche becomes the basis for the structure of sexual development for both sexes.

Klein’s acceptance of classical drive theory ultimately subsumes masculinity and femininity under sex. However, she diverged from other classical theorists with her (heretical) assertion that the breast is a more powerful psychic object than the penis. In feeding, the infant becomes immersed in the breast from an early age, and the breast is “something with which there is a relationship unmediated by sight or language, which is the crucial performative force in the child’s early experience” (Frosh, 1994, p. 30). Through immersion in the breast, the infant encounters the mother as a container. In this discourse, infants project both their destructive aggressive impulses and their early loving, affectionate feelings onto the breasts. The mother takes on board the whole range of feelings from the infant, “survives” them, and remains available to her baby. Therefore, “she communicates the possibility of acceptance and integration” (ibid., p. 32). In post-Kleinian discourse, there is an emphasis on containment and holding as the basis of one’s capacity for mental health. The route to mental health is intertwined with early sexual impulses conflictually experienced through the mother.

Klein follows Freud in arguing that the infant is primarily bisexual (Ratigan, 1998). In boys, conflictual psychosexual experiences with the mother are said to be the basis for the eventual differentiation of this bisexuality into a heterosexual identity. Through various defense
mechanisms such as introjection, repression, substitution, splitting, projection, and denial, the infant begins the internalisation of sex and gender. The stability or instability of the mother-infant relationship points to later emotional health or psychopathology.

Applying Kleinian insights to the dynamics of trans repudiation implies that encounters with the trans body may elicit deep, unconscious, and aggressive impulses. The ability to hold or self-contain these feelings can precipitate the degree to which one can or cannot accept such a body. It also points to the range of severity of repudiation, according to whether or not destructive affects can be contained or spill out, fuelling violence. The irrationality of such profound feelings of hatred, envy, rage, and so on, may fuel the force of some people’s repudiation. Defense mechanisms such as denial (“that’s not really a woman”), rationalisation (“they’re in denial of their homosexuality”), or reaction formation (mocking laughter) may also be factors in whether or not someone can contain or hold (accept) the trans body. Instances of phobia (as in transphobia) or intense seesaw feelings of eroticized desire/guilt (for being attracted by transsexual pornography/prostitution) can trigger emotional revulsion.

The violation of the binary, as perceived by those who have negative reactions on encountering the trans body, may elicit a number of primordial reactions. For example, the MtF breast may be encountered as not akin to the mother’s breast, as an impostor devoid of milk, a “bad breast”; and the thought of vaginoplasty may arouse castration anxiety in some men. Moreover, images of a woman with a penis may evoke the pre-Oedipal, all-powerful phallic mother. Conversely, the removal of the FtM breast may be seen as an unconscious savaging of the mother’s “good breast”, while phalloplasty and scrotal closure of the vagina forecloses/annihilates the desire/dread of the mother’s genitals. Falling back into irrational reactions to an early object when confronted with the trans body points to the lack of effectiveness of the internalised Law of the Father (the superego). In many cases, such repudiation of a transperson assumes they are “really queer”, which may or may not be the case. This disavowal is really about their status as trans, and repudiating the trans body is connected with refusing same sex desire. Trans repudiation conveys the fragility of the perpetrator’s own identity as belonging to one well defined sex/gender and as heterosexual.
Kleinian theory allows for the possibility of considering a range of reactions to the trans body. However, on a critical note, her theory looks into the individual exclusively, in relationship to the biological mother, for the sedimentation of any psychopathology. It is unfortunate that Klein did not extend her thesis of introjection to locate what else is taken in through and around the mother. The introjection of the mother/breast both silences and pacifies the social, political and historical configurations that are not transcendental but come to construct an over-emphasis on the female (m)other as scapegoat within the structure of the Western nuclear family. Klein’s mother-object is a totalised and reductive figure, what McDougall (1995) calls the *smother-mother-lover*, mother as the ‘whole’ world. In introjecting the mother, the child also ingests the constructed sanctity of the sexual binary which reverberates with the Judeo/Christian mythology of original sin. In totalising the mother, the social conditions that produce her are, in the Kleinian discourse, smothered by the breast. This over-emphasis, regrettably, led psychoanalysis into infamous mother blaming as a means to explain the aetiology of many forms of psychopathology, including gender dysphoria. These attempts at assigning culpability conjure the persecuting and threatening breast while eliding the phallic culture that loves/hates it.

**Object Relations**

The theory and practice of object relations in psychoanalysis was made possible through the pioneering works of Anna Freud and Melanie Klein. Through empirical observations, analysts such as Fairbairn, Winnicott, Mahler, Balint, Bowlby, Ainsworth, and Guntrip continued to emphasise the centrality of the mother-infant relationship (as in learning to develop tolerance of separation vis-à-vis attachment) as the basis for mental health. The central thesis put forward by object relations theorists is that infants and children internalise their early relational experiences of the mother (and to a lesser extent others) and that these relationships become part of one’s self. The ‘object’ in object relations represents a hated or loved person, place, or non-human object (as in toys and baby blankets or “transitional objects” that help babies to both realise and endure their separation from mother). It was Freud (1905) who introduced and theorised upon the term object in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. He analysed instances of ‘perversion’, suggesting that when psychic energy is inappropriately invested into an object, one could behave towards that object as if it constituted a sexual relationship with an
actual person. Fantasies or other psychic productions such as memories may contain investments that lead to the division of internal and external objects: internal objects being based on imaged material and an external objects on a person or thing.

In explaining the aetiology and associated features of GIDs, critics of sex change, such as McHugh (2004), rely on the discourses of perversion that originate in psychoanalytic theory. McHugh focuses solely on MtFs, reporting two pathological strains. In the case of the 'autogynephile', McHugh concentrates on finding evidence of perversion in the 'paraphilic' (perverse) histories of these particular trans women. His puritan gaze searches for 'aberrant' sexual expression which forecloses the possibility of MtFs being genuinely mis-sexed subjects who express erotic desire that finds creative forms of expression, considering mis-sexed limitations. McHugh assumes that all MtFs who desire other women (as lesbians/bisexuals) are perverse, rejecting the assistance that cross-dressing might play (using "transitional objects") to facilitate a narrative of emergence. Curiously, in pursuing a thesis of perverse psychopathology in MtFs, he ignores the S/M practices that some trans men practice (e.g. Califia, 2003), solely discrediting trans women, revealing a fixated interest in this group. This begs the question: Can transpeople not engage in non-normative sexual practices without disrupting the integrity of their embodied subjectivity? Why is gender congruent people's embodied integrity not questioned when they engage in similar practices?

Winnicott's (1958) outlining of infantile fears, such as the baby's fear of "falling forever", may be useful to return the repudiating gaze of psychiatrists like Paul McHugh or psychoanalysts such as Charles W. Socarides. As with violent physical attackers, their trans repudiation may point more to their own unconscious, sedimented fears of a collapse of their deeply held, conservative views of the immutable and essentialist nature of sex, especially the male sex. They may fear castration, or be frightened of growing female breasts. If transsexuals really are what they claim to be, McHugh and Socarides may – to their horror – fall forever.

39 As discussed in Chapter 5 these are: 1) the 'autogynephilic' who is not genuinely of the sex s/he claims, but rather a disturbed individual exhibiting an extreme form of perversion, and 2) homosexual males who cannot accept their homosexuality.
Psychoanalysis, in its universalising status as a master theory, is also complicit with colonial repudiations that negate more than the sex/gender status of transpeople. One of my informants, Aiyanna (MtF), does not mince words when she tells of her experience with her psychiatrist, who repudiated her cultural understandings of her embodied self:

Aiyanna: I knew enough about psychology to know the difference between Jungians and Freudians. The Freudian, every time he would start with his mother fucking father obsessing shit, I refused to answer and would just throw back at him some aspect of my cultural being... he might ask an interesting question and then he’d go back to his Freudian shit. By the third session he quit asking me any of his questions and we continued with me expounding on Indigenous Culture 101 and that’s how I made my way through the [gender] clinic. (entry# 26)

Aiyanna points to the limitations of inscribing a universalising psychoanalytic interpretation onto transpeople. Her success, as a First Nations woman, is that she was able to insert her non-Western being into the clinic and make her way through the process. Aiyanna returned the gaze. This was not easy, pointing to the difficulties that many transpeople face and negotiate in dealing with intersected subjugations that are more complex than sex/gender alone.

The psychoanalytic concepts of repression, projection, envy, defense, and abjection are relevant and useful in trying to understand the psycho-dynamics of trans repudiation. Some other psychoanalytic theories may be brought to bear on other dilemmas that transpeople themselves face.

**Trans Women and Mothering**

Chodorow (1978) notes that Freud’s theorization of women and femininity was located in a particular historical period and *does* reflect many of the biases of his time. Her point is not dissimilar to Gadamer’s (1960) understanding of the force of tradition, of a historical location that produces blinding prejudices. Chodorow does not, however, apologise for Freud, but advocates instead a rejection of his theorising on women in favour of a feminist analysis. Such a re-reading pays particular attention to men’s dominance as an outcome of the construction of
masculinity. Masculinity acts as a defense against infantile fears rooted in the mother-infant relationship (Kurzweil, 1995). This standpoint is consistent with Frosh’s (1994) contention that “mother is terrifying to the man...the threat of fusion, of being sucked back into her narcissistic womb and thus losing all the laboriously built boundaries of masculinity” (p. 111).

Chodorow (1978) argues that an important aspect of establishing femininity in girls is found in the social significance of the reproduction of mothering. She notes that psychoanalysis adopted the nuclear family, particularly the “turn of the century Viennese patriarchal family” (p. 53), as the universal norm for understanding human nature. This specific patriarchal familial model is the only one that could validate aspects of the dynamics of Freud’s Oedipal theory, and illustrates the tendency to universalisation in psychoanalytic theory. As Weedon (1987) comments, from a poststructuralist feminist viewpoint:

As with all psychoanalysis, the central problem lies in the attempt to theorize structures of femininity and masculinity on the basis of fixed psycho-sexual structures which look to a single cause. In Freud it is the Oedipus and castration complexes, in Chodorow, pre-Oedipal relations. (p. 62)

Both pre- and post-Oedipal mothering is central to Chodorow’s (1994) arguments on the connections between the social construction of mothering, gender distinctiveness, and patriarchal dominance. She states:

Women, as mothers, produce daughters with mothering capacities and the desire to mother. These capacities and needs are built into and grow out of the mother-daughter relationship itself. By contrast, women as mothers (and men as not-mothers) produce sons whose nurturant capacities and needs have been systematically curtailed and repressed. (p. 7)

Implicitly, this thesis relates the psychic and social construction of sexual difference to the degree of identification with mothers rather than with fathers. Chodorow argues that because mothering is a task generally performed by women, girls experience themselves as “less separate”, and develop fluid ego boundaries. Boys, in contrast, are pressed to separate from their mothers, to “disidentify” so as to experience themselves as autonomous and distinct, developing ego boundaries that are more fixed, resulting in “differing relational capacities” (ibid., p. 169).
For Chodorow, the development of masculinity entails a psychic separation from the mother, and by extension all women, so that boys solidify their identification with men. The social organisation of the family is internalised, and the external and internal are intimately connected in this shift from mother/women to father/men.

Chodorow (1994) criticises Freud by pointing out two “glaring limitations” in his theory (p. 4): first, he overlooked the significance of mothering in terms of its “strong, intense feeling, preoccupation, and identity in women as subjects” (p. 4), in addition neglecting the significance of the pre-oedipal mother-infant bond; and second, his view of women is “hegemonic”, and “female desire and sexuality are seen entirely through male eyes” (p. 4). These reproaches follow her (1978) earlier criticisms of the Oedipal and Electra complexes, which she claims contain three unexamined and problematic assumptions: (1) that genital difference is the exclusive means through which gender differences are incorporated into the psyche; (2) that gender is constituted through sexual orientation; and (3) unacknowledged phallocentrism.

By extension, Chodorow’s writings on women and sexual difference pose some interesting questions for considering trans women and the question of mothering. Critics of transsexualism such as Greer (1999) and McHugh (2004) repudiate the authenticity of trans women’s subjectivity by claiming a paucity of those who want a uterus (Greer) or a desire to be, post-surgically, mothers (McHugh). What Greer overlooks are the medical limitations and risks of uterus transplantation. There is no evidence that uterus transplants will organically support menstruation, conception, or childbirth (by caesarean section) in natal females born without a uterus, let alone trans women. Greer’s rhetoric also evades the issue of where the harvested uteruses would come from – even if they would magically work in the bodies of trans women.

McHugh overlooks several issues in considering why – perhaps – a number of trans women do not express a wish to become mothers (such as through adoption). To reiterate, trans women were mis-sexed by being born into male bodies in a world that insists we train them to become boys and then men. If Chodorow (1978) is correct, and we as a culture produce mothers who reproduce mothering in their daughters, “daughters with mothering capacities and the desire to mother… [that] grow out of the mother-daughter relationship itself” (ibid. p. 7), then McHugh’s
concerns can be answered: the problem is the refusal of the Western nuclear family to tolerate gender deviance in children, which probably accounts for at least some trans women’s lack of desire to be mothers. Trans women have been traumatised by families (mothers and fathers) who see it as their (un)conscious duty to uphold cultural mandates: whereby boys must become future fathers, girls must become future mothers, the “enforcement of women’s maternal role” (ibid., p. 6). This cultural demand was amply conveyed in the interviews I conducted with trans women.

Gender deviance in childhood is usually met with punishment through a range of institutions, such as schooling, the family, and so on. The French film *Ma Vie en Rose* (Berliner and Scotia, 1997) poignantly dramatises the problem. It tells the story of a male-bodied seven-year-old named Ludovic. She recognises her mis-sexed body and tells her mother that she is meant to be a girl, looks forward to puberty and menstruation, and intends to marry a school-boy friend. She is adamant that one day she will become a girl. For her transgression, Ludovic experiences constant harassment at school, in her community, and eventually from both her parents. She loses friends and is expelled from school after the Headmaster receives a petition from other classmates’ parents. Ludovic can no longer tolerate this repudiation and tries to commit suicide by climbing into a freezer. In the end, s/he is saved by a sympathetic grandmother and the family eventually reconcile themselves to Ludovic’s subjectivity. Aspects of the story thematically resonate with many of the experiences that transpeople shared with me in remembering their childhood (see Chapter 2).

I have never met a transsexual woman who is delusional about her embodied capacities. Most believe they were mis-sexed in male-bodies by birth. They have an understanding that this was a mistake that surgery and hormones can correct. When government agencies change a trans woman’s birth certificate from an M to an F, they must concede that this person was born to be female, and a mistake requiring medical correction necessitates this revision of documentation. Trans women are aware that as a result of this mistake, they cannot bear children in the way that most natal females can. This knowledge may be a dynamic factor in accounting for any lack of desire among trans women to become (post-surgical) mothers. Mothers and fathers do not usually encourage their male-bodied children to become mothers. Trans women may also hold ambivalence towards their own mothers, who may have denied them their subjectivity in
childhood, breaking the reproduction of mothering claim that Chodorow outlines. Fathers may have been punishing figures that forbade playing with dolls, house, and dress-up games that could promote the acquisition of future mothering skills. These dynamics may traumatise and discourage trans women from future mothering, as well as inhibiting male-bodied and congruent natal males from success in that area.

In some ways, trans women resemble women who have had hysterectomies. Neither group can bear children. Moreover, both groups may, in their previous embodied states, already have had children and not wish for any more. Some trans women, in their previous “latency” periods, where their trans-ness was repressed, may have fathered children (as represented in the films Transamerica and Le sexe des étoiles). This issue is also very relevant to those transpeople who were once biological mothers/fathers and transition afterwards. It opens-up imperative questions: How do their children re-conceive their parents? What issues does it raise for them (loss, mourning, excitement, fear)? Is it possible for adult children of late transition transsexuals to reconfigure their relationships to their former fathers, perhaps seeing them afresh as second mothers or a gender neutral parent?

Feminism argues that mothering is a choice and not a compulsory element to womanhood. To repudiate trans women for an alleged failure to desire motherhood is sexist and reinforces patriarchal rules that dictate that only natal, congruent females can really be mothers. To break the reproduction of mothering along essentialist lines, a better understanding of the production of the family as institution and as a discourse serving the interests of power is warranted. Feminist psychoanalysts might assist those trans women who need to therapeutically excavate early parental object relations, to reconfigure and heal any wounds in this area, so that they may be free from sedimented psychic oppression and may mother unencumbered if they so choose. Similarly, the question of FtMs as fathers needs to be broached. The emphasis on mothering in object relations theory (and the general absence of fathering) provides little to no opportunity for making links regarding FtMs and fathering. Perhaps the ability to inseminate, in order to become biological fathers, is something that some FtMs may wish for and scientific technology may one day accommodate. Likewise, not being able to inseminate does not preclude the ability to father. The issue of FtMs as fathers in trans studies, moreover, seems to be under-explored. They may
transmit their name, if not their genes, which brings us back to another psychoanalytical theorist whose ideas on sexual difference and the “name of the father” are relevant.

**Jacques Lacan and French Psychoanalysis**

Lacan’s (1901-1981) pithy pronouncements that “woman does not exist” [*la femme n’existe pas*] and “woman is not whole” [*la femme n’est pas toute*] are exemplars of his provocative and innovative reading of psychoanalysis. Lacan argues that the *symbolic order*, which by implication subverts any notion of woman (and therefore man) as biologically determined, erases any core essentialism that Freud maintained in his drive theory. The Lacanian reading restructures woman (and therefore man), pointing to a series of unthought masks, costumes, cloaks, and disguises. These masquerades are an invitation into the linguistically structured unconscious.

