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# TRIPLE ECHO

AT THE CROSSROADS OF THE SEXES



## Premiere Issue!

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Trans Warriors from the Chevalier d'Eon to Leslie Feinburg

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News and opinion, and mischief in the park

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*Collage by Rachel Steen*



# Triple Echo

Volume 1, Number 1 1998



*Cover story, page 9.*

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## Beyond the pyjama party

I once saw an episode of Newhart in which Bob Newhart's character, Dick Loudon, discovers to his horror that Stephanie, his wealthy, superficial maid, has befriended his co-host on Vermont Today, the giggly airhead, Buffy. When Dick asks what they plan on doing that day, Stephanie replies, "We thought we'd condition our skin, I'd do a makeover on Buffy and she'd do a makeover on me, and then we'd take it off and do it all over again!" Dick gives them the classic Newhart straight face and then turns to his wife Joanna and says, "My God. I feel like I'm trapped in a never ending pyjama party."

I had a good laugh over that. The first thing I thought of was all the transvestite literature I've read in my lifetime and how empty headed most of it was. While I can laugh at it now, I still recall the overpowering emptiness I felt after I had read it. I was embarrassed by its superficiality and offended by its implied sexism. If this were a reflection of the trans community, I wanted no part of it.

In retrospect I can see that the stereotypes and the fantasies were merely symptoms of lives narrowly lived. It makes me think of George Orwell's observation that "the imagination, like certain wild animals, will not breed in captivity". Our superficiality was a sad reflection of a suppressed culture, a culture with little or no opportunity to test out who we were in the full light of day.

Times have changed. The trans community, by which I mean transsexuals, transvestites, and transgenderists of all description, has come a long way in the last decade. The goal of this publication is to reflect that maturity and, through intelligent comment, humour and the reporting of trans people's lives, to be a part of its evolution. Considering the modesty of the inaugural issue, it's a bold ambition, but one which we hope to achieve through creativity, integrity and good writing.

We intend to view the trans community through a non-sexist lens that, we hope, will challenge the conventional notions of gender. Transvestites and transsexuals, despite their inherent subversiveness, have not always been, to borrow Kate Bornstein's phrase, gender outlaws. In the past, the people asking the most interesting questions about gender were straight feminists, gays and lesbians. The evolution of trans people into gender outlaws has come about through the realization that we will never be accorded the respect we deserve by being good boys and girls and following the conventional male-female script. I realize this is not an opinion that is universally held within the trans community. It is, however, the premise behind this publication.

As this challenge to the male-female binary is not exclusive to trans people, we intend to explore gender in all its variations, without limiting it to a transgender context. This means that, while Triple Echo is primarily a trans publication, our goal is to be inclusive. The struggles of gays, lesbians and intersex people are of interest because their successes and failures have consequences for the trans community.

While we hope to reflect the maturity and evolution of the trans community as a whole, we assume the maturity of our readers. This publication takes for granted that its readers already know who they are. Our aim is to support trans people but not to be a cheering section for them. I once heard trans people self-described as "gender gifted". Surely I can't be the only one who finds this sort of thing offensive. I have met some trans people whose qualities would not, by any stretch of the imagination, inspire me to call them gifted. I'm sorry if you're feeling miserable about being transgendered, and I don't mean to be unsympathetic, but proclamations of our transcendence always leave me cold. The policy of this publication is to assume the people who read it don't need their egos massaged with hollow declarations of self worth.



Although we hope to cover trans stories from across Canada and around the world, inevitably we'll be relying on the trans community here in Ottawa. As the national capital, Ottawa is home to not only numerous advocacy and human rights organizations, but to a vital trans community as well. We hope to do our part to keep that community strong.

Finally, despite our limited resources - and like most trans publications Triple Echo is very much a labour of love, not profit - this publication will be published as professionally as possible. If you subscribe, we'll send you issues; if you submit material to be published, I promise to give it careful consideration and to respond as quickly as possible. The plan is to maintain a professional standard of writing and to develop the design, production and photography as money permits.

As you can see, we have many objectives for this publication. I freely admit that we may not attain all of them immediately. A lack of resources and utter disinterest from the trans community may prevent us from attaining any of them. We hope, however, that as this publication develops we will be able to achieve our goals consistently.

The trans community is at an interesting point in its history. We are on the verge of creating our own culture instead of just mimicking the one we have had to grow up with. I hope that this publication will be a small part of that evolution. If you wish to be a small part of our small part, please consider contributing. We are always interested in intelligent life in the trans community.

Incidentally, the publication takes its name from H. E. Bates's short novel of the same name. The book was also made into a movie in the early 1970s (I think), which unfortunately I have not seen; but I thoroughly recommend the novel to anyone who has not read it.

Welcome to the first issue of Triple Echo. Life beyond the pyjama party.