Lacan’s writing is often confusing, bewildering, and seemingly contradictory. As Frosh (1994) states:

> Desiring to understand Lacan is like wanting to have the phallus; the fantasy is that it would bring in its wake everything connected with power and authority, because that is what it represents and seems to be. (pp. 66-67)

However, Lacan’s deliberate invocation of the unconscious draws attention to the prevalence of incoherence as a force in human subjectivity. He sought a “return to Freud”, aiming to move psychoanalysis away from Freud’s later period, a period of legitimisation of ego psychology, and back to the primacy of the unconscious. His expulsion from the psychoanalytic establishment (The International Psychoanalytic Association) left Lacan free to develop original theorising on the psychoanalytic margins through the Parisian institute he founded. Here he further engaged in distancing himself from the “idealisation of maternity... in object relations theory and its Kleinian relatives... [especially] the degradation of psychoanalysis consequent on its American transplantation” (as cited in Frosh, 1994, p. 41).
In crafting a return to Freud, Lacan did not re-enter the biodeterminism associated by many with orthodox psychoanalysis but re-read Freud in conjunction with Saussurian structural linguistics. This led him, upon his “return”, to go beyond Freud and restructure the unconscious not in terms of “residual biologism” but in terms of language (Kurzweil, 1995, p. 101). In doing so he nevertheless re-inserted the determinant castration complex, transforming it into a linguistic rather than an instinctual phenomenon. This transformation rests upon the fundamental distinction he made between the penis and phallus: the penis, a linguistic signifier for the actual flesh and blood organ, differs from the phallus, which is a signifier of something absolute that one can never possess.

Lacan, like Freud, posited universal structures to articulate gendered subjectivity. As Weedon (1987) claims, psycho-sexuality and social context are intimately entwined in the analysis:

Both Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis propose universal structures and processes within which individuals acquire precarious ‘normal’ heterosexual femininity or masculinity, or deviate abnormally from them. While normal gender identity is constantly threatened by the return of the repressed, it is none the less fixed by psycho-sexual structures, and social relations are read in terms of these fixed structures. (p. 56)

Lacan’s contribution on the pre-Oedipal mirror stage (six to eighteen months) is among his more famous, where the baby anticipates greater embodied mastery, an “imaginary” that helps to form the future ego. It is a dawning period of realisation of gradual separation from the mother, and of the self as split. The mirror phase is primarily narcissistic, with the split image in a mirror confirming the distinction of a separate self from the mother. Through this process a foundation for relating with others is laid, a recapitulation of this mirroring phase throughout life via reflections in the “Other” in an attempt to transform this split (two) into one (the function of the “I”). Raoul (1994) translates Sylvie Le Poulichet’s summary of Lacan’s position as, “‘I’ = sedimentation of the residue of narcissistic identifications” (p. 16).

Laplanche and Pontalis (1972) note that “in so far as the intersubjective relationship is influenced by the effects of the mirror phase, it is imaginary, dual, and given to the aggressive tension in which the ego is constituted as an other, and the other as an alter ego” (p. 193). Sexed-embodiment carries narcissistic components through a complex process of projective
identifications and transferences, creating fictions of gender identity and self-image through encounters with Others. And yet this process is definitively mediated through the earlier internalisations made via the unconscious “sucking in” of the symbolic order. Here, Lacan has incorporated a massive repertoire of symbols and rules inclusive of all the gendered material circulating throughout the contingencies of time, culture, and place.

Following the structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss, Lacan articulates the symbolic as a three-fold concept (the three psychoanalytic “registers”: the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real). Laplanche and Pontalis (1972) connect the symbolic to all three psychoanalytic registers, but it remains embedded in the name / law of the father (nom/non-du-père), which is “irreducible to the real or imaginary father: one who declares the law” (ibid., p. 202). The law of the father, like all Lacanian constructs, is governed by a chief motivating force, desire. The promise of desire is said to be phallic and its internalisation, through the law of the father, allows the child to be reborn into the world of language. The importance of language and the symbols that structure the social world was broached by my informants in the discussion of lavatories and change rooms (Chapter 2). Table 3 (below) illustrates the familiarity and force of many of these signs as the gender binary expresses itself symbolically. Referring to “Ladies/Gentlemen” labels on segregated spaces, Lacan (1977) speaks of the relationship between the signifier and the signified (S/s), using this example “to show how in fact the signifier enters the signified, namely, in a form which, not being immaterial raises the question of its place in reality” (p. 151). From the perspective of some of my informants, the reality seems to be that the signified (man/woman) is supposed to enter the signifier (the right door). For some transpeople this poses the problems raised. In regard to the possibility of a ‘trans’ signifier/symbol (which I have only seen once, pasted over existing lavatory doors at a trans activism conference), it may solve the issue of the lack of acceptable toilet space for TG people. It may also function to draw attention to the plight of those who do not pass and the not infrequent harassment they receive for seemingly violating the law of the binary. I wonder, however, how TS people feel about this option, since their aim is to disappear into the binary and not to draw attention to themselves. Entering the “trans room” could inadvertently “out” them to observers. As a third space symbol it seems we should support its use, especially as several of my informants have called specifically for it. However, I also remain concerned that it may be used to segregate all transpeople, de-legitimising or even
prohibiting those who want to use the regular binary lavatory (M/F), rooms constructed according to "the laws of urinary segregation" (Lacan, ibid., p. 151). Should the trans signifier be forced to enter a new signified and vice versa?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Image of women's bathroom sign]</td>
<td>![Image of men's bathroom sign]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unisex/Either</th>
<th>Disability</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Image of unisex/either sign]</td>
<td>![Image of disability sign]</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Image of transgender symbol]</td>
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Table 3: Various Lavatory Symbols

Returning to Lacan’s phallic notions, it is clear that they directly challenge Melanie Klein’s insistence that the breast is the principal object of desire. Indeed, he defiantly re-inserted Freud’s phallocentrism, but Lacan’s phallocentrism differs from Freud’s by means of its unattainable ambiguity. As Frosh (1994) notes, “the ambiguity of the phallus is something integral to its function: it operates both to divide the sexes and to encourage a fantasy of oneness” (p. 80). A fantasy of one-ness emerges out of a fractured ‘ontology’. Phallic ambiguity is posed by Frosh, in his study of masculinity, as a source of anxiety for boys. Boys can never really possess the phallus because it is a fiction, “a signifier of desire (signifiant du désir)” (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1972, p. 200). Yet the very constitution of a fictive masculinity insists that boys constantly be in pursuit of it. No other quest is known, as the internalisation of the symbolic order entails the internalisation of the masculine-feminine binary, to which alternatives are banished by the censor into unconsciousness. The danger is of confusing the flesh-and-bodied penis with the phallus. In this specific sense, those trans men who do not have a penis need not be any different from those who do, since the phallic quest does not demand it. Moreover, trans women who abject the penis do not lose the phallus, a phallus they never had. No one can ultimately have a phallus. The phallic quest is an unconscious masquerade. Like Freud, Lacan also made use of the concept of castration anxiety, yet in a very different vein. For the male, the fiction that he may lose a phallus he does not really have may generate anxiety; it is something that may be taken from him, his fiction of the phallus is subject to loss and robbery.

Beyond Lacan: Feminist Re-Readings

Lacan’s work has been central to poststructuralism, with his ideas shaping the work of a generation of feminists. By restructuring the unconscious in terms of language and thus divesting Freudian theory of its biodeterminism, many feminists have located themselves within Lacan’s tradition. They do not, in taking up Lacanian concepts, do so uncritically. O’Connor and Ryan (1993) are exemplary of the kind of feminists who, casting away Lacan’s universal statements overwrought with phallocentrism, nevertheless support his “strategy for understanding the emergence of subjectivity as gendered...it allows for the analysis of the hierarchical dualism operative in the distinction of masculinity and femininity” (p. 135). Fuss (1989) points out that
not only is Lacanian theory phallocentric, it is also a discourse that is blind to the constitution of subjectivity along race and class lines: “the Lacanian subject is a sexed subject first and last” (p. 10). With this limitation in mind, Fuss is in accord with those French poststructuralist feminists (Cixous, 1981; Kristeva, 1982; Irigaray, 1985) who took up the initial re-readings of Lacan, endorsing Lacan’s positing of identity as “alienated and fictitious”, as “possible and impossible” (Fuss, 1989, p. 102). If identity is cast as im/possible, transpeople are not, therefore, somehow exempt. Having said this, transsexual theorists suggest that the problem of the mis-sexed body runs deeper than identity. The search for identity is at root split. Prosser (1998), in his analysis of transsexual autobiographies, notes that “mirror scenes punctuate autobiographies with remarkable consistency” (p. 100). Out of trans mis-embodiment, a quest for identity is evidenced through many depictions of these mirror scenes. In Lacanian discourse, the early image of the mirror scene evidences the first fundamental split, the human subject as a split subject, and the self as seen and named by others (or in the mirror) is not the self as experienced from within. TS/TG writing affords the opportunity to write as partial or complete Others of the Other, to inscribe subjectivity in ways that also, uniquely, challenge the phallocentric binary.

Kristeva’s work, which builds on Lacan’s theories and Klein’s, may be employed most fruitfully towards an understanding of trans (sexual/gender). Her concepts of abjection (see Chapter 4) and the subject in process/on trial (en procès) are particularly useful. Her work also emphasises the importance of language which for transpeople is epitomised by the issue of gendered pronouns. It also relates psychic theories of fragmentation to actual bodily experiences. Trans repudiation may at times be a manifestation of a deep fear, since trifling with reproductive organs, genitals, and breasts evokes not only castration anxiety but also an unconscious terror of dismemberment and death. The repudiation of SRS (sexual reassignment surgery) may be based on the irrational fear that it represents the annihilation of the human species, as does abortion for some anti-choice campaigners. Negative reactions to the idea of mastectomy for FtMs may be stirred up by infantile ambivalence towards the breast, or fear of women refusing to be mothers, of a permanent withholding of the breast, the death of the mother. That transmen have abjected a mis-sexed breast is not recognised as a type of maternal abjection tied to the desire to keep the body clean and hygienic, “proper”, as Kristeva (1982) explains. To reiterate the principles of abjection, organising the tenuous borders of the infant’s self begins through learning to reject the
mother’s ‘sour’ milk, to vomit the mother out and to come to realise separateness. FtMs may be
seen as rejecting the mother’s body that has been partly internalised, but improperly so. Those
who repudiate FtMs do not comprehend this abjection. Without surgery, the abject hounds the
FtM subject, since binding practices do not remove the mis-sexed breast. He must fully abject
the breast in order to finalise his separate self. SRS in this sense is not a mutilating practice,
rather, it is a necessary and final abjection to assist the construction of the integrity of the sexed
and gendered self. I will come back to these concepts in Chapter 8, in discussing the
contributions of the so-called father of “ego psychology”, Alfred Adler. Adler and Kristeva
differ markedly in several ways, however some surprising theoretical parallels and propositions
make for interesting points of convergence.

The Felt Body: Beyond Language and Sight

Prosser (1998) summarises the work of another French psychoanalyst, Didier Anzieu, in
relation to TS ontology. Aside from Butler’s (1990) seminal psychoanalytic analyses which are
pertinent to TG theorising, very little affirmative appropriation of psychoanalytic work has been
done to specifically support TS positions. Prosser’s work is an excellent exception to this rule.
He problematises Lacanian approaches as too “ocularcentric” in ways that do not resonate fully
with transsexual experiences. Such approaches occlude a sufficient understanding of transsexual
subjectivity, through an overemphasis on sight that denies an equally important embodied sense
of touch. Prosser procures Anzieu’s ideas to “recover the bodily ‘sensations’ that form Freud’s
bodily ego, which, following Lacan, have been overlooked” (p. 79). This appropriation
daringly challenges poststructuralist assertions of “disbelief in the integrity and continuity of the
subject” (p. 79). Anzieu’s work on selfhood, based on a belief in the possibility of a felt bodily
integrity, argues that the healthy ego can be differentiated from an unhealthy sense of
disintegration, as experienced by a weak ego in states of depersonalisation. In depersonalisation,
the body does not hold together but dis-integrates in ways that blur the interpersonal boundaries
of the body (such as the skin). It is through clinical accounts of dis-integration that a case can
be made for a sense of bodily integrity as evidenced in healthy ego states. Ego strength holds the

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40 The term “dis-integration” alternatively appears in some clinical writings as “de-integration”.

body together, while ego flooding casts the body in pieces. That some people manage to live productive and meaningful lives in such states of fragmentation should not be construed as a necessary or required ontological 'state' for everyone. Similarly, 'together' people ought not to fault those who value their (un)conscious sense of fragmentation. Specifically, Prosser invokes the bodily self in TS cases to exemplify their need for bodily integrity. As an Adlerian, I will later endorse this need for bodily integrity as a useful fiction.

To lend credibility to his points, Anzieu uses the clinical example of the "borderline personality". He argues a theoretical case for selfhood and an ego that knows the integrity of its felt body. However, in the borderline case, he observes an inability to consistently distinguish inside from outside (e.g. feeling that one is not real). This phenomenology is related to other elements that engender a pervasive pattern of subjective suffering reflected in chronic, problematic interpersonal relations and self harm (such as indiscriminate sexual relations, burning or cutting oneself). The felt body, in the case of transsexualism where no borderline issues are concurrently present, is recognised by an otherwise unburdened ego to be mis-sexed. The ego strives rationally to respond to a chronic, inextinguishable, wrongly sexed sense, so that the individual can solve this pain and feel at one within his/her own skin. The primary issue Prosser raises in this debate is the tension between a poststructuralist insistence on a subjectivity that is fractured, and more ego-oriented emphases on the integrating project of the embodied self. This debate, of fracture versus integrity/wholeness, pre-dates poststructural critiques, as evidenced in Jung’s celebration of Holism following his split from Freud (who emphasised conflict/rupture).

**Jungian and Post-Jungian Psychology**

Carl G. Jung (1875–1961) proposed a much deeper layer of unconsciousness than Freud’s materialist drive model, a shared unconscious that is occupied by an undetermined number of archetypes. These archetypes, inherited from past generations, carry forward collective, feeling-laden, primordial experiences represented in mythological motifs. These archetypes make veiled appearances, when they burst into the personal unconscious through a *complex* “an emotionally charged and largely unconscious pocket of associated experiences,
ideas, feelings, and images, all clustered around a central core or archetype” (Kulkarni, 1998, p. 89).

Sex and gender in the orthodox Jungian scheme are structured as pervasive dualisms: “virtually all of Jung’s major ideas are expressed in a manner involving opposites” (Samuels, 1985, p. 92). This emphasis on opposites is inscribed into his structuring of the psyche. Jung’s archetypal structures are based on a fracturing of the psyche, as unacknowledged opposites surface in the unconscious and are lived-out through others in projected form. Jung’s acknowledging of the split state of the psyche is accompanied by a teleological holism. Holism is the ideal outcome of the broad principle of *individuation*, that operates through the archetype of the *Self*. This archetype incites the function of individuation by integrating opposites, and generating appropriate symbols and images that facilitate this aim. Any imbalances in the psyche are regulated through *compensation*, as the opposite is called upon in order to balance or compensate for any psychic one-sidedness.

Since Jung’s death in 1961, there have been various projects undertaken to conserve, reform or radicalise aspects of traditional Jungian theory, as detailed in Andrew Samuels’ (1985) *Jung and the Post-Jungians*. As a post-Jungian, Samuels (1989) pays particular attention to under-theorised realms in traditional Jungian writing. The ‘father’, for example, is drawn into discussion in ways that go beyond Jung and also challenge object relations’ overemphasis on the mother. He also discusses how gender categories have moved into a state of postmodern “confusion” on both conscious and unconscious levels that radically disrupts Jung’s original ideas. Samuels (1993) refutes the Jungian orthodoxy of contrasexuality, the archetypal anima and animus dyad, which is said to drive potential harmony in gender relations, by reconfiguring contrasexual insistence as defensive, composing a paradoxical and “unhelpful gender certainty” (p. 72). Other post-Jungians have argued that many of Jung’s theoretical propositions are so problematic as to be beyond redemption (Tacey, 1997; Kulkarni, 1998). Post-Jungian psychology is, moreover consistent with the ideas of TG theorists, who also challenge dualisms by unfixing them, revising them, or making a claim to the space in-between.
In Jungian analytical psychology one particular concept may be especially useful for an understanding of trans repudiation: a strong light casts a strong shadow. The shadow, which is an ‘archetypal tendency’ said to be present in the human subject from birth, makes its appearance solely through projection. Jung claims that of all the archetypes, the shadow is actually the most accessible, representing moral problems that challenge the whole ego-personality. In dealing with shadow manifestations, an emotional reaction is elicited that evinces “dark characteristics” (CW9ii, 1951, para. 14). Transpeople become the screens on which others project their own unconscious gender doubts or failings. Others, including effeminate queer men, butch dykes, and other gender outlaws will also, according to the Jungian scheme, be in danger of having to carry unwanted projections. Yet, it is not and never has been the gender outlaws who are “the problem”. People may feel so threatened by their own projections that they act in irrational ways towards the (phobogenic) object of their contempt/fear. Repudiation of those perceived to have failed is a projective outcome of the defensive need to disengage from what we, as a political culture, (unknowingly) create. Transpeople are forced to carry psychic burdens as a result of unwarranted projections of inadequacy and primordial fears of loss of sexual organs, or that the body will fall to pieces.

Jung identified the central problem of projection as follows:

... the cause of the emotion appears to lie, beyond all possibility of doubt, in the other person. No matter how obvious it may be to the neutral observer that it is a matter of projections, there is little hope that the subject will perceive this himself. He must be convinced that he throws a very long shadow before he is willing to withdraw his emotionally-toned projections from their object. [Italics mine] (CW9ii, 1951, para. 4).

Like the shadow, the Persona, another popular archetype in Jungian discourse, is said to work in opposition to the Self. This doubling profits from the Western tradition of a public/private divide, one that has historically been gendered. Its function is to mask the Self and to present a public image in keeping with societal expectations. The persona organises the surface impressions of personality in keeping with the superficial conformism of society, developing out of historical

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41 “Individuation”: drawn from Schopenhauer’s principum individuationis.
42 When citing Jung’s collected works (CW) I shall retain the conventional way of doing so in referring to the Bollingen series.
experiences of projecting out a public identity. Social conventions intercede to discipline and ‘refine’ the expected persona/presentation. Jung suggests that persona conventions maintain a fracturing that individuation seeks to overcome. The persona has a persecutory feature, since it demands that one present oneself in keeping with expectations. In trans studies, the issue of TS passing could be interpreted as protecting a persona, and TG rejection of passing might be seen as a political expression of resistance. The transgressive performativity of TG refusal to conform to gender roles might also be seen in light of resistance to persona expectations.

In my interview with Patricia (see Chapter 2), she recalls being denied a job as a receptionist as her employer was worried that having a transwoman as a frontline representative would not be in keeping with the company’s image. This illustrates how persona priorities contribute to the subjugation of transpeople in the everyday/night social world. Namaste’s (2000) study of transsexual sex-trade workers and other unemployed trans people documents how gender identity clinics routinely reject applicants for transsexual surgery based on their (un)employment status. They do not ‘fit’ with persona conventions and risk bringing controversy to the respectability of these clinics. Moreover, the ‘tough guy’, masculinist culture of policing may also be part of the persecution that another transperson, Roz (see Chapter 2), reveals in her interview. Not surprisingly, she experienced horrendous repudiations when she tried to transition on the job as a big city cop, since transpeople are a threat to the conservative “law and order” (nom du père) represented by the police.

Rather than assisting in unpacking irrational psychic reactions towards the trans body, Jung’s traditional cannon, as implicitly applied to transpeople, merely reinforces a doctrine of sex and gender difference. Such a dogma goes against the human subject’s striving for agency, a striving that risks divine retribution for meddling in the natural ‘order of things’. Unlike orthodox Jungians, post-Jungians are less likely to fall back onto the immutable realm of God/Nature and seem better poised to dialogue with other discourses in order to resist this domain. Kulkarni’s (1997, 1998) post-Jungian work also problematises traditional Jungian orthodoxies, as she argues that lesbian experience is not necessarily based on the dynamics of the anima/animus binary, but rather is linked to Jung’s transcendental function. Her argument resonates to a degree with transgender theory. Specifically, Kulkarni (1997) contends that lesbianism “represents a potential
to ‘transcend’ categories of gender” (p. 53) and that it “can never be understood by recourse to concepts like contrasexuality” (p. 57). She asks, “if lesbians do not need men for individuation, why do we need ‘the masculine’? ... and if we do not need the masculine...well, then, maybe we do not need ‘the feminine’ either?” (p. 102). Her account puts into question the entire masculine-feminine binary, in the same spirit as Wittig (1988) and Butler (1990). Kulkarni concludes: “it seems to me that the only way women and men will ever be free to access repressed ‘contrasexual’ qualities will be when we demolish the categories of gender altogether” (ibid., p. 107).

Kulkarni’s post-Jungian work on lesbianism presses for the possibilities of liberation from, and resistance to, the anima and animus archetypes as symbols of the binary. In particular, ‘effeminate’ boys and men need not be considered as identified with, or captured by, an anima figure, but rather can be conceptualised as individuals who are engaged in gender resistance; not victims of an unconscious archetype but political actors (however unconscious this in turn may be). The term “transcendent” implies a positive spin, rather than seeing gender outlaws as pathologically un-integrated selves. However, the gender abolitionism thesis promulgated by theorists such as Kulkarni does not concur with the lived experience of many transsexual people, who on the contrary wish to adhere to one gender, the one not initially assigned to them.

Rachel St. Claire (1999) is one of the few Jungians who have theorised and employed clinical practice with transpeople in ways that support their trans journeys. She works with transpeople without recourse to pathologising their unique identities. Her overall approach is faithful to the spiritual aspects of Jungian psychology, arguing that transpeople seek to heal their bodies and their “souls”. She contends that many transpeople are psychically wounded by having internalised “transphobic attitudes” (p. 2). A range of negative appraisals of the self are experienced, producing mental health problems such as “anxiety, depression, ambivalence, guilt, shame, and anger directed inwardly towards the self” (p. 2).

Analysts, even those who suppose that they will positively support a trans patient, may unconsciously hold transphobic feelings and project these feelings onto the patient. Like all depth psychologists, Jungians make use of the countertransference. St. Claire suggests that those
analysts who work with transpeople need to become aware of their internalised transphobia so that it does not adversely affect the patient.

St. Claire also contends that for repressed and wounded transpeople to be “healed” they must accept their split-off identity and reclaim it from the shadow. In doing this “the false gendered ego-identity dies” to be replaced by an authentically integrated “gendered persona” (p. 5). The process is not, in her experience, an easy or comfortable one. She argues that for transsexuals “the journey from self-hatred and paralytic fear, through death, transformation, and re-birth is daunting” (p. 8). As a Jungian, she favours an ideal of “the whole”, of integration, and completeness that has been problematised in other discourses such as poststructuralism. In clinical practice, however, Analytical Psychology is concerned with psychic integration as necessary in order to counteract dangerous potentialities in pre-transition transsexuals, such as suicide. In the conflicts that they usually face under a binary system, such as having to reject their assigned sex/gender, psychic injury often occurs. St. Claire is concerned with the healing of these psychic wounds. She believes that for them to heal, transpeople must accept and affirmatively endorse their selves by developing an integrated identity, enabling them to “establish a functioning transgendered persona by which the person can meaningfully live with others in an authentic life” (p. 3).

While concepts such as ‘integrity’ or ‘authenticity’ are problematic for poststructuralists, and indeed for many post-Jungians, Jungians faithful to Jung’s original positing of the Self archetype emphasise it as a symbol of holism (citing “the Christ imago within”). The symbol/archetype of wholeness is said to function as a means to draw together a life quest for realising individuation. Although I disagree with the universality of their thesis, one could potentially understand transition in TS, or indeterminate crossings in TG people, as a means to synthesise fracture into an integrated Self. Moreover, the religiosity apparent in some Jungian discourses may resonate with the often conflictual religiosity in some transpeople’s lives. In the interviews, some transpeople spoke of the religious conflicts that have arisen for them over the course of their lives. By traversing religious themes, Jungian discourses invoke the Transpersonal in ways that defy the liberal empiricism of positivist psychology, supporting the view that a sufficient understanding of subjectivity in the lives of many transpeople must not ignore the intangible
impact of spirituality, of the uncanny, of the desire for a whole Self that is in harmony with the cosmos. This Self may be unattainable, or function as a strategic goal that gives subjects a sense of meaning that is important to them.

In the next chapter, I consider Adlerian theory and its elaboration of the idea of the constructed and fictional self. Like Jung, Adler was concerned with issues of holism and the self, although in theoretically divergent ways, reflecting the quite different schools that they formed when they broke away from psychoanalysis. Jung and Adler both share the distinction of having significantly contributed to the early days of psychoanalysis, its formalisation and institutionalisation. Freud chose Adler to lead the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society as president, and Jung was selected to lead the International Psychoanalytic Society. Jung and Adler also share the experience of having made adverse and permanent splits (at different times) from the psychoanalytic movement. These splits from Freud arose from disputes over the function of the libido in psychic life. That theorising sex and gender in depth psychology produced such acrimonious splits is unsurprising. Transpeople embody further challenges to these split discourses by inadvertently throwing light onto the insufficiencies of depth psychology, while in paradoxical fashion, inadvertently demonstrating how these discourses are crucial to understanding the ubiquitous forces of the irrational (love/enmity), of unconscious defence (abjection/repudiation), and of lack (desire/striving) in human subjectivity.
CHAPTER 8:

ADLERIAN THEORY

Alfred Adler (1870-1937) made significant contributions to understanding the dynamics of subjectivity. His school of depth psychology, while traditionally conformist to sex/gender normativity, provides insights into the phenomenon of repudiation and several Adlerian concepts are relevant to contemporary debates over sex/gender and trans issues. Though preceding poststructuralism, some of his insights foresee later developments, while others are in direct opposition to them. French psychoanalysis, with its disdain for ego psychology’s conceptions of the ‘self’, demonstrates almost total disregard for Adler’s contributions. This under-theorised and frequently unstated disregard is worthy of analysis, since poststructuralist psychoanalysis actually has several points in common with Adler. It was Adler, and not Lacan, who first re-read Freud’s supposed biodeterminism as based on symbolic constructions, or “fictions”. Adler’s humanism and faith in holism, expressed more directly in his later period, may have caused poststructuralists to overlook earlier nuances in Adlerian theory that are precursors to their own deconstructive re-readings. This issue pertains most saliently to the subject/self debate and the relative centrality of language, the body, and society/culture in the formation of individual persons.

This discussion of Adler’s depth psychology will lead into further analysis of the tensions between subject and self that will be fleshed out more fully in the Conclusion. The Adlerian turn to the self in depth psychology occupies a position consistent with Prosser’s (1998) evoking of Anzieu’s reclamation of selfhood as not only useful but integral to understanding trans (especially TS) embodiment. Similarly, for Adler the implicit self is responsible for the task of repairing fracture - of making an integrity emerge from fragmentation, establishing healing, or mending, as a useful fiction. The Adlerian constructivist position posits the self as striving for the integration of an unconscious fracture. The pre-eminence of poststructural psychoanalytic
theorising in (trans)gender debates (e.g. Butler, 1990), elides Adler’s earlier contributions in this area. The present discussion aims to reconsider Adler’s separation from Freud as the first attempt to build a constructivist depth psychology, and to draw attention to its relevance to trans theorising. It also reviews the controversy around “ego psychology” as central to one of the paradoxes of the trans condition: that the self is obviously split, as poststructuralists claim, but trans people nevertheless seek a new (rather than original/lost) wholeness.

**Adler’s Break with Psychoanalysis**

Adler established an influential system of psychology and personality theory known as *individual psychology*. His life and work are recalled in biographical detail by Ellenberger (1970) and Hoffman (1994), who emphasise the general yet often unthought impact that Adler’s school has had on twentieth-century psychology. He was a physician practising in Vienna at the time when Freud first began the formalisation of psychoanalysis and the two first became acquainted in 1899, when Freud responded to a letter by Adler, distinguishing the differential diagnosis between hysteria and epilepsy. Fourteen years younger than Freud, Adler remained a member of the Wednesday discussion group which met at Freud’s home for nearly nine years, having joined at the group’s inception in 1902. With Freud’s endorsement, Adler was installed as the first president of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society and became the first editor of the associated journal *Zentralblatt für Psychoanalyse*. Eventually, Adler’s views began to compromise the core sexual tenets of Freudian psychoanalysis, and Freud came to regard him with utter contempt (Fiebert, 1997). Adler, in turn, rejected Freud’s fatalistic tendencies, adopting a more optimistic view of people’s potential for healing. In his later clinical work he imparted this positive attitude in therapy, discarding the psychoanalytic stance of neutrality that Freudians insist upon.

Over the years of his association with psychoanalysis, Adler became increasingly impatient with Freud’s dogmatic style. Jung (1961) recalls how Freud consciously set out to dogmatise the libidinal hypothesis: “I can recall vividly how Freud said to me, ‘My dear Jung, promise me never to abandon the sexual theory. That is the most essential thing of all. You see, we must make a dogma of it, an unshakeable bulwark’ ” (p. 147). This dogma was at the core of Adler’s eventual split from Freud in 1911 and Jung’s subsequent split in 1913. Both Adler and Jung
believed that instinctual sexuality could be an important element in the neuroses, but was not the exclusive one. Adler’s early views were also shaped by his initial adherence to Marx’s social theory. In his first publication [1898], *Das Gesundheitsbuch für das Schneidergewerbe*\(^{43}\), Adler argued for the prevention of illness through the application of social medicine, preventative education, and a re-thinking of exploitative working conditions in the tailor trade, acknowledging socio-economic factors that Freud ignored.

Early on Adler was identified as a socialist by many of his early contemporaries, however Marxist critics in the school of critical theory later disputed this characterisation. One critique of Adler’s psychology, by the radical historian and critical theorist Russell Jacoby (1975), places Adler’s school firmly within an ideology supporting conformity to capitalism and the liberal ideology of individualism. Jacoby dismissed Adler’s “revisionist” contribution, accusing him of “social amnesia”, of abandoning the more radical insights garnered by orthodox Marxism and psychoanalysis. Undoubtedly, Adler’s eventual emigration to America, and his seeming embrace of capitalist American culture, endorses some aspects of Jacoby’s polemic. A good case can be made that Adler did compromise his earlier socialist passions, but his political shifts do not, I contend, invalidate his socialist sympathies nor his theoretical constructs. There are Adlerians who are left-wing in their politics and others who are mainstream liberals. Like Freud and Jung, Adler viewed his school of psychology as a movement. He consciously set out to construct a ‘big tent’ psychology, one that could supposedly and tacitly accommodate a wide range of political positions.

During Adler’s association with Freud he was deemed “the socialist” (in Wilhelm Stekel’s sketch of the original Wednesday Society members), and indeed one can see the accuracy of this portrayal in the *Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society* (Nunberg and Federn, 1962-1974), which indicate that Adler frequently offered a Marxist interpretation of various issues under discussion. An example is highlighted by Kurzweil (1995), when Adler challenged a questionable thesis put forward by Fritz Wittels about the unconscious meaning of menstruation. Wittels opposed the admission of women into the Wednesday group and held anti-feminist views, believing that feminists were women who actually wanted to be men. He was challenged

\(^{43}\) Health Book for the Tailor Trade.
by Adler, who argued that “the fate” of women is determined by patriarchal arrangements and the control of property, relations that disadvantaged women. It is noteworthy that Adler and his wife, Raissa Epstein (who was a life-long socialist feminist), were personal friends of Leon Trotsky, often entertaining him at their home during the years when Trotsky lived in Vienna (1907-1914). Also, Adler was the first to propose a synthesis between psychoanalysis and Marxism, though his paper on this topic is lost (Ellenberger, 1970). He was also the first to argue a psychoanalytic position in support of feminism, as the sociologist Connell (1995) and feminists like Kurzweil (1995) and Tong (1998) have all correctly noted.

Following his break from Freud, Adler formed the Society for Free Psychoanalysis, which later evolved into the school of individual psychology, a somewhat confusing reference to the Latin individuus meaning indivisibility. This obscure reference to indivisibility, perhaps due to inappropriate translation into English where its intended meaning is not at all obvious, was consistent with Adler’s insistence upon the fictional unity of the neuroses and indeed the fictional (yet useful) unity of the self. His position contrasts with Freudian psychoanalysis and its counter-insistence upon permanent, compartmentalised conflict, an un-mendable fracture. The American adoption of Adler’s school favoured the retention of the colloquially understood term “individual” as referring to one person, rather than collective issues. However, Adler’s meaning, while pertaining to his theorising on the unique and creative power of the individual psyche, did not ignore contextual and collective aspects.

Ansbacher and Ansbacher (as cited in Adler, 1956) argue that the conflict between Adler and Freud essentially pitted “psychology with a soul [Adler] against a psychology where the soul or self was eclipsed [Freud]”. The Ansbachers further conclude that “the self or the soul must remain the focal point if psychology is to provide satisfactory explanations” (p. 62). Indeed, both Adler and Jung shared a holistic regard for the psyche, and did not ignore its spiritual dimensions (whether religious or existential), remaining faithful to the root meaning of psyche as the prefix of psych-ology [soul-logic]. Adler’s (1998/1938) later writings turn towards “the meaning of life”, as he courts metaphysical ideas on spirituality such as the social ideal he posits as

44 In the Ansbachers’ otherwise excellent systematization of Adler’s writings, their conflation of self/soul is problematic.
constituted “sub specie aeternitatis” (p. 271) [under the aspect or light of eternity]. Adler was also an early adherent of phenomenology in psychology, well before existential and humanistic therapies came into vogue. However, he disputed the Cartesian dualism of classical phenomenology, as evidenced in his concept of “organ jargon” (Linden, 1997), which resonates in part with Kristeva’s much later positing of the “speaking body” (Oliver, 1993). Adler contends that the body speaks what the un/non/conscious forbids, what conflicts with the “fictional final goal”, a term to be discussed shortly. Organ jargon and compensation are aspects of an ideal, an embodied striving for holism. He believed that cognitive change goes hand in hand with shifts in the unconscious which are in turn reflected in the ways in which the body speaks. His retention of a dynamic unconscious further differentiates his school from those that are Cartesian in their phenomenological or cognitive views.

Adler was contradictory in his turn to the ego in ways that separate him from ‘cognitive therapy’ with its exclusive focus on consciousness. Hillman and Ventura (1992) problematise phenomenologically based cognitive and associated “behaviouralisms”, contending that these approaches are based on a puritanical ideology,

...the kind of psychology that would support the Puritanism, is what I would call ego psychology: behavioural psychology, behaviour therapy, cognitive therapy - the kinds that try to bring things under control. (p. 202)

Hillman and Ventura’s argument echoes the scorn that Lacan held for North American ego psychology, because of what he insisted was their denial of rupture, and the undoing of the radical potential of a psychoanalytic unconscious (Horrocks, 1998). Horney also accused Adler of shifting too much to the ego, of failing to take a proper journey into the depths (Paris, 1994). Curiously, historians of psychiatry nevertheless describe Horney herself as more of a neo-Adlerian than a neo-Freudian (Ehrenwald, 1991).