Teddy Michaels  
Editor

## We need you, but...

Like all publications, this one needs contributors to survive. This does not mean, however, that I'm prepared to publish everything I receive. This may seem an elitist editorial policy for a publication that does not pay for its material; however, under the assumption that Triple Echo will flourish or die depending on the quality of that material, I'd like to establish a few standards and emphasize a few points.

I am trying, on a limited budget, to print as little fluff as possible. Stories about trannies living in the real world are always interesting. This does not mean I want stories about your first walk through the mall and what a dazzling success you were. I appreciate the courage required to do such a thing but, sad to say, I demand more. Ideally, I'm looking for articles that resemble reporting. I know this requires work and considering the price I'm paying for this work, I naturally don't expect to get a lot of it. It is, however, what we aim for. Anyone can print fluff, as is obvious if you've ever surfed the transgender internet.

We love disagreement, but please be civil and well argued. Some of the fights that have broken out in the trans community have been, to put it mildly, unseemly. Focus on the argument, not the personality.

Satire, well aimed criticism and acute observation of society always have me rubbing my hands with glee.

Thoughtful book reviews are also welcome. The book should be reasonably current, or still in print at least, and it needn't necessarily be specifically about trans issues. It should, however, be relevant to the trans community.

Small items for the news section are greatly appreciated. They don't need to be from a newspaper. We would like to hear about events that trans people have organized and anniversaries and achievements they have celebrated.

Lastly, if this narrow editorial policy is too stifling, send us a letter. We love getting letters! Letters need not conform to anything but your own thoughts, compulsions and obsessions. Please keep them tasteful, of course, and succinct. We edit for length, if necessary. The more pages we print, the higher our costs.

Above all, in anything you send us, reach for the innovative, the expansive and the new rather than the stereotyped, the insular and the old. When building a trans culture, we should take our motto from Samuel Butler: "The conventional had been tried already and had been found wanting."

## Win some, lose some

Winnipeg voters became the first in a major Canadian city to elect an openly gay mayor. Glen Murray's election was seen as a victory for his centre-left politics. Mr. Murray's private life was not an issue during the election.

Mr. Murray's victory received only modest coverage by the news media, which in itself suggests that a person's sexual orientation is no longer much of an issue in this country. It is perhaps more significant that even macho Mexico last year elected a lesbian to the Mexican legislature.

Patria Jimenez is anything but discreet about her sexual orientation. She is head of "The Closet of Sister Juana", a lesbian rights organization. Her election is remarkable not just for her personal victory, but because the party she represents, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), took a big risk in identifying itself with the struggle to win acceptance of gay lifestyles. The PRD won about 36 per cent of the vote in Jimenez's district, more than twice what it won in the last election.

Perhaps Ms. Jimenez can come to the aid of Mexican transvestites. Between 1990 and 1995, more than two dozen transvestites were murdered in Mexico, most often by the local police.

The news was also not so good for trans people in Germany.

In November, residents of Quellendorf voted out of office their mayor, a 40 year old man who dresses as a woman and intends to undergo a sex-change operation. Of 717 valid votes, 482 were against Norbert Lindner, an engineer who now calls himself Michaela. Villagers filled the election hall to hear the result.

## Scary story

A couple making love in a Manchester, England cemetery were injured when a gravestone fell on top of them.

The 25-year old woman, who suffered cuts and bruises, scrambled free and ran almost a kilometre to a public phone to call the emergency services. When firefighters arrived in the city's Southern Cemetery they found her 27-year old partner, wearing a skirt and white silk stockings, trapped under the gravestone. It took five firefighters to lift the tombstone off the man.

A spokesman for the ambulance service said the injured man was discharged after being treated for head injuries.

*Times are changing. Advertisers are now using crossdressing to attract customers. From an advertisement in the Ottawa Citizen.*

## Dress holy, look holy

A Tennessee woman who says wearing pants is against her religion is suing to get her job back at an automotive plant where she says she was fired for wearing a dress to work.

"We believe you have to dress holy and look holy and walk daily with God. We believe (wearing pants is) a sin, and the Bible says it's an abomination," said Charlene McCormick, a member of the Pentecostal Holiness church.

According to her law suit filed this summer in federal court in Nashville, Ms. McCormick was working for a staffing agency in April 1996, when she was sent to work as a machine operator at the Robert Bosch Corp. plant in Hendersonville.

A few days into her assignment, her supervisor sent her home, saying her dress was a safety hazard that might get caught in the machinery.

Ms. McCormick was assigned to another task in a different department of the plant, but the personnel director saw her wearing a dress and instructed the temporary agency to fire her, the lawsuit contends.



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## Sex change soldiers

The department of National Defence, currently the favourite whipping boy of Canadian journalists, has been ridiculed for its decision to pay for soldiers seeking sex reassignment surgery. Previously the Canadian Forces refused to fund sex-change operations, which can cost from \$10,000 to \$20,000 (Cdn).