Ellenberger (1970) characterises Adler as the ‘father of ego psychology’, but in some ways this is a faulty representation. In ego psychology the self-contained ego, as the centre of consciousness and experience, seems to stand outside of time and space, unconnected to relational contexts. However, Adler’s psychology is less of an ego psychology than a context
psychology. He emphasised that "no psychologist can determine the meaning of any expression if [they] fail to consider it in its social context" (p. 118). Ansbacher and Ansbacher (as cited in Adler, 1956) conclude that even though Adler’s psychology is known as one of the depth psychology models, which search for deep “unconscious phenomena”, “one can better speak of Adler’s psychology as ‘context psychology’” (p. 3). His so-called turn to the ego requires further explication, as theoretically it is a complex turn, that may actually point to something else altogether.

### Adler and the Guiding Fiction: Consciousness as a Mise-en-abîme

Following his break with Freud, Adler drew upon the work of two philosophers to strengthen his ideas, both of whom accepted the notion of an unconscious: (1) the neo-Kantian and post-Nietzschean philosopher Hans Vaihinger (1965/1911); and (2) the South African statesman Jan C. Smuts (1926). In the first instance, Adler adopted Vaihinger’s concept of fictionalism [fictio]. Ansbacher and Ansbacher (as cited in Adler, 1956) describe the concept as “ideas, including unconscious notions, which have no counterpart in reality which serve the useful function of enabling us to deal with [reality] better than we could otherwise” (p. 77). In the spirit of Kant, Vaihinger emphasises the subjectivity of fictions which work on the principle of “as – if”. For example, gendered constructs are fictional, functioning as if gendered material were pre-given, apriori, a reified set of facts, or ‘objective reality’. Gendered subjects unconsciously construct and creatively rework gendered fictions, often through early internalisation of available material, to produce their own images, fantasies, dreams, ideas, ideals, and beliefs about masculinity and femininity. By unknowingly fashioning their fictions, subjects create hidden goals to strive for and a biased apperception with which to view others and the world in relation to these fictive goals.

Adlerians argue that these fictions are tangled with notions of private logic, that is, a logic that is not shared or consensual. Dreikurs (1973) suggests that private logic is opposed to the sensus communis, the striving for reason as expressed in ‘common sense’. Adler used the private logic

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45 A term from heraldry (the design of shields) introduced by French writer André Gide to evoke a story within a story, or the reflection of the creative process within a work of art.
and common sense polarity in the manner which Kant had intended (ibid.). Kant spoke of the sensus privatus as Eigensin, which means “one’s own sense/meaning”, i.e. stubbornness or unreasonableness in holding a divergent interpretation. This understanding of common sense (as opposed to individual idiosyncrasy) differs markedly from the liberal-empirical, anti-Hegelian common-sense discourse that dialectical materialists such as Jacoby (1975) and Parker (1997) discuss. Poststructuralists also refute the claims of a ‘naturalistic’ common sense.

Unfortunately, some of Adler’s German concepts were translated into English terms such as ‘common sense’ and ‘Life Style’ [e.g. Lebens-Schablone], which are now easily misconstrued, approximating too closely to contemporary right-wing rhetoric. Neo-Conservatism, which spawns ‘common sense’ political movements, coincidentally uses ‘life style’ as a marker of a hedonistic, liberal society (as in “the homosexual life style”). Adler did not intend these meanings in his use of the concepts. As an Adlerian, I am very careful to avoid these terms and use clearer translations (e.g. communal sense and following Ansbacher, 1999, style of life).

Combining his understanding of Vaihinger’s concept of the “fiction” with a (constructed) ‘teleological’ orientation, Adler created the concept of a “guiding fiction” or “fictional finalism”. The unconscious is driven by an unknown creative force, producing fictions spontaneously to aid in the child’s development. Adler used creativity in the Aristotelian sense (poiesis), as “the creative force of the human being” (Oberst and Stewart, 2003, p. 10). The Ansbachers (as cited in Adler, 1956) sum up the meaning of Adler’s conjunction of fictionalism and teleology thus: “by now describing goals and the future as fictional, he expressed in effect that this future was not the objective future but a subjective future as experienced in the present” (p. 88). Hence, Adler’s depth psychology differs from psychoanalysis by looking into the past (early recollections) in order to uncover and interpret the prospective function of the psyche, to reveal unconscious goals. Some Adlerians conflate Adler’s later reading of metaphysical teleology (sub specie aeternitatis) with his earlier constructivist fictional finalism. I am careful not to, preferring the earlier theorising without the notion of eternity.

The unconscious nature of an individual’s guiding fiction is summarised by Adler (1956):
Every individual acts and suffers in accordance with his peculiar teleology, which has all the inevitability of fate, so long as he does not understand it, that is so long as it remains unconscious. Its springs may be traced to his earliest childhood, and nearly always we find that they have been diverted into false channels by the pressure of the earliest situations in the child's life.

(p. 93)

He used the fictional final goal interchangeably with the "guiding self-ideal", a term he introduced in 1912 following his break with Freud. This concept preceded Freud's usage of "ego ideal" [1914], a forerunner to Freud's superego. The terms differ significantly. Adler's concept was structured as an original creation of the child consistent with the child's unique and stylised creative power. In contrast, Freud's ego-ideal and superego are reactive constructs, formed as a result of parental criticisms and Oedipal relations, as a "substitution for the lost narcissism of childhood" (Ansbacher and Ansbacher, as cited in Adler, 1956, p. 95). For Adler, the uniquely created fictional final goal produces directionality with regard to movement and psychic development. Since this is seen as a largely unconscious construct, posited at the centre of one's style of life, Adler's psychology should be classified as an embedded modality of depth psychology and not a "surface psychology" as Jacoby (1975) has charged.

For Adler, people are not always aware of their intentions, the 'knowing subject' is only a 'partially knowing subject'. The limits of agency circulate within the (not wholly) conscious ego. According to Adler, "the uncovering of the neurotic system of the style of life is the most important component of therapy because [it] can only be preserved when a patient successfully withdraws it from his / her own criticisms and understanding" (Adler, as cited in Datler, 1999, p. 36). This analysis is consistent with Vaihinger's understanding and formulation of the fiction, which he saw as "carried on in the darkness of the unconscious" (Vaihinger, as cited in Adler, 1956, p. 88). Dreikurs (1973) also accepts this understanding of the unconscious, claiming that "our goals are always hidden and unconscious" (p. 89). In the Adlerian reading, gender is fictional. Fictional final goals of masculinity and femininity are constructed gender ideals, 'purposeful', partly phenomenological constructions, tempered by an ever-present and circulating unconscious. The mise-en-abîme of gender (a story within a story) is constituted by fictions that one strives for on the basis of "as – if". Gender is never achievable yet always pursued. We are gendered as if there were such a thing as gender. In trans studies and queer
theory, Halberstam (1994) writes about gender as a fiction in her analysis of ‘female masculinity’, taking-up a similar theme.

Adler also synthesised the holistic philosophy of J. C. Smuts (1926) with his adoption of ideas from Vaihinger. Smuts, whose work also philosophically underpins Gestalt therapy (Gorten, 1987), likewise supports the notion of an unconscious that is conceptualised holistically. For Smuts,

The field of Mind then comes to mean that area of its functions and activities which falls below the “threshold” of consciousness, which remains unilluminated and dark, which cannot, therefore, be known by direct inspection and which, as in the cases of the other fields, can only be ascertained by its indirect effects. (p. 254)

Adler and Smuts shared Kant’s concept of the realm of ends, believing that through sensation and apperception the subjective mind moves towards various ideals and that all perception is relegated through a synthetic judgement, what Kant referred to as the synthetic unity of apperception. This unity of apperception is at the core of Adler’s conception of personality, which he referred to as the Style of Life [Life Style; Life Pattern]. Style of life is a more comprehensive term than personality, as it includes the idea of movement, the degree of community feeling [Gemeinschaftsgefühl], and a greater striving towards this ideal (social interest) than the more limited concept of personality otherwise permits.

Adlerians do not deny that conflict exists within the psyche; indeed, Adler claims that “nothing at all can take place without conflict” (Adler, 1998/1938, p. 120). However, he also argues that once the primary unconscious goal has been revealed, it will demonstrate the synthetic tendency, the attempt to lend coherence and unity to an otherwise incoherent fracturing of the psyche, the battleground of conflict. Adler disputes the psychoanalytic claim of an inherent conflict between the conscious and the unconscious, “even the so-called conscious, or the ego, is chock full of the unconscious, or, as I have called it, the ‘not understood’” (Adler, 1998/1938, p. 150). Smuts’ (1926) view of the

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46 It was common practice for Adler to take a generally accepted psychoanalytic concept and re-name it. The unconscious is a case in point. At various points in time, Adler referred to the unconscious as the “not understood”, “unawareness”, and the “non-conscious”. His habit of re-naming psychoanalytic concepts is clearly related to the animosity he developed towards Freud but also reflected his desire to re-frame these concepts within his own understanding of the psyche.
unconscious was no doubt consistent with Adler’s, as he contends that,

Even the unremembered past experience is not dead, but alive and active below the level of consciousness. In the debating chamber of the present it may not speak, but it votes, and its silent vote is often decisive...remembered or unremembered the past exerts its full force on the present experience. (p. 254)

I shall return to Smuts in the next chapter, pointing out his contributions to the idea of the holistic self as well as the problematic nature of holistic grand narratives more broadly. Holism is an important issue for many transpeople, hence analysis of the concept is warranted.

**Adler and the Contested Realm of the Ego**

There was a demographic difference between Adler’s and Freud’s patient populations that drew Adler in the direction of the ego as the point of entry in therapy. In contrast to Freud’s insistence upon an analysis protracted by, for example, the use of regression, Adler’s therapy was consistently shorter and resisted the tendency to conjure transferences, though he did not deny that the phenomenon exists. Adler saw more patients from the lower classes, whereas Freud saw more upper-class patients who could well afford a long analysis. Handlbauer (1998) points out that “the background of his patients brought Adler nearer than Freud to the effects of social misery” (p. 179). Adler was often consulted by patients who suffered from severe problems that, under the circumstances, prioritised ego strengthening. He was therefore compelled to devise a quick and effective treatment approach for such patients in order to help alleviate their symptoms. Perhaps critical theorists and therapy critics alike could cite this as an example of social control, in the sense that Adler adjusted such patients so that they could go back to their exploitative social conditions⁴⁷ (Jacoby, 1975; Kitzinger, 1987).

In order to avoid the problematics of ego conceptualisation, Hans and Rowena Ansbacher, who were responsible for most of the initial organisation and translations of Adler’s German writings

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⁴⁷ One could, however, counter that such individuals would be better able to facilitate social change with their symptoms under control: an agoraphobic individual, for instance, would probably be of little use to revolutionaries.
translated the German “Ich” [ego or I] into the English “self,” a more holistic conceptualisation that includes both conscious and unconscious dimensions. Adler’s writing was so imbued with the idea of the ‘self’ that Hoffman (1994) titled his biography of Adler *The Drive for Self*. Poststructural psychodynamic theorists such as those who came after Lacan (like Kristeva) share Lacan’s distrust of ego psychology. However, one needs to be careful in assessing Adler’s turn to the ego. In terms of clinical technique, it was a turn utilised so as to accommodate class issues. The ego as discrete consciousness is not what Adler conceptualised, rather the mise-en-abîme of the ego in Adler’s scheme reflects the *unconscious as present in the conscious*. Adler’s holistic gaze refuses the easy mechanistic demarcations evident in Freud’s metapsychology. In his view the ego is not pure consciousness, or unfettered awareness. This point resonates with Gadamer’s idea (discussed in Chapter 3) that perception is clouded by the blinding forces of tradition. The risk of choice is dependent upon the extent of consciousness and is never completely free (as existentialism often claims) of the uncertainty of fallacy or delusion. An Adlerian turn to the ego is one that retains some agency, while recognising its limits.

In Adlerian psychology, the dynamics of a conscious/unconscious interplay is expressed in the concept of *safeguarding*. Safeguarding strategies protect the individual from outside threats to the self-ideal and the unconscious fictional final goal. Safeguarding, of which repression is merely one of the many forms, seeks to protect a subject from falling into the felt abyss of inferiority, protecting one’s self-esteem from collapse. However, the distinction between the early psychoanalytic concept of defence and Adler’s safeguarding is fundamental; defence mechanisms defend against internal instinctual demands, whereas Adler’s safeguarding is in response to external stressors and the demands tied up with the problems of living. Anna Freud (1966/1936) rethought the concept of defence and, without any acknowledgement of Adler, eventually broadened the concept to include external demands. In *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* she concedes that defence “may also apply to dangers which have their source in the outside world” (as cited in Adler, 1956, p. 265). This is especially pertinent considering the discussion of defense (e.g. denial of one’s/others’ trans status) in the previous chapter.

Oberst and Stewart (2003) note that Adler’s school of depth psychology began by stressing Vaihinger’s constructivist insights, which support Adler’s relevance to both cognitive
psychology and what is now referred to as poststructuralism. Adler’s late period (from 1925 onwards) marked a more pronounced humanism and existentialism, a “step backwards” from the direction of postmodernity (ibid., p. 163). Moreover, Oberst and Stewart argue that Adler turned towards “romantic humanism” (such as the ideal of community) as a response to the escalating crises that led to the rise of fascism and the second world war. This period witnessed Adler emerging as a more messianic figure who wanted his Individual Psychology to rescue mankind. Though I am loathe to distance myself from Adler’s idealistic humanism, I do recognise the problems within the humanist discourse (Weedon, 1987).

Both Gergen (1991), Oberst and Stewart (2003) argue that constructivism is a key epistemological ‘framework’ that supports postmodernism. Oberst and Stewart (2003) contend that:

Adler’s view of the human being and human conditions, his refusal of determinism and of physicalist viewpoints in psychology, his agreement with Vaihinger’s ideas, make Individual Psychology a first project of constructivism in psychology. (p. 163)

I would add that Adler’s view of the unconscious as present in the conscious, and his roots in aspects of Nietzsche’s philosophy (Lehrer, 1999), further support Oberst and Stewart’s claim. The relevance of constructivism to trans studies has been central to debates raised by Butler (1990, 1993) and Hird (2000) as well as those trans theorists who are sceptical towards the discourses of postmodernity in relation to transsexuals (Namaste, 2005), and critics of trans-ness more broadly (Jeffreys, 2003). Moreover, I would be remiss if I did not state the fact that many (if not most Adlerians) do not consider themselves postmodernists, preferring to retain Adler’s later emphasis on existentialism and humanism.

Masculine Protest

In retrospect, Freud and Adler’s dispute was at root a conflict between conceptions of sex and gender and the relationship between them. Freud subsumed gendered material (produced by social conditions) under the grand category of ‘sex’, yet his privileging of the instincts gives priority to a biologicist discourse (Freud, 1933; Frosh, 1994). Adler, in contrast, argues for
concepts evolving in the direction of creative utilisation of socially constructed fictions and compensations based on the subjective inferiority/superiority dynamic. Freud confused the issue by accusing Adler of arguing for biology rather than psychology, whereas the reverse has proved to be the case. In a presentation to the Wednesday Society in 1909, Adler began to speak of a subjective “feeling of inferiority”, in contrast to his earlier biologistic references to “organ inferiority”, for which compensation for weak constitutional elements was seen as the key to understanding neurosis. Adler’s turn to subjective feelings and interpretations of embodiment amounted to a paradigm shift in his thinking, away from biology and towards a limited ‘phenomenology’ (Handlbauer, 1998). Adler’s view of phenomenology differs from Edmond Hüsserl’s discourse, since the latter focuses on ‘pure’ descriptions of consciousness through mind/body dualism (Bowie, 2003). In contrast, Adler’s ‘phenomenological’ discourse maintains that the body is still present, including its gendered/sexed aspects, and there can be no ‘pure’ consciousness since the unconscious is present in the conscious (Shelley, 2006).

In cementing his paradigm shift away from Freud, by moving towards a limited phenomenology, Adler again addressed the Wednesday Society and proposed that the notion of ‘psychic hermaphroditism’, predicated on an interior interpretation, a gendered sense of felt inferiority, was at the root of neurosis. This new conceptualisation, entailing gendered value judgements based upon subjective appraisals of ‘strength’ and ‘weakness’, hypothesised that individuals possess both masculine and feminine traits, based on their association with aggressive and passive feelings. Adler purposely invoked ‘hermaphroditism’, avoiding the term ‘bisexuality’, drawing a new theoretical direction away from the core ‘drive’ tenets of psychoanalysis. Freud’s ‘bisexuality’ was, as far as Adler was concerned, mired in an inescapable instinctual paradigm.

Adler’s concluding remarks foreshadowed his later move to the construction of the fiction: “the child’s infantile understanding compels him to look upon everything inferior as unmanly and to conceive of it as feminine” (p. 428). His presentation, however, left the Society somewhat confused and indeed his initial outlining of the thesis of “psychic hermaphroditism” was rather bewildering. Adler attempted to clarify matters at a Scientific Meeting of the Society (1 February 1911), when he presented his paper “The Masculine Protest as the Central Problem of Neurosis”. In this presentation he argued that one of the driving features of Western civilisation is its
devaluation of women, which he described as “the carcinoma of our culture” (as cited in Oberst and Stewart, 2003, p. 10). The outcome, in psychic terms, is that women are provoked to express a “masculine protest”, that is a protest against masculinity, that can be deciphered from both ‘normal’ and ‘neurotic’ ‘female’ symptomatology. In men, a counterpart is exhibited to this protest, such as the unconscious fear of losing social and personal power (virility).

Adler argued that an unconscious fear of woman’s ‘superiority’ can be found in the dreams of neurotic men. He cites castration anxiety, birth fantasies, and the unconscious wish to be a girl as evidence of the impossibility of achieving the masculine ideal, as well as pervasive compensations revealed in the desire to be on top. He proposed that a boy’s [Oedipal] desire to have intercourse with his mother was not based on gratification of sexual drives. Rather it is a safeguarding fantasy, a desire to elevate himself above the mother, to “debase” her. This idea of masculine superiority, as a defence mechanism to ward off feelings of inferiority, implies that historically constructed power dynamics, including the power of parental authority, are deeper than biological sexuality. Adler contends that these power dynamics profoundly affect human psychology.

Following Adler’s presentation, most in attendance expressed criticism and disapproval. Freud was particularly annoyed with Adler’s use of new terminology. For example the Minutes record Freud’s objection that these ideas constitute nothing new: “Even our old friend bisexuality he calls ‘psychic hermaphroditism’, as if it were something else” (p. 145). Commenting on Adler’s recent publications, Freud concluded: “Adler’s writings are not a continuation upward, nor are they a foundation underneath; they are something else entirely. This is not Psychoanalysis” (p. 146). Adler’s proposals were dismissed as a denial of the unconscious, a traitorous compromise of the sexual libido that Freud uncompromisingly exalted. In a later reflection on Adler’s “heresy”, Freud wrote to Jung in 1911: “I now feel that I must avenge the offended goddess Libido and I mean to be more careful from now on… I would never have expected a psychoanalyst to be so taken in by the ego” (as cited in Fiebert, 1997, p. 253).

Some of the criticisms levied against Adler’s concept of the “masculine protest” were warranted. The notion itself, though correctly identified as a feature of many neuroses, failed to foreground
the importance of power that underlies any such protest and tended to reduce the analysis to stereotypical sex role traits. Moreover, the masculine protest was conceptualised on the basis of the child’s (m/f) immature value judgements, whereby all so-called masculine attributes were elevated as more powerful than feminine attributes. The child’s perception of women, whom Adler saw as generally embodying constructions of femininity, conceptually demanded that they be seen as masculine whenever power and authority were exercised, as in punishment. Indeed, Kleinians have demonstrated that the feminine mother is frequently experienced as a power to be reckoned with, hence the infamous splitting into the good and bad breast. Another pervasive problem in Adler’s theorising is that he tended to frame masculinity and femininity as synonymous with one’s embodied and normatively expected sex. Adler proposed a fiction of gender and yet usually failed to apply this insight, frequently resorting to stereotypical moral judgements that privilege a sexed and gendered normativity. Picking-up on Adler’s mistake, Jacoby (1975) comments: “Psychoanalysis pulls the shrouds off the ideology of values, norms, and ethics which is the stuff of Adler and the post-Freudians” (p. 33). For example, Adler’s (1978) gaze pathologised a child’s revolt against expected sex concordant gender roles. In doing so he stunningly ignored his own caution: “this apperception according to the masculine – feminine pattern, however, … introduces a sexual jargon into the neuroses that should be regarded symbolically” [Italics mine] (Adler, 2002/1927, p. 16). For transsexuals, the implication is that they cannot be allowed to belong to the other sex, for transgenderists they cannot engage in fluidity or in-between-ness, and for both groups clinical adjustment to comply with normativity must be prescribed.

The Ansbachers (as cited in Adler, 1956) trace the theoretical development of the masculine protest. It was originally formulated as a universal concept to rival Freud’s libido theory, however he largely abandoned it following his split from the Freudians. When he did invoke the term it was to describe a specific clinical dynamic found to underlie symptoms of sexual neuroses, an example being the unconscious wish to become a man deciphered from the dreams and fantasies of female patients, as rousing a “masculine protest” against patriarchy. He found evidence of this in various psychosexual disturbances like ‘vaginismus’, ‘sexual anaesthesia’, and in certain ‘character disorders’ (now referred to as personality disorders, see APA, 2000). In this regard, Adler can be credited with explicating the significance of gendered material in the
aetiology of neurosis and developmental personality pathology. These observations were verified in a contemporary [non-Adlerian] analysis of gender and psychopathology. Busfield (1996) argues that “the linkages between gender and type of mental disorder are some of the most consistent findings of psychiatric epidemiology” (p. 15).

In discarding the universal masculine protest as the central driving force in all neuroses, Adler adopted a new universal and dynamic factor in neurosis: superiority striving as a compensatory mechanism for feelings of inferiority. This shift gave rise to Adler’s most famous concepts, the inferiority and superiority complexes. In formulating these principles, Adler was influenced by Nietzsche’s concept of the “will to power”, especially in arguing for superiority striving (Lehrer, 1999). Adler (1956) explains it thus:

We all wish to overcome difficulties. We all strive to reach a goal by the attainment of which we shall feel strong, superior, and complete.... this great line of activity - this struggle to rise from an inferior to a superior position, from defeat to victory, from below to above. It begins in earliest childhood and continues to the end of our lives.  (p. 104)

Adler insisted that this striving to overcome is synonymous with a universal striving for fictive and ‘teleological’ perfection, for example in the desire for a perfect body. This perfectionistic striving may be revealed in the unconscious ‘basic mistakes’ within the style of life. For example, in masculinity fictions, one might come upon the idea of mastery, with associated themes such as absolute triumph, rule, and domination. Although such imperial goals are associated with men and masculinity, he did not want to read the replacement concepts of inferiority and superiority in gendered terms. Rather, he introduced a grand principle evoked to ‘rescue’ humankind, which erased gender/sex difference. The grand principle of Gemeinschaftsgefühl [community feeling] became the new linch-pin of his psychology.

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48 One need only peruse the diagnostic criteria for personality disorders (e.g. the ‘antisocial’ or ‘paranoid’ personality disorders in men or the ‘histrionic’ and ‘dependent’ personality disorders in women) to see that the criteria are heavily gendered. Psychiatric epidemiology cites sex ratio prevalence rates that consistently predominate in one group or the other (APA, 2000). Luce Irigaray (2002) exploits this division in her account of the discourse of psychiatric patients, Parler n’est jamais neutre (to speak is never neutral/neutered).
Community Feeling: The Problem of Be/longing

Ansbacher (1999) has drawn attention to the significance of community feeling in Adlerian psychology. The term loosely connotes a *feeling* of belonging under the guiding fiction of a perfect community. If such an ideal were realised, all would ostensibly feel spiritually at one with/in the universe. When realised, community feeling entails a highly developed empathy towards other people, plants, and animals and a holistic “oneness” with the cosmos. Community feeling is said to reflect a spiritual and metaphysical development in Adler’s psychology, a partial turning away from Marx, retaining Marx’s social idealism but rejecting his economics. Ansbacher (1999) translated the German *Gemeinschaftsgefühl* into the English “social interest”, avoiding the romanticism of the German conception by adopting a term better adapted to pragmatic and operational use.

Adler, however, maintained that there is “no reason to be afraid of metaphysics; it had a very great influence on human life and development. We are not blessed with absolute truth and therefore are forced to have thoughts about our future, about the results of our actions, etc.” (p. 35). However, the problem with the theory as it developed is that it ignores the prevalence of fracture and assumes that all human subjects strive for a utopia of the whole (common/unity). Yet there are those who live with and accept a sense of fracture, who do not concur with the necessity of ‘oneness’, who fear being subsumed under a ‘community’ that makes difference disappear. Such a utopianism does not reflect the interests of those who do not seek mending or merging but the right to non-conform freely.

*Social interest* was subsequently developed by Adlerians in Anglo-American contexts as the pragmatic application of the striving towards an ideal community (such as emphasising the social psychological conception of co-operation). Social interest is constituted through the ability to act co-operatively for the good of the community in a way that potentially transcends self-boundedness [*Ichgebundenheit*]. It entails facing the “three great task complexes of life” (work, friendship, and love and intimacy) with courage and responsibility (Adler, 1956), and is activated when one strives for the good of oneself within the context of creating a better community. This attitude, when developed, is perceived as a *sign* of mental health. The definition of mental health
conflated with community feeling is a crucial issue in Adlerian theorising. Unfortunately, community feeling may also, I contend, point to a fiction of superiority that repudiates the subjectivity of others and forces them to conform. This is most strongly evidenced in Adler’s writings on gender conformity, homosexuality, and criminality. In all three cases, he abandons a constructivist position and slips into reactionary moral judgements that are aligned with an ahistorical liberalism. Those who do not conform are condemned as “moral failures” rather than symptomatic (in whole or in part) of historic injustice (social exclusion, anomie, imperialism/colonialism, those who cannot integrate the Law of the Father, and so on).

In the interviews, I repeatedly heard a subtext to reports and disclosures of transphobia/repudiation: perpetrators convey that transpeople do not belong either in their sex/gender presentation or in the communities in which they live. Gay men and lesbians who harass transpeople, or feminists who expel transwomen from women-only spaces, signal their convictions that transpeople do not belong. Employers and co-workers who refuse to accept a transperson’s decision to transition or threaten and harass them on the job transmit a message that they are unwelcome, that they do not belong. Children who harass and bully trans youth (or other gender outlaws) in schools convey an attitude that they do not belong, an attitude that I believe contributes to common experiences of alienation and their ostracisation. Hence, the issue of belonging, which Adlerians highlight in their theory of mental health, is paramount to transpeople. To what extent do transpeople belong, or want to belong? I shall return to this issue of belonging as it is one that is not confined to transpeople but relates to postmodern conditions more broadly, as we shall see.

A Repudiating Gaze: Homosexuality and Gender Identity Disorders

What little exists in Adlerian writings on transpeople points to the dangers of a totalising ‘community feeling’ and associated sense of ‘belonging’ as the ‘measure’ of mental health. Adlerians have failed to ask, “whose community?” (Shelley, 1998). Who decides the criteria for membership? Moreover, are those who are forced or choose not to ‘belong’ at fault? This problem is extremely relevant to the traditional pathologisation of homosexuality and other sexual “perversions” or “deviancies”. Some Adlerians have written about gender incongruency
as a problem that is rooted in a deeper, pathological homosexuality. Dorothy Pevin (1996), for example, reiterates Adler’s position:

... throughout history, whenever an increase has occurred in the emancipation of women (as in Greek culture), an increase also has occurred in homosexual trends. Adler believed that men, in an escape from feelings of insecurity, attempt to put distance between themselves and women; they take flight from females into exclusively male society.

(p. 406)

Overall, Pevin’s analysis is an ahistorical one. She fails to consider the construction of homosexuality as a medicalised deviance traced to sexological writings of the late nineteenth century. She also fails to account for the colonial imposition of Western morality that pathologised same-sex relations within Indigenous communities. Moreover, the theory, which claims that a rise in male homosexuality is a pathological outcome of women’s liberation in the West, elides lesbianism and bisexuality but does infer these practices as likewise perverse.

Pevin does not see “gender identity disorders” as differing substantially from homosexuality; both are presented as psychopathological syndromes. In arguing her point, she ignores the fact that transpeople themselves hold a range of differing sexual orientations. The conflated thesis that gay men (and perhaps lesbians) are in ‘flight’ from the opposite sex, that they lack courage, is a prejudice that rationalises the still pervasive binaries and associated moral beliefs on the sole rightness of heterosexuality, a heterosexuality constituted as the rational foundation of the ‘natural family’. This view is based on Adler’s prevailing and contingent tradition, not his core theory of gender/sex as constructed fictions. It is also a view that erases Adler’s early familiarity with Marxist texts such as Friedrich Engels (1972/1845) The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State which argue that the structure of the family as a social unit is not natural, but historically determined.

Adler’s speculations on sex, gender, sexuality, and criminality were often grossly distorted by the rigid conformity of his time. In seeking to spread Individual Psychology amongst the masses, Adler (1993/1930, 1978) tapped into populist sentiments encouraging lay understandings of his psychology, and many of his more than 300 books and articles were intended for lay readers. He moralised freely on the “cowardice” of criminality, accepting that homosexual behaviour was a
criminal offence, and failed to make arguments for the social construction of criminality that would have resonated with his prior constructivism. This is the price he paid for relinquishing too much to the ego, at times in the name of class pragmatism, at other times to capture popular attention, a slippage from *sensus communis* into a problematic ‘common-sense’.

The danger of an unthought ‘community feeling’ lies precisely in the repudiation of individual subjectivity and subjugation of those who challenge heteronormativity or other hegemonies. Under Adler’s gaze, the repudiation of homosexuality, and by extension of transpeople, is part of a ‘perfect community’, which everyone is supposed to belong to after they have been ‘cured’. Without a consensual view of community, there is no community, there is no ‘belonging’.

Hence, psychopathology creates the idea of psychiatric/psychological rescue as a disguise for law enforcement and coercion. In a letter to Albert Einstein on the question, *Why War?*, Freud commented that “the only real difference lies in the fact that what prevails is no longer the violence of an individual, but that of community” (p. 275).

Sneja Gunew (Gunew and Leung, in-press) draws on postcolonial theory to problematise the idea of belonging in general. The diaspora of peoples around the world destabilises the idea of belonging as an attachment to place or a community where all share the same values and lifestyle. While Adler’s idealistic belonging strikes me as a worthy goal in some ways, the historical, political and contextual dynamics that produce the yearning of be/longing problematically disappear under his analysis. Under postmodern, globalised conditions, deep religious conflicts based on fundamentalisms that provide ‘belonging’ have further fractured communities and produced an increase in conflict. In painting a totalised, metaphysical view of community, Adler failed to foresee the pitfalls of masking difference, and reinforced the clinical gaze that diagnoses non-belonging as something to be cured. In this sense, I favour a re-working of Adlerian therapeutic practice similar to Gergen and Kaye’s (1992) narrative therapy, deploying a hermeneutic approach that questions the positions of both therapist and client. This approach privileges dialogue and the negotiation of meaning to produce glimmers of truth (as

49 My critical comments on belonging, posed as an Adlerian, are not intended to detract from the significance of a feeling of belonging, which in many cases, relates to states of mental health.

50 Published posthumously in 1957.
discussed in Chapter 3), to work towards understanding and a ‘healing’ that does not entail suppression or denial of difference.

Holism is one of the principle epistemological tenets supporting Adler’s notion of community feeling. The next and final chapter will take a more careful look at the positive and negative implications of holism. Before entering that debate, it is relevant to note some limited and perhaps previously unthought parallels between Adler’s ideas and those of Kristeva, a feminist post-Lacanian psychoanalyst usually perceived as having little in common with those associated with ego psychology.

**Adler and Poststructuralism: Disputations of the Self and the Ego**

Fuss (1989) credits Lacan for providing constructionism with some of its leading insights. In going beyond Lacan, others have introduced new ideas about subjectivity. As I have argued in this chapter, Adler was the first to provide a constructivist account in depth psychology, the first to move into the subject without recourse to a determinist - instinctual paradigm, and the first to take a constructivist approach (though hybridised through ‘holism’) to mind / body dualism. Unquestionably, there are significant differences between Adler’s psychology and poststructuralist discourses, since Adler died at the height of modernity, but to my mind some of his ideas moved in the same direction. Poststructural feminist theorists such as Fuss (ibid.), in her deconstructive discourse on essentialism, might even concur with limited aspects of Adler’s later turn to metaphysics, since she concedes that “we can never get beyond metaphysics” (p. 13). Fuss argues that the concept of constructivism itself develops out of a polarity with essentialism yet is actually reliant upon metaphysics in order to sustain its claims.

In focussing on Adler’s early constructivist period, a number of parallels emerge between his insights and later poststructuralist arguments. Here I will draw attention to Adler’s (1956) concept of movement, as parallel to Kristeva’s introduction of the subject in process/on trial [le sujet en procès]. I will also offer an Adlerian interpretation of Kristeva’s concept of abjection, a significant element for further understanding trans subjectivity and repudiation. Both Adler and Kristeva resist a Cartesian dualism that posits a knowing subject separate from an unknowing
body. Kristeva rejects the Western idea of an innate self, arguing that the birth of the human subject constitutes a “violent separation” from the mother (Oliver, 1993). Human subjects begin by means of splitting, and the first split is from the maternal body. Later splits occur (such as the “thetic split”, Kristeva’s elaboration of Lacan’s mirror phase), when subjects enter the process of identification. The overall emphasis for Kristeva, as for Lacan, is on the subject as a split subject. Although a trained psychoanalyst, Kristeva’s intellectual roots are in linguistics and semiotic theory. Adler, in contrast, came to depth psychology through medicine, which he saw as both a healing art and science.

In disrupting the Cartesian dualism of mind and body, Kristeva turns to the maternal relationship as a means to explain and illustrate the subject in process. In French, this expression carries a double meaning: in process (movement, unfinished) and “under legal duress” or on trial (McAfee, 2004, p. 30). The legislative aspect orders a relational dynamic between subject and other, and subjects are observed, coerced under ‘the Law’: Lacan’s symbolic order, represented by the “nom/non” (name/no) of the Father. The mother, in contrast, is associated with the Imaginary order and what Kristeva calls the “semiotic”, an on-going mode of less rational communication that co-exists with the symbolic order of language and law. Oliver (1993) contends that the maternal body cannot, however, demarcate a clear distinction between subject and object. The process as trial points to the contextual and juridical elements that inscribe the rational, liberal self and its supposed unification, but for Kristeva (1997) this is never complete. Otherness not only surrounds us but is within us, we are strangers/aliens to and within our selves (“Étrangers à nous-mêmes”). Not belonging is an essential characteristic of the postmodern condition and the globalised world, and something that could be embraced rather than ‘cured’.