The issue surfaced this summer after news leaked out to Reform Party deputy defence critic Leon Benoit and *Esprit de Corps* magazine that a soldier had made a formal request for "gender reassignment" surgery.

"This is complete insanity," said Mr. Benoit. "You have military families still having to go to food banks and soldiers going without basic necessities such as boots and uniforms. I just don't see a sex-change operation as a basic necessity."

Military personnel aren't covered under provincial health plans. Instead, the Canadian Forces administer medical services to them.

While letters-to-the-editor routinely criticized the decision to fund sex reassignment surgery, there was no reaction to the news that the Canadian Forces would also be supplying soldiers with Viagra.

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## Mission accomplished!

Journalists have also ferreted out past surveillance operations the Canadian Forces did on soldier and civilian Defence Department employees. As late as the 1980's, military police conducted a campaign to rid the Canadian Forces of homosexuals. Usually the surveillance was justified as a means to determine whether an employee was a security risk. A typical assignment in Ontario in 1987 and 1988 followed a Canadian Forces member for weeks at a time. Noting that he was never "observed dating females" and that he frequently went to a known "homosexual pickup and hangout area", the man was interrogated by military police. After the interview, he was observed making "a gesture as if to wipe sweat off his brow." This gesture was deemed sufficiently suspicious and he was subsequently asked to take a lie-detector test. During that interrogation, he was accused of being a homosexual but he refused to discuss the issue. One week later, the man asked to be released from the Armed Forces.

Gays and lesbians have been allowed in the Canadian military since 1992.

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## Wedding Blues

A bride-to-be suffered a nervous breakdown before her wedding on the Greek island of Crete when she discovered the groom, dressed in her wedding gown, in the arms of her best man. The future husband and wife were celebrating at separate parties when friends of the bride asked to go to the couple's new home to sneak a peek at the wedding dress. When they arrived, they found the gown-clad groom locked in a passionate embrace with the best man.

The distressed young woman was treated at a medical clinic in the town of Iraklion.

The wedding did not take place.

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## Distinct society

Closeted trans people have more security in Quebec than anywhere else in North America.

In the debate between privacy rights and the public's right to know, English Canada's tradition of common law recognizes no individual rights to privacy. Neither does the federal charter of rights. But the Quebec charter of rights does provide for a right to privacy, as does the Quebec Civil Code.

Common law originated in England and is in force today in the private law of English Canada and the United States. *Le droit civil*, upon which the Quebec Civil Code is based, originated in ancient Rome and prevails today in many Western European countries and in the private law of Quebec. The codification of *le droit civil* ordered by Napoleon became the model for the Civil Code of Quebec, enacted in 1866. Quebec retained its Civil Code upon entering the Canadian confederation in 1867.

In effect, this means that if you live in English Canada and someone knows you're a transvestite, can prove it and wants to publish that fact, there's nothing you can do about it. But in Quebec, that person has to prove that there's some public advantage to people knowing you're a transvestite.

Last year, for example, a Quebec judge ordered a tabloid to pay a woman \$25,000 in damages for publishing two photos showing her walking beside her boyfriend outside a courthouse. Her boyfriend was in court on charges of distributing nude photos of himself to strangers. The judge ruled that the public had a right to know about the charges against the boyfriend, but what was the public's interest in knowing who his girlfriend was?

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## Best laid plans...

Fertility research has found a way to segregate sperm cells that produce boys and those that produce girls before they are used to fertilize an egg through artificial insemination. The Genetics & IVF Institute published its research in the September 1998 issue of the journal *Human Reproduction*. The technique involves identifying and separating sperm cells that carry the Y chromosome, which produces a biological boy, from those carrying the X chromosome, which generally produces girls.

While some skeptics have claimed that the data the institute has produced is inconclusive, others question the ethics of sex selection.

The possibility that, despite their efforts, they may still not get the gender of their choice apparently never occurred to the scientists and parents involved in the trials.

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## Pride Controversies

Every year municipal Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Pride Day proclamations generate controversy. This year's biggest battle was in Fredericton. After years of fighting, Fredericton's gay and lesbian community finally succeeded in getting recognition for their first ever "Gay Pride Weekend". Unfortunately, while reading the proclamation, Mayor Brad Woodside chose to turn off his microphone so few people could hear him. The provincial human rights commission ordered him to reread the proclamation after two activists filed a complaint over his refusal to do so.

The backlash emerged shortly afterwards in the form of several anti-gay billboards along the Trans-Canada highway, which urged motorists to "Honk if you're straight."

Meanwhile, the white supremacist Nationalist Party duped municipal governments across Canada into dedicating a special week to their cause. London, Ontario was the latest city to fall victim when it agreed to declare European Heritage Week. It had to scramble to undo the proclamation when religious groups alerted council to the organizers' racist connections.

The same city got into trouble three years ago for refusing to issue a proclamation in favour of Gay Pride Week.

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## Penis transplant

A leading Italian plastic surgeon has asked health officials for permission to carry out the world's first penis transplant. Dr. Nicolo Scuderi said he was spurred to make the request after news that French doctors had transplanted an arm and a hand to an amputee.

Three people have told Dr. Scuderi that they would be willing to undergo the operation. Two are women who have received legal permission to undergo sex reassignment surgery.

The third is a man who had his penis amputated in a sex change operation to become a woman but has since "realized it was a mistake" and wants to return to being a man, Dr. Scuderi said. It is not yet clear if a person who received a transplanted penis would be able to have an erection.

The penis transplant operations could take place by twinning sex-change patients. Dr. Scuderi said penises could also be donated by clinically dead patients on life support.

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## Japan's first

Japan's first legal sex-change operation, on a 30-year old female to male, took place at Saitama Medical college at Kawagoe, north of Tokyo. The operation took place in October.

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## Ontario cuts SRS funding

The Ontario government has decided that the provincial health care plan will no longer cover the cost of sex reassignment surgery. In the budget last year, \$122,000 was spent on eight operations.

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## Trans head for ALTGBO

Joanne Law, the current president of Gender Mosaic, became the first trans president of ALTGBO (Association of Lesbians, Transgendered, Gays and Bisexuals of Ottawa). ALTGBO is one of North America's oldest gay rights organizations, beginning 28 years ago as the Gays of Ottawa. Trans people were included for the first time last May.

ALTGBO is currently in a state of suspension as its executive struggles to retire its outstanding debt.

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## Survey says

In an informal survey of 500 guests, New York's Park Central Hotel, which is undergoing a \$55 million renovation, found that nearly 20 percent of men would undergo a sex change for \$55 million. Only eight percent of women said they would take the money and become men.



# A MIDSUMMER EVENING IN THE PARK



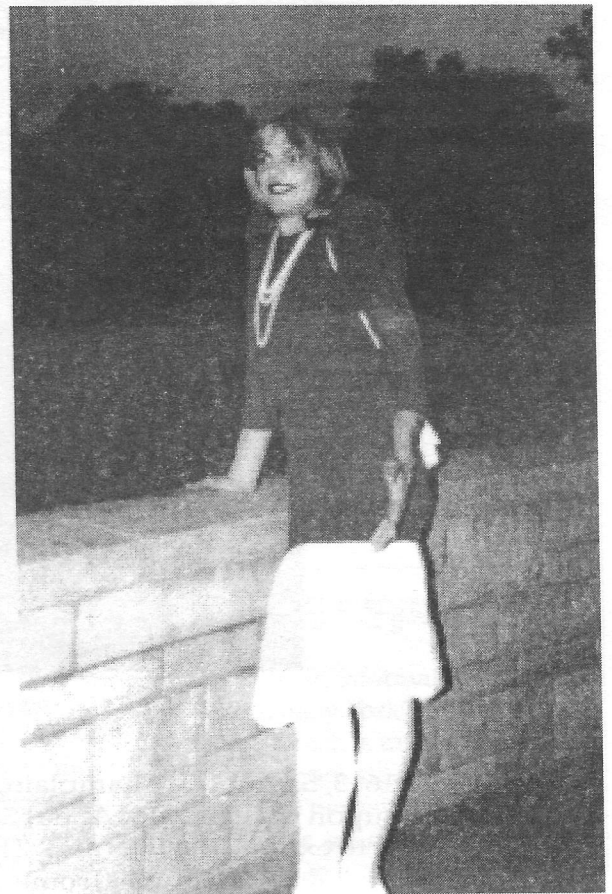
In June of 1613, Samuel de Champlain, following his Indian guides up the Ottawa River, first came upon Rideau Falls. About 280 years later, the trannies from Gender Mosaic in Ottawa went to explore the falls also. Things had changed since Champlain's time. There is a park there now. And tourists, some of whom found the trannies more interesting than the falls. Oh well. We were certain they took home vivid memories of Canada's capital.



*Transgender warriors. Teddy and Natalie delivering merciless blows to a trans basher. Demonstration only.*