Perhaps an earlier recognition of stranger(s) within, others in me, and the fundamental early splitting of the subject, may very well have been the motivation for the rise of the Adlerian fictive final goal and other unconscious fictions. Mythologies, such as belief in the rational, autonomous self, undoubtedly press for the adoption of a homogeneous self and identity. Kristeva challenges the possibility and desirability of anything approximating such a thing and uses feminist analyses (e.g. herethics) to undermine this ethical and juridical mythology, pointing out its negative effects on all who are othered by it.
Transpeople are subjects “on trial” and subjects “in process”. In TG subjectivities, with their emphasis on fluidity, crossing and the impermanence of identity, the act of transiting (/m/f/) entails unstable identities and a refusal to belong in one category. Passing, in the case of TS ontology, is a test which some TS people (will) fail. This verdict is one that repudiates TS claims of belonging in one category. TG people, who may appear differently each time the jury convenes, also risk a derisive verdict of “guilty by reason of insanity”. Both TS and TG people are deemed to be disturbed because they are too disturbing in a context that denies strangers/otherness in the self a place. Transpeople are potentially threatening to cherished fictions of sex/gender and the fiction of the binary. Many people evidently are intolerant of the threats that transpeople pose to such deeply revered fictions and act (pass sentence/penalise) accordingly. All subjects follow fictions, which are meaningful to them, and subject to defense.

Like Kristeva, Adler (1956) also contends that the subject is not a static, standard character: “paltry typologies tell us nothing about the individual” (p. 196). In his conception unconscious dynamics are at play, governed by “a law of movement... without his understanding it or giving himself an account of it” (p. 195). Movement holds a pre- eminent position in Adler’s psychology: “the strongest step which Individual Psychology has taken... we have always maintained that all is movement” (ibid., p. 195). This movement is not the rational unfolding of an intrinsic self since “the individual is hardly ever able to state clearly where his way leads... and he often states the contrary” (ibid., p. 195). On the level of interiority, Adler posits paradox as a common dynamic in subjectivity. Yet unlike Kristeva, Adler’s “movement” is not necessarily aimless, but pursues the fictive goal of overcoming the inferiority and indeterminacy of actual early fracture. The subject can ‘heal’, but often strives to in mistaken ways. When mistaken or neurotic movement is apparent, this state of affairs can be altered. Adler (1998/1938) clearly states that “everything can be something else as well” (p. 18). The fictive final goal may be experienced as a peculiar sense of fate, it may be transformed, or indeed overthrown, as in Kristeva’s notion of psychotherapy as (potentially) revolutionary for the subject.

In Chapter 4, I outlined the importance of Kristeva’s concept of abjection to understanding trans repudiation, especially of a transphobic nature. Like the infant who vomits the mother’s breast
milk, expelling it as foreign to the tenuous self, repudiation of trans subjectivity likewise is a negation of the other, a refusal to accept, a projection of abjection. Abjection takes on the image of the retching of a body that wishes to expel what is harmful, what is dirty, sour, bacterial, a threat to the self, Other. As Kristeva (1982) writes, “It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules” (p. 4). If one considers this alongside Adler’s fictive final goal of overcoming defects and producing a utopian homogeneous/harmonious community, one might consider that trans repudiation is an (un)conscious attempt to protect this goal, to expel those who threaten the imago of a perfect community.

The abject hounds the subject and can never be fully expunged. Radical practices such as surgical sex reassignment aid transsexual subjects to live their lives in a body that is habitable. However, many transsexuals as “subjects on trial” fail to pass, and are rejected, thrown out, by others who consider them abject: they are hounded. In my interviews with transpeople, many transsexuals revealed traumatic events in their struggle to ‘heal’ the mis-sexed body. Otherness in the self and abjection by others complicate the striving for fictional goals (such as completion, harmony, re-birth). I maintain, however, that striving for fictions of a ‘whole self’ and for ‘healing’ is essential for those transsexuals traumatised by/as the abject. Both the self, based on a discourse that posits integration (which Adler favours), and the (permanently) fragmented subject (which Kristeva favours), pose a host of dissonant problems and hence require further analysis, the focus of the next concluding chapter.
CHAPTER 9:

CONCLUSION:
THE GENDERED AND TRANS/GENDERED SELF

A hermeneutic approach to narrative research demands that interviewers listen deeply to interviewees. Having reflected on the interviews as a whole, what I generally heard was the desire of transpeople to be recognised as subjects/selves in their own right, coupled with frequent rejection/repudiation of their sexed/gendered selves. It seems that this issue links all the aspects raised in the study. The subject – self debate is a very old philosophical problem and one that relates to Romantic, modernist, postmodernist and poststructural discourses. In concluding this conversation, I shall concentrate on this debate and emphasise its pertinence to transpeople’s lives by linking the interior/exterior dimensions of the struggle for trans selfhood.

The Gendered Subject

The main argument advanced in this chapter concerns the tension between transsexual strivings for self-integrity and the fragmentation of the subject. Lacan’s idea of the fragmented body (le corps morcelé) [the “body in pieces”] (Macey, 2000, p. 136) captures this sense of the subject’s body, its incompleteness or incoherence. An (un)conscious sense of fragmentation may motivate the self to strive towards an integrity, synthesis, or ‘holism’ that cannot be attained and yet, for many, constitutes a very meaningful journey, the quest to be whole. As already discussed in previous chapters, the premise of a holistically striving self is crucial to schools of depth psychology such as Jung’s and Adler’s. Jan C. Smuts (1926), Prime Minister of South Africa in the pre-apartheid years, coined the term “holism” and made the self a fundamental constituent of the phenomenon. In so doing he declared that “our very foundation and constitution, self of our very selves, it is yet the great mystery, the most elusive phantom in the whole range of knowledge” (p. 263). A constructivist synthesis of holism, such as Adler’s, transforms Smuts’
holistic self from an essentialist concept to something else, perhaps still in keeping with Smuts’ curious and contradictory positing of the self as phantom, the self as selves that cannot be pinned down.

The tenuous and elusive nature of the self has long been a focus of debate: Who gets to be a self, and what is the self subject to? Anti-foundationalist, poststructuralist theory, some of which draws on Foucault’s thought, decries the idea of a holistic self for some very good reasons. Foucault (1984) held a discursive interest in the topic of the self, a subject he viewed as more interesting than sex: “I must confess that I am much more interested in problems about techniques of the self and things like that than sex ... sex is boring” (p. 340). Within the concept of the self, he found an effect of power, the self as subject (Latin: subjectum, that which is thrown under, derived from sub and iaceo). For Foucault, the ‘essence’ of self is a matter of the historical and political subjugation of subjects. For transpeople, this issue is pertinent, since their selves are frequently subjugated, as I declared in the opening statement of this study (Chapter 1). The matter of subjugation (exteriority) is important, however, so too is the subjective sense of selfhood (interiority). Transsexuals commonly cite the desire for a coherent and stable self as a basis for the necessity of healing the mis-sexed body. In contrast, transgenderists may privilege an indeterminate crossing, fluidity and flux in ways that defy a fixed ‘teleological’ self. Yet I have uncovered no evidence that such multiplicity negates the importance of the self(selves) for TG people either. The gendered subject may never reach a final sense of being a man/woman, yet narratives of the self often include the avowed pursuit of such ideals. Hence, I contend that the problem of ‘the self’ surfaces itself as a fractured issue in trans studies. Prior to looking at the fiction of the holistic self and its usefulness in terms of trans integrity, in healing the mis-sexed body, it is nevertheless worthwhile to raise some of the concerns that poststructuralists have made in regard to the ‘self’, to consider why they usually reject the concept.

Postmodern and poststructuralist theorists tend to dispute the Western concept of the autonomous and coherent self as an historical creation, a “technology of the self” in the Foucauldian sense that exists to answer to the power of ruling institutions (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982). Foucault argues that such a self arose in the thirteenth century by order of the Catholic Church. The requirement of confession served as a tool of institutional surveillance, calling individuals to
account for their inner sinfulness, to be their own reflexive judge and disclose their sins to the authorities. In contemporary society, the confession continues to operate through the Law, psychiatry, psychology and psychotherapy. As Danziger (1997) remarks, however, "once the self is conceptualised as an entity that observes, evaluates, and controls itself, it is, in principle, a divided entity, unlike the soul, whose indivisibility was of the essence" (p. 147). Soul, mind and body, observer and observed, the self-conscious subject was actually already divided.

Feminist theorists such as Lather (1991) remind us that the Western self is marked by Cartesian dualism, an ontological split between subject and object, mind and body. This split solidified the observing, thinking self as masculinist, to the degree that women were denied selfhood, relegated to the status of body/Other (de Beauvoir, 1952/1989). The only selfhood available to women was based on being socialised into a subordinate and self-denying role constructed under patriarchal control. For these and other reasons, some feminists such as Finke (1997) prefer the Lacanian understanding of the 'subject', arguing that it "more fully captures the sense of subjection, of the self's fashioning by its insertion into an already articulated symbolic economy" (p. 125). Such a self is not "pre-existent" but results from the discursive and semiotic practices of patriarchy within and against which the gendered self fashions its 'identity' " (ibid., p. 124). Others, such as liberal feminists, seek equality for women within the prevailing status quo, demanding for women equal access to a self within the institutions that were (until recently) the exclusive province of men: the forum, the academy, and the marketplace. Liberalism permits women to celebrate a self that is conflated as both instrumental (exploited) and free in the existential sense (Brown, 2003).

Postmodern and poststructural discourses tend to see the self as something other than an identity that one can possess, reify and subsequently measure. Even as the speaking subject of language, the self is spoken by language, and is therefore its effect. In contrast, liberal humanism, in the guise of liberal feminism, seeks an equal female self to the 'pre-existent' male self, a self that can be weighed against his, and its valuation and representation in terms of asymmetry reformed towards an ideal of institutionalised equality. Materialist, liberal and humanist discourses acknowledge that the self exists as both a discrete and tangible thing yet is often oppressed, politically subject to the ruling relations derived from political categories of subjugation.
(patriarchy, imperialism, colonialism, capitalism). Fromm (1998), for example, speaks of a self that is drawn into the *having mode*, a commodified existence that is reified and ultimately “necrophiliac” in its love of deadness, of non-living things. He contends that a free self is relieved of the hoarding instinct so as to authentically celebrate joy, as expressed in the *being mode*. Thus, the related task of humanistic psychotherapy (e.g. Rogerian) is to lift the false veils of inauthenticity, to reveal a real self, to encounter the genuine creative force of an actualised and realised self. Overall, these concepts of the self as subject/sovereign may appear to be incompatible, yet they frequently co-exist, often through ideas of a false/outer and true/inner self. The debate so far centres around the extent to which selves hold an essence (humanism) or if this ‘essence’ is merely an effect of language, concealing something (or nothing) else. The preference for the term ‘subject’ in poststructuralism does not, however, side step the problem of essence, predicated on some underlying foundation. Zimmerman (1981) finds that subject at root means substance:

> To be a substance supposedly means to stand under, support, or unify a group of qualities. The self is often interpreted as the substantial core which gives identity to the manifold experiences of a human life. This view of self as substance can also be extracted from neo-Platonism, which holds that the self is the eternal soul placed in the body at birth. The “self” is thus the unchanging inner reality of a person. (p. 24)

This etymological reading suggests something in parallel with Fuss’s (1989) contention that constructivism (which she favours) is not easily dislodged from an acrimonious polarity with essentialism. Similarly, ‘subject’ and ‘subjectivity’ are not the polar opposite of the contested essentialist (inner substance) of the self, as poststructuralist analyses of self often implicitly suggest (Weedon, 1987). Rather than viewing subject/self as polarity (one right/ the other wrong), a more nuanced change in these concepts has taken place. For example, the shifts from conceptions of a singular and fixed self towards a plural self “in process”, a conception of subjectivity as multiple, as expressed in intersected identities: “I am a woman and a mother/daughter/professional/heterosexual” and so on. To what extent do these signifier/signified categories hold over the course of one’s life? Are their meanings consensual or do they shift? Are they absolute or do they contain the possibility of disruption and transgression? Fuss (1989) argues that identity, rather than self, is the principle concern under postmodernism. Identity is not configured as singular, nor whole, rather “identity is frequently
theorised as an atomic identity, fractured and disseminated into a field of dispersed energy” (p. 103). Identity can also imply sameness/oneness in its subjective construction, yet is this a real and self-evident sense of the one/whole or an imposition of coherency? In this sense, Fuss’s ideas concur with the earlier suggestions of Vaihinger (1965/1911) and Adler (1956), as all three theorists view identity itself as important, yet fictional. Fuss, however, is more inclined to view identity as unstable. While I recognise the reality of incongruency in transsexuals, it seems to me that all subjects, trans and non-trans, grapple with fictions which carry tremendous significance and meaning.

The Gendered Self

Historically, “the self” has long been a contestable concept in psychology and transsexuals have, perhaps unknowingly, inherited many of the unresolved issues within these debates. In the early twentieth-century, behaviourism rejected the concept of the self in favour of objective behaviour. In the mid twentieth century, the self re-emerged as a positivist construct that could be measured in terms of role and problems in identity that create objective behavioural/symptomatic features (Brinich and Shelley, 2002). Gender identity emerged as key to a fixed and ostensibly stable identity at the core of the self which might require adjustment to prevent or cure pathological symptoms (homosexual behaviour, cross-dressing, or transsexual longings to belong to the opposite sex). The assumption of a healthy self-schemata contains an unproblematic belief that one is a man or a woman and when this is deemed awry, psychology/psychiatry attempts to fix it. Hence, Busfield (1996) refers to one of psychology/psychiatry’s central tasks, that of “gender regulation” (p. 101). Since gender identity is supposedly one of the core elements in navigating a fixed and committed developmental task, failure to adhere to one’s birth status, or to follow the regulated and coercive lines of a binary-driven social ethos, brings ‘deviants’ to the attention of the authorities. As previously discussed, transgressing gender normativity has historically elicited the psychiatric gaze with attempts to impose treatment and the outcome of cure: conformity/normalcy. The gendered self, in the case of transsexualism, was/is seen as mostly aberrant. Transsexuals, however, argued strenuously for their right to express their “true gendered selves”, as confirmed by the interviews for this study.
In their sensitive and informative text that explains transsexualism to friends, families and co-workers of TS people, Brown and Rounsley (2003) inadvertently draw attention to the “self”, as a central philosophical problem in trans studies. The authors of this work do not critique the self, rather they foreground it as crucial to TS subjects, as evidenced in the title of their book: True Selves. The idea of capital T ‘true selves’ poses numerous theoretical problems, in light of the discussion above. Nevertheless, in covering debates surrounding the self and the subject, I do not wish to trifle with the integrity of TS embodied claims. I acknowledge that many transsexuals believe SRS allows their “true gendered self” to emerge, while shedding a false gendered self that was imposed upon them. Indeed, one of the central issues to emerge from my interviews with transsexuals entails a concept of self that differs from both the unproblematic liberal humanist ‘knowing subject’ and the permanently fractured poststructuralist subject. The phantom of the ideal self makes a tenuous appearance, as a ‘whole’ to be realized or conjured, to be brought into physical presence. As discussed earlier, for many TS people it is a case of recognizing what is perceived as true, core identity (m/f) and making the body conform to it; whereas for some TGs, it is a struggle to escape from the rigid m/f binary and be recognized as something else. Perhaps for TGs it is a question of having multiple selves (or for Two-Spirit people, two spirits), or subject fragments within one body - yet not as in the clinical pattern of dissociative identity disorder, since the “I” remains intact. For example, in working with a psychotherapy client who is TG, I have asked them to come to session on occasion in “hir” alter identity (not as “Giles” but cross-dressed as “Gillian”) in order to assist the client in integrating conflicts between the two sides. Speaking separately to each subject revealed differing tastes and sexual orientations, and conflicts within the same person which produced dissonance and emotional distress, their primary motivation for coming to therapy.

Prosser (1998) draws on the idea that “narrative composes self” (p. 120) to critique what he perceives to be the poststructuralist view of the self as only a priori or transcendental. He demonstrates a plurality of meanings of ‘self’ and uses the idea of body-self integrity to question some aspects of postmodern queer theory, asserting that “the transsexual does not approach the body as an immaterial provisional surround but, on the contrary, as the very ‘seat’ of the self” (p.

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51 By emphasising language, poststructuralists usually agree that the “self” is a narrative. This is a point that Prosser overlooks in his critique.
For Prosser, the material body, an essential aspect of the transsexual self, is often held in a (pre SRS) sexed abeyance, in a state of "bodily alienation" (p. 68). For him, the refusal of the ego to claim ownership over its' corporeal terrain, perceived as the "wrong body" (p. 85), is more than sufficient reason to justify transsexual claims for SRS, which ideally leads to "attaining that feeling of a coherent and integral body of one’s own" (p. 80). Surgery is an instrument to heal the body, "integrating its lost parts" (p. 83). Morphological integration brings about a "completion" of bodily image that "reveals sex as quite real, quite embodied" (p. 92). SRS abjects what is foreign to the sexed and gendered self. Prosser wants to make the body feel like "a home" (Prosser, 1998, p. 59), a place/space in which transsexuals may be/long. The narratization of bodily alienation predicates the necessity of SRS. That transsexuals must become expert narrators of their autobiographical history of corporeal distress and mis-sexed trauma leads Prosser to conclude that "narrative has an explicitly cohering function. Like surgery, autobiography heals the splits in plot into a transsexual identity" (p. 121).

Not all transpeople agree with Prosser’s idea of the desirability of a fixed and gendered home. Noble (2004b), for example, argues for his transgendered ‘state’ of paradox: “I’m a guy who is half lesbian” (p. 26). He articulates the self as a subject who is, “engendered, racialized, sexed, nationed, classed, etc.” (p. 23). Reading the complexities of intersectionality usually leads to recognition of a multiplicity of identities that may never cohere. However, as a stage in Western philosophy, postmodernism and poststructuralism must be careful not to impose a universal theory of fragmentation. Herdt (1997) reminds us of non-Western conceptions of ontology that celebrate wholeness and integrity: “Western sexuality in the modern period has come to exclude areas of ontology so critical and pervasive elsewhere across time and space: concepts of the whole person that incorporate spirit, mind, and social relations” (p. 276). Poststructuralism’s rejection of the singular self produced by humanism and the Enlightenment tends to ignore a multiplicity of meanings that can be given to the embodied self. By an exclusive focus on language, the material body as felt tends to be under-recognized and under-theorized.