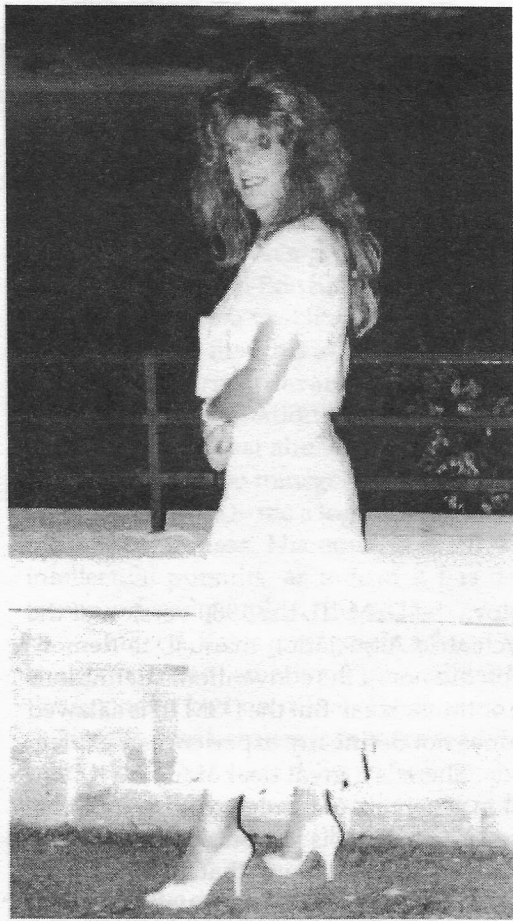


*These photos, taken some years ago, bear no resemblance to the people we have become.*



*Teddy reverted to being a happy brunette after this photo shoot.*





*Fortunately, Natalie hasn't changed.*



*The divine Miss L.*



*Here they come, the girls in the bright red sports car, waving their arms in the air. Who do they think they are? And where did they get that car? (With apologies to Trooper.)*

# Monsieur d'Eon Is Still a Woman

Gary Kates's analysis of the Chevalier d'Eon is a whitewash of transgender history

by *Teddy Michaels*

There is a revealing segment in the television special *Women: A True Story*. It concerns Billy Tipton, the jazz player who lived his life as a man but was discovered upon his death to be a woman. The producers of the show attempted to explain Billy Tipton's life as an example of the way women have overcome oppression, in this case, the discrimination against women jazz players in the 1940's. It was an astounding whitewash which left me wondering whether it was deliberate or whether the show's producers were so lacking in imagination and had so firmly embraced the conventional male-female binary that they could not conceive of other more plausible motivations for Tipton's behaviour. After all, it was not sexism that caused Tipton to marry a woman and become a father to adopted children. It was only late in the segment in an interview with his biographer that she allowed that perhaps discrimination did not fully explain Tipton's life.

But there is discrimination at work here, discrimination against transgendered people. I doubt whether Tipton would have approved of his life being used in a program about women when he clearly chose to live his life as a man. The show's determined denial of his transgenderism and its attempts to place his life within the limited and conventional interpretations of gender did a disservice to a remarkable individual.

I was thinking about Billy Tipton when I read Gary Kates's book *Monsieur D'Eon is a Woman*. Kates claims that "it is clear from the basic facts of the story that d'Eon was neither a transvestite nor a transsexual." In reading Kates's story of d'Eon, I am not nearly so convinced as he and find much of his interpretation suspect.

Kates builds his argument on unsteady ground

when he employs the DSM III, the 1980 version of the American Psychiatric Association manual, to demonstrate that d'Eon did not fit the conventional definitions of transvestite or transsexual. But the DSM III is a flawed document. It does not define my experience or explain my motivations. There is a great deal of my own "will and cognition" in my choice of gender expression, something Kates seems to believe is not present in the "psychosexual disorder" (a dubious term that hints at Kates's motivations) of transvestism or transsexualism.

Not only are DSM III definitions inadequate currently, they are absurd when applied to an individual living in the 18th century.

Kates suggests that d'Eon's era somehow facilitated his journey across the gender barrier, that before the 19th century educated people had not yet decided that sexual identity was necessarily a key component of human personality. People "tended to focus their attention on moral and cultural differences between the sexes". But having admitted this much and after stating that d'Eon did not live in a "cultural vacuum", Kates somehow expects definitions in a 20th century psychiatric manual to be relevant. Transgender behaviour is always reflective of the society in which it is present. Clearly d'Eon's motivations and behaviour would differ from the motivations and behaviour of transgendered people of the present. However, this makes d'Eon no less transgendered. It simply demonstrates how lacking in context the DSM III is to d'Eon's life.

The other arguments that Kates claims support his opinion that d'Eon was not transgendered in the conventional sense are similarly open to contrary interpretations.

Kates claims that "d'Eon's switch was not a com-





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pulsion but an intellectual decision that he made between 1766 and 1776, after careful reading." He also adds that d'Eon did not have a "peculiar childhood or family history", as if this were somehow necessary for one to be transgendered, which clearly it is not.

What evidence does Kates present that it was mostly an intellectual decision? During the decade that rumours about d'Eon's gender identity began spreading - rumours that d'Eon himself could only have started - he accumulated a vast library of books about women. Kates suggests that this was the beginning of d'Eon's intellectual journey toward womanhood, but surely a more logical explanation is that he was merely exploring the emotion that already existed within him. In the absence of books on transgenderism, his collecting books on women seems to me a logical expression of his growing self awareness. His emotional life stimulated his intellectual pursuits, as indeed it has done for many transgendered people living today.

Indeed, Kates grudgingly acknowledges that the change was also "emotional", but attempts to minimize the impact it had on d'Eon. He chooses to emphasize the intellectual because it is more readily accessible to research. "What were d'Eon's feelings during this crucial period?" Kates asks, of the period in which men were laying wagers on d'Eon's sex. "It is impossible to know for sure."

But we do know that d'Eon was infuriated by the circus atmosphere caused by the debate and betting over his physical sex while he was in England. This casts doubt on Kates's second argument, that "the cause of d'Eon's transformation was his alienation from French political life." Although Kates does an excellent job of describing the difficult circumstances d'Eon was in while in England and the deep alienation he felt from political life, he fails to establish a cause and effect between how becoming a woman was going to resolve his problems. D'Eon was no fool. Surely he understood that declaring himself a woman, far from tying up his problems in a neat little bundle, would likely cause him even greater difficulties. If he did not realize it initially, surely it would have become obvious when men were laying bets on his sex. If becoming a woman was a "way to win back his honor", then it was a seriously flawed master plan.

Kates provides a context for understanding how d'Eon could convince people he was a woman. He seems to believe that this context is enough to convince the reader that changing your sex would be a plausible idea that almost anyone from the 18th century might employ as a solution to his problems. Some of the individuals he describes are also mentioned in Julie Wheelwright's *Amazons and Military Maids*, a book that studiously avoids reference to any trans words. While the concept of the female warrior may not have been uncommon in d'Eon's century, the fact remains that d'Eon

was a biological male who chose to live as a woman. The benefits to be gained from this transformation were not nearly so evident as the advantages a woman had in passing as a man.

Having convinced himself that d'Eon's decision to become a woman was an intellectual one that would somehow resolve his political alienation (which of course it did not), Kates is then left with the problem of explaining why he lived the last 32 years of his life as a woman. This, he claims, was due to d'Eon's "Christian feminist" theology.

D'Eon read and wrote extensively about Christianity and his Christian interpretation of gender "gave him the justification to remain a woman." Kates implies once again that it was an intellectual decision. It is clear in the evidence he presents, however, that d'Eon was simply coming to terms with his own transgenderism in an 18th century fashion. There was no psychoanaly-

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## **D'Eon was no fool. Surely he understood that declaring himself a woman would cause him difficulties.**

sis then, no DSM III to pigeon hole you into type. Religion was the great authority and d'Eon developed a theological system which clearly reflected his own life. Christian feminism confirmed in his own mind his feminine nature, just as his deep admiration for Joan of Arc confirmed that it was possible to be a woman and a soldier, as d'Eon had been.

Kates admits that in d'Eon's Christian feminism there is "a good bit of self therapy" and yet his argument ignores this fact altogether. It is this aspect of Kates's work that is most frustrating. He dismisses or ignores evidence that does not suit his arguments and seems at times not to realize that some of his own statements suggest a different interpretation. Kates says d'Eon "was forever articulating his religious beliefs and ideas...as a means of explaining his own behavior. But that behavior inevitably went beyond even d'Eon's understanding." Clearly if d'Eon could not explain it, it was not an intellectual decision.

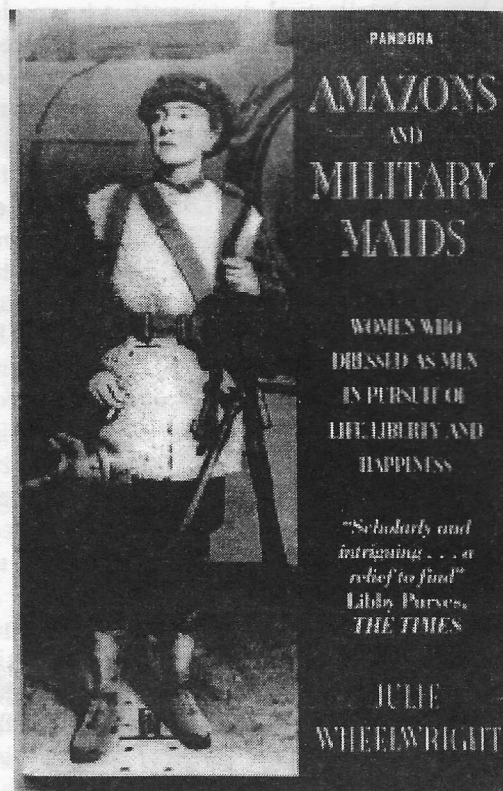
I could similarly explain my own behaviour in terms of my pro-feminist beliefs. I am well aware, however, that this does not explain my reality entirely. It may provide a justification for my behaviour, as d'Eon's Christian feminism did his, but the source of my transgenderism is still emotional, as was d'Eon's.

Let us redefine d'Eon using Kates's own evidence.