Debates surrounding identity, subjectivity and the self have coalesced in recent years around poststructural and postmodern based Queer theory. Queer theory draws historical attention to the damage that gender regulation has done to gay and lesbian subjects. Wilchins (2002c) expresses
the queering of the sexual and gendered binary by arguing that “no one is perfectly gay, completely straight, totally womanly, or wholly transgendered” (p. 47). She further contends that “if gender is always a bending of self toward prevailing norms, then gender is always a kind of displacement, from which not even genderqueers are immune” (p. 29). Butler (1990) argues that this bending of self is towards “a regulatory practice that seeks to render gender identity uniform through a compulsory heterosexuality” (p. 31). The bending of self is, of course, towards what the binary regulates as ‘normal’: heterosexuality. In a subsequent work, Butler (1993) argues that material bodies are complexly moulded to conform to heterosexual regulation and that the matter of bodies is a political construction that seeks to inscribe heterosexuality not just as a performative role but also as a heterosexual coding of the material body itself. Butler’s argument resonates with Rose’s (1986) psychoanalytic, Lacanian account. Rose argues that identity is where psychoanalysis intersects with the political sphere. Identity is something that comes about as a result of fracture and ensuing trauma and pain which has regulatory, political roots. Rose notes that “most women do not painlessly slip into their roles as women, if indeed they do at all” (p. 91).

In Butler’s (1990) earlier text, Gender Trouble, she favours the concept of identity rather than self. She contends that “gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be” (p. 25). Butler uses psychoanalytic discourses to strengthen the unconscious dimensions of performativity. Overall, however, Butler’s analysis seems to ignore conscious, chronic incongruent embodiment, despite the title of her subsequent text, Bodies that Matter. What matters to Butler is the heteronormative inscriptions that code bodies, an extremely valid point. But what of those heterosexual transpeople who suffer from having been mis-sexed, some of whom, in their earlier pre-transition periods, tried earnestly to live as gay or lesbian but failed? In analysing subjectivity and identity, Elliot and Roen (1998) argue that the physical and sexed body does matter in ways that Butler overlooks. Thapan (1997) concurs in her analysis of race and gender, claiming that “woman’s experience of her body as a lived body in everyday life” (p. 7) is one that is important to consider. Indeed, if identity and performativity were all that mattered, if the physicality of the body were not an issue, then there would be no TS (or perhaps even TG) people. The problem is that self is more than subjectivity and more than identity.
The ‘knowing subject’ is not the all-knowing subject. The all-knowing subject foolishly erases the unconscious and the greater aspect of the self in favour of common-sense. Subjectivity is important but also a dualistic conception that throws objectivity into the shadow of this particular binary. As Rose (1986) comments, “reifying the idea of a pure fragmentation [which] would be as futile as it would be psychically unmanageable for the subject” (p. 15). She continues with the contention that “feminism needs access to an integrated subjectivity more than its demise” (p. 15). In this sense, Rose does not however relinquish her strenuous objections to an idealization of wholeness. Elliot and Roen (1998) also criticise an ideal of wholeness though recognise that this ideal is what motivates many transpeople. They cite the statements of trans activist Leslie Feinberg who

\[\ldots\text{writes about the connections between sexual identities and gender identities, arguing that they are aspects of a person’s identity that are “tightly braided” together \ldots she articulates her transgender politics as being about fighting for her “right to be whole”}.\]  
\[\text{[Italics mine]} \quad (\text{p. 241})\]

This brings us back to the idea of selfhood. Rose draws attention to the need for an integrated subject and Feinberg to her right to be whole. In psychodynamic psychology, identity ultimately becomes a defensive manoeuvre based on projection and identification as defense mechanisms. Hird (2003) discusses Freud’s papers “Mourning and Melancholia” [1917] and “Analysis Terminable and Interminable” [1937], summarising his conclusions that identification is never complete and is often both traumatic and mired in resistance. Anna Freud (1966/1936) extends her father’s discussion by noting the similarity and closeness between the mechanisms of introjection and identification, in her chapter entitled “Identification with the Aggressor”. She sees such identification as a part of superego formation (the moral seat of the mind), as identification defends against paranoiac fear of the castrating or otherwise punishing parental object. My contention is that the issue of identity, while very important, is insufficient to achieve the ideal wholeness that Feinberg speaks of. There must be something more that integrates an identity (“me(s)”) that is not pre-existent but complexly acquired.

Certain discourses of subjectivity (e.g. phenomenology) privilege consciousness, whereas the self on the contrary contains both the phenomenology of consciousness and an “un-realised”
aspect – the unconscious. Others theorise that subjectivity (without self) is far more than the knowing subject posed by phenomenology (Butler, 1990). Subjectivity is theorised to contain the unconscious, which influences identity, as the arguments posed by Butler evidence. This thread, however, tends to disregard James’s material self, diminishing embodiment as something simply produced by political and historical factors that reinforce heteronormativity in terms of gender identity: there is no core identity behind gender identity, bodies are wholly socially and politically produced. There needs to be a better understanding of the role of unconsciousness and its mechanisms, such as projection, in compiling an understanding of the gendered subject, one that includes the felt self as embodiment. There needs to be acknowledgement of more than just identity, the “me(s)”. As James pointed out, this something more is the self which integrates the “me” and the “I” in material/social/and ‘spiritual’ intertwinement. There may not be a core identity behind gender identity, yet this does not mean that there is no “I” behind the “me(s)”. Transpeople, in their interviews with me, seem to speak of the “I” in ways that point to the importance of a selfhood that goes beyond identity. Their narratives, which Prosser contends compose the self, have advanced my understanding of the complexity of the gendered subject/self.

**Trans Integrity / Trans Selfhood**

In reflecting on the interviews conducted for this study as a whole, one particular impression stands out in counterbalance to the pain of repudiation. The notion of trans selfhood as a quest for integrity has struck my ear in ways that leave a hopeful ring. In contradistinction to the psychiatric diagnosis of ‘Gender Identity Disorder’, with its implication that identification of gender requires an order to be imposed to produce mentally healthy individuals, I am impressed by transsexual people’s narratives of their sense of, or desire for, integrity.

McAdams (1997) proposes that the self is not necessarily ‘unified’ as was thought in the past. Rather the self has the task of creating a temporal coherence out of a multitude of experiences. McAdams refers to this process as selfing, entailing the task of integration and synthesis. Hence the ‘I’ will make sense of varying ‘me’s’ over time. McAdam’s ideas are comparable to Kristeva’s concept of the subject in process. Selfing is an ongoing motion, a “movement” in the Adlerian sense. As applied to transsexuals, “selfing” attempts to resolve the embodied discord of
having been mis-sexed into a more coherent self. To pursue SRS takes tremendous ego strength, and courage is required to both face and correct an otherwise chronically dissonant existence. Repression of the knowledge of having been mis-sexed might bring more harm to the subject than pursuing SRS. To reduce such a complex situation to issues of identity encourages pathologisation of a choice that is based both on physical conviction and reasonable assessment of the gains and risks.

In favouring the concept of the self, especially for transsexuals, I do not wish to detract from the transgender activism of the 1990s that sought to deconstruct ideas of a shared and unified transgender experience, “of decentring and disrupting identity” (Broad, 2002, p. 244). Rather it is to address a stunning observation by Califia (2003):

> Not a single recognized authority on this issue has said that transgendered people have intrinsic value and worth, or something important to contribute to the rest of us and our understanding of what it means to be human. Benjamin, Green, and Money would have absolutely no ethical problem with genetically engineering transsexuals out of existence. (p. 81)

It is within the context of psychology and psychiatry’s reductive focus on ‘identity as disorder’, as evident in the clinical diagnosis of GID, that Califia’s criticism is so important. Without considering the possibility of the integrating function of the self (which may never reach its fictional goals such as ‘total integration’) psychiatry and psychology lose a fundamental appreciation for the richness of transpeople’s interiority and strivings. By reducing the self to an aberrant gender identity, the integrity of the person is lost. In evolutionary psychology, there is no self, only an identity that expresses a genetic flaw. In GID more broadly, there is no self, only a reductive focus on an identity that is ‘abnormal’. What transsexuals, and perhaps some transgendered people, seem to express is the desire for the right to be whole. Since the self is posited as having an integrating function, holism as a concept merits closer analysis.

**The Holistic Self: Problems in Holism**

Samuels (1993) is critical of those aspects of holism that lead to a unified viewpoint, a “fantasy of homogeneity” (p. 11). However, with the chronic fracturing of difference,
woundedness often prevails. Holism, on the contrary, is related to healing. Postmodern and poststructural discourses dismantle the whole to reveal fractures, incongruencies, splits, and absences. To heal means to make whole, it is a force with directionality, and the goal of healing is to repair painful fracture(s). The danger in invoking holism is that it may lead to denial of rupture and succumb to totalitarianism. Yet it is possible to make use of ‘the whole’ in relative ways, as Gadamer does (1960), for example, when he states that: “the concept of the whole is itself to be understood only relatively. The whole of meaning that has to be understood in history or tradition is never the meaning of the whole of history” (p. xxxv).

Smuts’ (1926) philosophical ideas on holism filtered into Anglo–American psychology after having been endorsed by Alfred Adler, the Gestalt therapy school (Fritz and Laura Pearls) and the influential psychiatrist Adolf Meyer (1951) (Shelley, 2004). However, holism in medicine and psychiatry produces some difficult problems. In his historical analysis of German physicians from 1890 to 1930, Hau (2000) notes that a “synthetic gaze” based upon an intuitive holism was “the hallmark of a superior physician” (p. 495). This gaze of the cultivated, educated and hence bourgeois male physician carried forward a Romantic aesthetic. Hau argues that it became the basis of the unthought imposition of this class of men, “the Bildungsbürger [who] could truly judge whether a person was normal, healthy, and beautiful” (p. 495). This aesthetic holism is associated with a specifically male gaze. The authorial male eye projects its Romanticism by equating the corporeal/body to a work of art. An occularcentric sensibility to proper and eternal proportions captures forms in terms of an “absolute norm of beauty” (p. 504). The holistic physician, a declared expert in natural science, disdains the reductive (and Kraepelian) approach. Rather, he needs to adopt an artistic and holistic gaze to “reveal eternal truths” (ibid., p. 512). This masculinist gaze reflected a holism that de-centred others, “women and the uncultivated were neither capable of creating great and timeless works of art nor capable of practising the art of medicine” (ibid., p. 524). In early twentieth-century Germany, holism in psychology was taken up most forcefully by the Ganzheitspsychologie. This school was subsequently appropriated by the Nazis, who rhetorically deployed fictions of a naturalistic unification, of inciting racist metaphors of ‘blood and soil’. Holism came to justify racial exclusion (by those who ‘naturally belong’) and subsequent genocidal practices (to
expel/extinguish aliens/others), to elevate the ‘natural superiority’ of certain races in a grotesque attempt at ‘purification’. Hence, the grave danger of essentialist holism is that it leads to an idea of the total, to totalitarianism (Shelley, 2004).

Smuts’ philosophy of the essence of wholes was opposed to the Nazi appropriation. Adolf Meyer tried to open an institute of Holism in Germany, which Smuts cautioned against. As Smuts’ biographer Hancock (1968) recounts,

Smuts told [Meyer] the idea was premature. Yet he soon found out that Germans could do worse things to his ideas than bury them in an Institute. ‘Ganzheit-Theorie’, as some Nazi writers were expounding it, shocked him. He thought it a monstrous parody of everything he believed in – “a queer compound of Holism, romanticism, racialism, ethics and religion... a ruthless scrapping of ideas and methods which we consider part of the moral and political heritage of the human race”.

In his analysis, Smuts (1926) did not properly consider the dangers of holism and could only comprehend the Nazis’ ‘appropriation’ of holism as “queer”. Meyer, inspired by Smuts, became a monumental figure in the institutionalisation of academic and clinical psychiatry: “the Dean of American psychiatry” (Neill, 1980, p. 460). While Meyer’s holism does not dominate psychiatry, it remains an important thread that he theorised in his psychiatric school of psychobiology (which should not be confused with the reductive school of biopsychology). His holistic epistemology may be relevant to Namaste’s (2000) ethnographic account of a male psychiatrist at a gender identity clinic, in which she describes this particular psychiatrist’s method of differentiating ‘real’ from ‘pseudo’ MtF transsexuals. A ‘real’ transwoman appeals to his aesthetic and erotic sensibilities, eliciting a ‘natural’ and feminine stimulation of the heterosexual male body, by sexually inciting the male psychiatrist’s gaze. She does not offend his eye but elicits desire in an ocular feast, she stirs his loins. The psychiatrist Paul McHugh (2004) is offended by those MtFs with “large hands, prominent Adam’s apples, and thick facial features”, whom he sees as constituting an “incongruous” form that is not “persuasive” to a psychiatrist’s ‘superior judgement’ (p. 2). Such trans women cannot possibly, in his judgement/verdict, be ‘real women’. This type of holistic gaze is not limited to a masculinist repudiation. As we have already seen, it is also used by some radical cultural feminists who deploy a similar essentialist and repudiating

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52 Emil Kraepelin [1856-1926], influential German psychiatrist.
gaze to pass the judgement/verdict (Law of the Father) that trans women are not ‘whole’ women (Greer, 1999). In spite of such damaging effects in its application in psychiatry and other spheres, holism, when reconfigured as a useful fiction (Slavik, 2006), seems to me a fundamentally salvageable construct.

The issue of the ‘real’, in the sense of material embodiment, and the sense of having a self that is split (identity/body) can lead to repression and denial, as I have discussed at length. In my interviews with John and Trevor, the self as a sense of real embodiment surfaced. John describes his former life as a fundamentalist Christian and how that doctrine factored into his initial repression of his trans self:

John: ...fundamentalist religion does not help you to develop your own sense of who you are. It’s all about Jesus and forgetting yourself, you’re regularly taught certain verses in the bible along the lines of ‘Don’t trust yourself; you are too sick and sinful to trust your own thoughts.’

At the time of our interview, I recall feeling struck by John’s summary and its consistence with the contradictory meaning of the self. The earliest reference to the term in the English language (circa 1300) declares: Oure awn self we sal deny, And folow oure lord god al-mighty (as cited in Danziger, 1997, p. 143). Throughout the ensuing 700 years the contradictions between the self as sinful and the self as an object to be both known and esteemed (Socrates instructed us to ‘know thyself’) have been carried forward through the forces of historical tradition (Gadamer, 1960). Currently, we are instructed to indulge the self, to be a consumer, yet we are also, in a maddening contest, at times required paradoxically to deny the self. For John, the pain and trauma of incongruity compelled him to solidify his self. He could only achieve this by shedding those repressive dogmas that prevented this, so that he could “bloom inside”, to heal the self (see interview with John, Chapter 6). His turn away from self-denial allowed him to become, to be.

Zimmerman (1981) suggests that “to be a self in the most suitable way is to be wholly open to those possibilities which are uniquely one’s own” (p. 31). For John, it is not the shedding of his skin, as if he were revealing the finished and final self within, that allows for his self to bloom. He does not declare a frozen internal male to be released, an a priori existing figure, the David
within the marble. Rather, he sees his journey as one of growth, of becoming, an ongoing process. He altered his body to achieve a sense of ‘wholeness’, to seek congruency between the material/social/spiritual selves. Narratives such as John’s persuade me that there is something ‘real’ laced into the social and historical production of sexed and gendered bodies. A phenomenological sense of embodiment, inclusive of its perceived limitations, is powerfully ‘real’ to human subjects. The material or embodied self is more than socially constructed performativity. The flesh and blood body, as a body that is lived-in in a daily/nightly sense, retains prime importance for those transpeople who aspire towards sex/gender congruity. In my interview with Trevor the issue of the body surfaced in the context of discussing performativity (which we tentatively aligned with “gender”) versus “real” (or sexed) embodiment. Trevor made his position clear:

Chris: So basically you do see (pre-SRS) anatomy as some kind of a limitation. Is that a self-imposed limitation or reflecting something “real”?  

Trevor: Real. You know it’s interesting how much I tell myself and what’s actually out there like using urinals, using locker rooms, it’s how far and how close to the edge can I go and still be safe. Can I really hang out on the beach and be safe, do I feel totally safe on the beach wearing next to nothing?

Chris: So it’s like a fear of being found out?

Trevor: Ya, but at the same time I forget, I’m living my life and I forget until I get into a set of circumstances and then I think oh – I’d better be a little more careful here… I’m a man out in the world, and I don’t think twice about it, I am and I’m just being there. I mean all those years I lived trying to be a woman I never took off, I was always aware of having to project femaleness and now I don’t have to project maleness, I just am. I’m just myself.

Chris: You don’t have to construct anything?

Trevor: I don’t have to construct a thing. I mean nobody ever rushes up to me and says “you’re not an adequate man” and I’m not thinking that anyway. Only once in a while does it surface, like I’ll think, what if this person really knew? And then I think: really knew what? Anyway, I’m here and I am myself. (entries# 45-50)

Trevor and John’s narratives hinge on the idea of selfhood, the ‘I’ constructing the ‘am’ in attempts to cohere the identity(ies) of ‘me’. In their conceptualisations, they have become what they believe they are, they have allowed their ‘true’ selves to emerge. In an Adlerian sense they
have followed their fictions and 'real-ised' them. In having done so, material alterations of the flesh and blood body have solidified in the form of a liveable body. The ideals of the self have dramatically actualised in their quests to 'become', as subjects in process. In pursuing their goals, they have overcome previous inner restrictions that imposed limitations on their lives.