D'Eon did crossdress in England in the 1760's. Kates dismisses it as mere camouflage (and then later actually denies it happened!), but how can he possibly justify such a dismissal knowing d'Eon's future? It's dishonest. D'Eon himself started the rumour that he was a woman and did not deny it when his life became a public spectacle because of the ambiguity. He could have ended the matter quickly but endured the circus because he preferred to be considered a woman. (The parallel between present day transgendered people who endure abuse but still go on living as their preferred gender cannot be ignored.) D'Eon was a soldier and desired to continue being a soldier long after the king of France denied him this option. D'Eon was sufficiently intelligent to realize that becoming a woman would threaten his career. This was not, therefore, a solution to his political alienation. His vast library of books on women and his Christian feminism explained and justified his feelings that he was a woman. Intellectual rationalization followed emotional conversion, as it does for all transgendered people.

Kates claims that there is "no indication that d'Eon hated his own body or that he wanted, or even imagined he would be better off with, the body of a woman." Because Kates did not find any evidence of it, does that mean it was not so? In any case, would this be realistic given that in the 18th century he would have had no way of attaining it? From Kates's own evidence, it seems d'Eon did have a problematic relationship with his own body. He died a virgin and the implications of the following quote from Chapter 50 seem to have been lost on Kates: "In the eyes of men, I am like an aborted fetus. But by the grace of God, I am what I am and the grace given to me has not been in vain. God gives everyone a body as He sees fit. It is engulfed in corruption; it will be reborn incorruptible. It is engulfed in weakness; it will be reborn in strength. It is engulfed in horror; it will be reborn in glory."

Kates has convinced me of nothing. His book provides an interesting and comprehensive look at a remarkable human being. But his selective interpretation of facts and profound ignorance of trans people leave me with the feeling that he deliberately set out to deny that d'Eon was transgendered. As in the case of Billy Tipton, an individual of admirable character cannot possibly be transgendered. Trans people are by nature lesser human beings. This is, in effect, one of the arguments Kates uses to justify his interpretation of d'Eon. "Instead of an active intellect, aware of his choices, and even trying to change society, d'Eon is portrayed in this interpretation as a victim of an illness whose only fate is to suffer." The startling ignorance behind this observation should immediately relegate Kates's ideas to the dustbin. Unfortunately, there are too many people willing to believe an argument that accomodates their own prejudices.



*Studiously avoiding the T words.*

### **If it looks like a duck...**

Sometimes a transgendered person will speak to us clearly across the centuries. One would hope that scholars might then have the humility to accept at face value what these transgendered people have to say about themselves. Apparently not:

*A few cross-dressing women actually married other women, however, including Maria of Antwerp (1719-81) who was arrested twice for marrying a woman. In her trial, she described herself not as a woman who was sexually attracted to women, but as a man in a woman's body, indicating perhaps that, like those who arrested her, she had difficulty figuring out how to describe sexual love between two women.*

The only difficulty here is determining why the author, Merry E. Weisner, felt compelled to give us another interpretation of Maria of Antwerp from the one she had given herself. The arrogance of modernity can be breathtaking.

From *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, by Merry E. Wiesner. Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993.



**Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman**, by Leslie Feinburg. Beacon Press, ISBN 0-8070-7940-5 (cloth), 0-8070-7941-3 (paper).

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By Teddy Michaels

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In the last few years there have been a number of books published that mark a type of watershed for trans activism. Trans people are finally writing their own stories and, what is more significant, challenging current concepts of gender and the society they have spawned. Kate Bornstein's *Gender Outlaw* is one of these books, and now Leslie Feinburg has given us *Transgender Warriors*.

This is not to suggest that *Transgender Warriors* is a flawless book. It isn't. Its historical component is sometimes so sketchy that it reads like a laundry list of trans warriors, mere names in history with no recognizable identities attached to them. Such a flaw is perhaps inevitable when one considers the wealth of material Feinburg has assembled here. It may have been preferable to avoid the temptation to include everyone, but on the other hand there are so many unfamiliar stories here that one can't help but feel proud of trans people's diverse history and their resilience. The book has the power to motivate. Most trans people who read it will, at some point, feel compelled to say, "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore!"

In the preface to the book, Feinburg calls *Transgender Warriors* an attempt to "fashion history, politics and theory into a steely weapon with which to defend a very oppressed segment of the population." From a motivational standpoint the book succeeds, but its political argument, while argued with conviction, is not entirely convincing.

There is no doubting Feinburg's leftist roots. His consciousness of class preceded his trans activism. *Transgender Warriors* is the synthesis of his work in the early 70's as part of the Workers World Party with his current work in the trans movement. Feinburg argues that the structure of early communal and matrilineal cultures allowed trans people to play a role in society and that "the same historic overthrow of communalism was also responsible for trans oppression."

We are getting into a complicated discussion here and there are too many gaps in Feinburg's reasoning to make for a compelling political argument. All communal societies were primarily subsistence economies in which men and women had gender specific tasks and roles that ensured the survival of the community. The peasant revolts that

Feinburg describes in which men dressed as women or women as men were probably more revolts against the new industrial society than they were acts of sympathy for trans people. The new focus on commodities and profit was the beginning of the end for highly gendered, communal societies.