'Changing sex' is a controversial act, hence the widespread phenomenon of repudiation. Coming-out to oneself and then to others as "trans" is often a difficult process posing its own unique set of barriers. The stigma attached to gender transgression, which has its source in the political and social context and is not intrinsic to the self, is something that many transpeople need to untangle and overcome even before they embark on transition: they face their own shame, guilt and self-imposed prohibitions, their own internalised oppression.

**Internalising the Gaze of Repudiation: 'Self-Oppression’**

A disturbing aspect to emerge from my interviews with transpeople is evidence of trans self-repudiation. As a feminist counselling psychologist I kept an ear open for any distress revealed as a result of living life under the auspices of ruling relations/Law of the Father. Domination also has internalised consequences and transpeople frequently, but not universally, evidence these through their reflexive accounts. Instances of self-harm or other patterns of emotional, mental, or interpersonal difficulty were mentioned in many of the interviews. These difficulties were attributed to coping with life under the weight of a social order that largely repudiates trans subjectivity.

In the following interview extracts, the colloquial term ‘transphobia’ is utilised to refer to the problem of having internalised the gaze of repudiation. Alex acknowledges his internalised struggles:

Alex: Something that is not an external barrier but for me is an internal barrier is internalized transphobia. Trying to work on stuff so I feel okay about being trans... like I have some role models now but that certainly has not been the case all my life, so dealing with internalized transphobia and keeping on trying to feel okay about things is a huge issue and probably for me the more pressing issue than external incidences. Because the internal stuff is much more of a daily issue – a constant issue. (entry# 94)
Hank offers his experience of the kind of self-oppression he continues to face, because of his fear of being “found-out”:

Hank: I think there’s always the fear of discovery, if you’re not out and you can pass. That’s often when people get murdered - is on the discovery of your transness. When people find out they tend to get really, really angry, so I think that fear of discovery limits your ability to fully interact with the world because you have to keep something...There’s a trust issue where you have to keep your back up at all times, to be watchful. (entry# 78)

The self-oppression, the fear of discovery, that Hank speaks of is echoed by Keenan. As a queer trans man, Keenan fears how other gay men will react towards him:

Keenan: I fear being rejected, that I’m not good enough. There is a lot of internalised stuff too. I am afraid of being in gay male spaces. Once when I was at a gay bar in the bathroom a man put his hand on my chest and it really freaked me out. I don't know the rules in gay male culture, like is anyone allowed to touch you in a gay bar? Can you touch anyone you want? I just don’t know what to do in gay male spaces. Even going into the men’s washroom, I don’t know how to stand at a urinal, there are so many things I don’t know how to do. So, if I am at a gay bar and someone seems interested in me, I get scared. I bring a lot of baggage with me in there.... I don’t think that gay men are even aware that trans men go into gay bars. (entry# 24)

Internalising the gaze of repudiation creates a self-policing carefulness, a vigilance to avoid discovery. The (un)known rules that are produced under binary conditions create, in Keenan’s case, an anxiety of breaching these rules. The (un)conscious comforts that most natal male bodied people take for granted, such as using a urinal, are initially missing in perhaps most trans men. The need to repress such anxiety, to mimic conventions as closely as possible, adds a layer of psychic stress to trans men that is missing in other marginalised groups, such as gay men.

Prior to her transition, Roz reveals a history of self-oppression through strategies of denial. She explains:

Roz: I became –aholic, I was a workaholic, I was a studentaholic, I was a studyaholic, I was a jogaholic, I was a fitnessaholic. I wouldn’t use the word alcoholic because I would binge with alcohol but never until I was completely out of control with it, so there were
times when I would binge drink and then there were periods when I didn’t, so it was always there as part of the coping strategy. 

(entry# 50)

Aiyanna also discloses her coping strategy in the years that she tried to live as a man, a period she had earlier referred to as “living the lie”:

Aiyanna: The years of abuse of alcohol, drugs, other things had taken their toll, by the age of 38/9 if I didn’t make a major change I was going to die... that was my self-suicide.

Chris: And that was the way you were self-medicating for living “the lie” and hiding?

Aiyanna: For all of those things.

Chris: And you had to make a choice then?

Aiyanna: It was life, simple as that. 

(entries# 82-86)

Aiyanna made a choice to live, to be who she is, a woman, and to cease living life as a man, the latter an inauthentic, dangerous existence. Her previous strategy of denial, of self-medicating the pain of living in a mis-sexed body, could not continue. Like the push of Thanatos, living “the lie” leads to death. Emerging to heal, Aiyanna identifies the sources of her oppression:

Aiyanna: Society’s obstacles and restrictions and shit eventually take a toll psychologically and emotionally and debilitates you to where you do become physically and mentally ill... it’s an external force, it’s a social force that’s applied, that’s the disabling factor.

(entry# 92)

Hence, the problem of the interior/exterior dynamic. For transpeople, trying to hide, repress or force the interior realm of identity to conform to the external world simply fails, in the long term, as a strategy. Indeed, there are complex feelings of guilt and shame that accompany attempts to repress trans-ness. As Kimberly elaborates:

Kimberly: It’s much, much different growing up as a boy being treated as a boy compared to growing up as a girl being treated as a boy. Keeping the secret can just tear you apart inside, and having to perform to other people’s expectations and be the person that they expect you to be and try to fulfil that was very, very difficult. Very uncomfortable and very painful. For me, I had one blessing that I somehow knew that this was the way it was meant to be and I just accepted it in myself. Otherwise I would
have gone down another road, either not been here anymore or other ramifications... That didn’t happen with me because I just accepted it within myself, but I felt, initially, a lot of guilt and shame. (entry# 14)

Kimberly’s disclosure of risking “not being here anymore”, points to SRS as a life-saving procedure for transsexuals. Her experience of trying to conceal her “secret” reveals the trauma of repression and the negative effects of an internalised gaze. The tyranny of normativity, and the sad examples of what happens to those who openly defy it, further reveal the threats, coerciveness and consequences that incite self-oppression and self-repudiation. Aiyanna recalls what had happened to her sister in the 1950s upon her family’s discovery that she was a lesbian, which frightened Aiyanna into self-repression of her trans-ness:

Aiyanna: I knew my older sister was a dyke, she was a butch. When my parents locked her up the first time she was sixteen - I would have been fourteen/fifteen - and it scared me into silence. It was only a couple of years after I knew about Christine Jorgensen and it absolutely scared me into silence. They will lock you up for being too weird. That’s the message that I got though it certainly wasn’t talked about. It was made clear that they locked her up for her alleged promiscuity, not her sexuality.

Chris: And that kept you scared –

Aiyanna: They locked her in a fucking mental institution, that’s what they did in the 50s, 60s, 70s to young women who professed love for other women. That’s what they did to my sister and they said it was because of her promiscuity but it wasn’t, it was because of her choice of partners.

Chris: Did this force you to keep yourself a secret, and conform on the surface to what they expected you to be?

Aiyanna: Absolutely. (entries# 58-62)

The gravity of self-oppression in the lived experiences of transpeople cannot be underestimated. Asked what were the worst barriers, Trevor expands:

Trevor: The internal ones. And certainly that whole struggle with my feminist perspective. It was a huge struggle. I mean at some point I had read Janice Raymond [anti-trans feminist], I had gone through a phase where I was reading everything. (entry# 34)
In this instance, Trevor speaks of the conflicts between his feminist consciousness and how radical cultural feminist rejection of trans embodied claims create internal conflict for some pre-transition transpeople. Resolving these internal conflicts is imperative for those transsexuals who need to address the mis-sexed body and retain allegiance to feminist aims of the emancipation of marginalised groups. For Trevor, transitioning did not require a rejection of feminism more broadly but a recognition that this particular feminist position is mistaken.

Yossi reminds us that these issues are not just an internalised barrier, the internal struggles of transpeople, but can also be the basis for transpeople oppressing other transpeople: “Often transpeople have huge amounts of internalized transphobia... Transpeople can be very, very mean to each other” (entry# 83).

The issue of self-oppression in transpeople is a serious one. One is reminded of the recognition of the problem in previous struggles for liberation, as in gay liberation. The manifesto of the London Gay Liberation Front states: “The ultimate success of all forms of oppression is our self-oppression” (as cited in Hodges and Hutter, 1979, p. 1). Self-oppression in transpeople underscores the need to continue to push for their right not just to a non-pathological subjectivity, but also to selfhood. If self incorporates the idea of striving for a fictional whole, for ‘healing’, then it incorporates the right to be free from self-oppression. The repudiation of trans subjectivity and selfhood divides transpeople internally, divides trans communities, and divides transpeople as a social group from other marginalised groups. The ubiquity of ruling binaries spares few, if anyone.

Drawing attention to ‘self-oppression’ can provoke legitimate criticisms. In her critique of “gay affirmative psychotherapy”, Kitzinger (Peel and Kitzinger, 2005) contends that the concept of “self-oppression” shifts the responsibility from the oppressor to the oppressed, delegating to the oppressed the sole responsibility for overcoming their internalised barriers and traumas. For Kitzinger, psychotherapy and self-help groups mitigate the necessity for fighting political sources that create this oppression in the first place. She suggests that ‘therapy’ siphons off the necessary rage needed for organised, radical transformation of society. Therapy draws ‘self-
oppressed’ lesbians and gays into liberal-humanist based ‘solutions’ that individualise the problem of oppression.

Kitzinger’s criticism has merit but sets up an either/or conundrum that places gays and lesbians, and also transpeople, in a double bind. The paradox is that many pre-transition transpeople are deeply traumatised, conflicted in such a way that their very survival is threatened, often by potential suicide. Many transpeople may very well need to prioritise their mental health over activism. This is why allies are so important for the political struggles that marginalised people face. Without allies the full burden of inciting social change would rest solely with transpeople. I believe that Kitzinger’s stance, as applied to transpeople, imposes an unreasonable burden on them. Moreover, not all transpeople want to be activists.

**Conclusion: The Enigma of Self-Estrangement**

In summary, the ‘self’ is a contestable concept. Poststructuralists, in their favouring of the ‘subject’, correctly draw attention to the uncertainty that the concept of the self poses. However, a rethinking of the self as both multiple and more than identity, containing an ‘I’ and ‘me’ s, allows the self to re-emerge as a useful fiction that speaks to the integrating function as expressed in ‘holism’. Transsexuals especially, seeking to correct their mis-sexed bodies, often adopt a discourse of the “right to be whole”. Concepts such as “selfing”, “movement”, and “subject in process” all allow for a multiplicity that accounts for the complexity of trans lives. This complexity is evidenced not only by external social barriers where the trans self is always in process and on trial, but also internal ones that impede self-acceptance.

The intricate intersections of interiority and exteriority that challenge transpeople’s everyday/night lives surface in this study through hermeneutic dialogue. The eradication of trans repudiation requires an end to unwarranted institutionalised oppression, which is also the ultimate source of internalised oppression. The shift away from a pathological “gender identity disorder” moves the location of gender ‘symptoms’ from the individual as the aberrant source to the social world as the correct origin of unnecessary harm. Until the eradication of trans repudiation occurs, transpeople may very well need fictions of healing, to recover from a
trauma(s) that is not intrinsic to them, so that they may – like most of the rest of us – be accepted and valued as (them)selves. So long as trans repudiation prevails, transpeople remain foreigners and “the foreigner has no self”, but is “constantly other” (Kristeva, 1997, p. 270). As Others, the strange(rs) become the screens upon which unwanted reactions/projections are hurled, they are targeted as the “phobogenic object”.

Freud refers to an aspect of this interpersonal dynamic using the German term unheimlich, which Kristeva (1997) translates as “uncanny strangeness”, representing the strange as encountered through projection, what is not recognised as “my (‘own and proper’) unconscious” (p. 283). In confronting the phobogenic object, perpetrators of trans repudiation have their fear/desire stirred up. In fearful reactions, the archaic aspects of the narcissistic self are provoked to abject, to throw out of the self what is deemed dangerous, alien “uncanny and demonical” (ibid., p. 283). It is the return of the repressed that provokes this self-estrangement. Whether it is pre-transition transpeople who may try to vanquish their “secret” through repression but cannot abject it, or their attackers whose gender certainty is challenged, an anguish is provoked by the “weird... by death... an untouchable universe... the strange within us” (ibid., p. 289). Transpeople often unknowingly provoke a response to the unheimlich, rattling perpetrators’ deepest gender fictions, in an encounter that may affectively flood their ego with feelings that transpeople are “‘too good’ or ‘too bad’” (ibid., p. 287): they are fascinating/desirable, and an object of fear/dread. This is the essence of the phobogenic object, whether expressed in xenophobia, ‘homophobia’, transphobia, fear of the dis/abled, or misogyny.

The self intersects the interior and the social-exterior where selves are read through role identification, institutional inscription, and attempts at social coherence. Transpeople may (un)consciously utilise the idea of selfhood as a means to guide healing of the mis-sexed or mis-gendered body. Whether transpeople need a ‘self’ or not, the right to selfhood includes, I contend, the right to retain or reject it. An appreciation of difference, regardless of debates surrounding the ‘self’, requires acceptance with acknowledgement that other people too, no matter how different they may seem, ought to be constituted as subjects in their own right.
Trans repudiation, whether through utterance, erasure, gaze, spectacle, alienation, phobia, sexual objectification, or violence, requires the solidarity of others to eradicate it. The lessons of depth psychology, moreover, speak to the necessity of reconciling the "stranger within" so that we may better know our own shadow, account for our own fears, and contain the potential spilling-out of noxious fragments that do not belong on the skin of others. Gadamer's hermeneutics speaks of dialogue, of conversation, interpretation, and understanding as a means to better comprehend one's own and others' "truths". If transpeople disrupt our fixed sense of the order of things, this may actually be perceived and received as a positive event, rather than as something that arouses fear and loathing. Transpeople have something profound to teach us, yet unless we take down our defences we may not hear them and hence miss something that would benefit our own self-understanding. Feminism speaks of gender justice and often strategises through solidarity to challenge barriers and advance the rights of women. As a broad spectrum of discourses, feminism has much to offer to transpeople in terms of experience and expertise in facing seemingly insurmountable barriers.

In a study that focuses on the negative aspects of repudiation as it pertains to the interiority (intrapersonal) and exteriority (interpersonal/institutional) of trans subjects, I am wary that an impression of victimisation may linger, paradoxically curtailing the agency of these subjects. Transpeople's activism on the local and international levels (the latter especially facilitated through the Internet) clearly demonstrates the exertion of their social agency. They are not necessarily or only the passive recipients of repudiation and transphobia. Rather, from the inception of the availability of SRS to the formation of groups that provide social space to advocate for cross-dressing and the rights of TG people, transpeople have a long and active history of coming together to advance their rights. On the local level in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland of BC, groups such as the Cornbury Society, the Zenith Foundation, the Trans Women Dialogue Committee, the BC FtM Network, and the annual Trans Day of Remembrance, have worked tirelessly to provide assistance, support and advocacy for transpeople in ways that clearly exert their agency. Moreover, the demise of the Gender Clinic at the Vancouver Hospital (a program cancelled due to neo-liberal austerity cuts) has given rise to a unique trans-run health referral and support program (Transgender Health Program) funded by the Vancouver Coastal
Health authority. This program, located at the Three Bridges Health Centre, recognises and advocates for the essential medical needs of this group.

Transgendered people, in a tentative umbrella sense, challenge many of the deepest convictions that a pervasive and naturalistic common-sense discourse holds dear. That many feminists, queer, dis/ability, anti-racist activists, anti-psychiatry activists, critical psychologists, and social theorists are now paying attention to the rumblings below suggests that the ground may be about to shift, especially if we pay attention to trans challenges and their convictions. The narratives shared in this study point to the necessity of a deep shift. These narratives are, for me, a beginning and not an end, as the quest for understanding, undoing estrangement, and for concrete social change continues, in struggle and in solidarity.
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Appendix A

Consent Form

‘The Gendered and Transgendered Self:
A Hermeneutic-Critical Realist [Understanding] of Transphobia. 53

Version date: 29 October 2003

Principal Investigator: Professor Valerie Raoul, Centre for Research in Women’s Studies and Gender Relations, UBC

Research interviews to be conducted by: Christopher Shelley, Centre for Research in Women’s Studies and Gender Relations, UBC
*This study is being conducted as part of a Ph.D. degree.

Purpose of the study
The proposed research seeks to attain an informed understanding of transphobia as experienced by female to male, male to female, or transgender identified individuals. The researcher understands that transphobia may include prejudicial treatment, job and housing discrimination, loss of or disqualification from necessary medical services, inappropriate assumptions or attributions about a trans person’s self, body or social role, and instances of physical, verbal, and/or psychological abuse/violence. This definition of transphobia is open to modification. The research seeks to raise awareness of the on-going barriers that transgender people face in Canadian society, and specifically in British Columbia.

53 Original title of thesis at time of version date.
Appendix B

Interview Questions

• [if not already established] Where do you place yourself on the trans continuum? [e.g. TG, TS, F/M to X, not applicable].
• When did you begin to transition? [If TG: when did you begin publicly crossing?]
• Can you describe the process you had to undergo in order to transition? [for TS]
• On reflection, how was the experience of transitioning for you? [for TS]
• Can you tell me about your experiences as a trans person at school / work/ in regard to your family?
• What are the most difficult barriers that you as a trans person faced before transitioning? After transitioning? [for TG: publicly crossing]
• Have you ever been made to feel uncomfortable as a result of being trans? Can you tell me about it?
• Have you ever been threatened or intimidated for being trans?
• To what extent does your ability to “pass” affect any transphobia that you may experience?
• Do you feel that the kinds of transphobia trans men and trans women experience differ? If so, how?
• What can trans allies do to assist trans folk in dealing with transphobia?
• Is there anything else you would like to say about the issues/barriers transpeople face that we might have missed?