This is not to diminish the fact that much of our oppression is based on economics. It is extremely difficult for trans people to make a living in their gender of choice. This fact alone confines us to the margins of society. Some readers may not agree with Feinburg's leftist politics. Nevertheless, the labour movement in this country is at the forefront of the battle for the rights of minorities and its belief in the dignity of the worker has made it an ally of trans people. I recently received a voter registration form from the Public Service Alliance of Canada to elect representatives to their Equal Opportunities Committee. The responsibilities of the committee include

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"I consider it to be an extension of my political organizing and my activism. As I read the sort of gender theory that was coming out of academia at the time, I felt that gender theory had to be put back into the soil of race, class and sexuality in order to have meaning in people's lives. It couldn't be an abstraction because we were living gender theory."

*Leslie Feinburg, quoted in Lambda Book Report, January 1998*

"advancing the rights of...transgendered members." I don't see business taking a similar interest in our plight and that won't change until there is some financial benefit in doing so.

Still, if justice depends solely on socialism, we may be waiting a long time. When Feinburg rails against the rich or the European ruling classes, I doubt that many trans people will be caught up in this particular call to arms. The personal may be political, but most trans people's resistance is very personal. The current dominance of capitalism is so complete that our struggle is most often one of learning how to accommodate ourselves to a hostile society while still maintaining some form of personal

integrity. It's hardly a satisfactory situation, but the fact remains it will take more than politics to change our reality.

All this is not meant to diminish the value of Transgender Warriors. Its total is very much greater than the sum of its parts. Feinburg's insistence on looking at the "interrelationships of class, nationality, race and sexuality" is a progressive view that is becoming common in gay and trans communities. The recurring subtext is that trans oppression, racism, anti-semitism, woman-hating and homophobia keep us battling each other instead of fighting together; but "we can never throw enough people overboard to win approval from our enemies."

The stories Feinburg has brought together should make us proud of the trans warriors that came before us and angry at the way so many of them were treated. "It is time for us to write as experts on our own histories," Feinburg says. In fact, it is long overdue. The academics and the medical

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## "It is time for us to write as experts on our own histories"

community have had their turn.

Books such as Feinburg's signify a major change in attitude in the trans community and compel us to take up the challenge of trans liberation. Transgender Warriors is an essential book for every trans library.

*Leslie Feinburg's new book is Trans Liberation: Beyond Pink or Blue.*

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## Call for papers

### Can the male-female binary adapt or must we kill it off?

*"Sex categories should be removed from all basic identification papers - from driver's licenses to passports - and since the right of each person to define their own sex is so basic, it should be eliminated from birth certificates as well."*

Leslie Feinburg, Transgender Warriors

This radical notion so challenges the heart of basic human organization that it requires some imagination to even conceive the society that would result.

There are two ways of looking at gender. The first is the conventional male-female binary under which all of us, even the most determined gender outlaw, is obliged to live. The second acknowledges the fluidity of gender, that none of us are exclusively male or exclusively female. While the latter probably more accurately reflects human behaviour, for the purposes of social organization, the male-female model not only prevails, but is rigidly, often violently, enforced.

This social organization inevitably leads to oppression, particularly of women, homosexuals and trans people. Is it necessary then to overthrow the male-female binary to overcome oppression? Is such a thing even possible? After all, most men and women enjoy being men and women and don't want it any other way. If it is possible to overcome it, what sort of society would result?

Conversely, can the male-female model adapt? In so-called primitive societies, if you wished to live in the opposite gender, there were rituals and social roles that allowed trans people to be a part of society. This sort of accommodation was preferable to anything we have now, but it still did not necessarily challenge the conventional gender system. Is there some way to resume this tradition in modern industrial society? In short, what sort of gendered society do we really want?

These are complex questions that are not easily answered, but if you're willing to try please send us your views. Serious essays and flights of imagination welcome. The diversity of submissions will determine the number we print. Authors of accepted papers will receive a free subscription to Triple Echo. Two pages of typed text maximum length, but papers will be edited if necessary, so please be succinct. Sorry, we cannot return unpublished manuscripts.



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# MORE TRANS WARRIORS

by Teddy Michaels

Although Transgender Warriors provides a fairly comprehensive survey of trans history, I have a few trans warriors that I feel compelled to add to Leslie Feinburg's list.

Years ago when I was in university and still very much a closeted trannie, I would go to the library and read Havelock Ellis's *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*. I must have reread the same case histories twenty times, but I somehow never tired of them. I realized after awhile that these stories of trans lives lived long ago reached across the years to comfort me in my loneliness.

I was thinking about this recently when I finally got around to reading Magnus Hirschfeld's *Transvestites: The Erotic Desire to Cross-dress*.

Written in 1910, this work also features many case histories and shorter stories of trans people's lives. I love these people and admire completely their courage and tenacity. Many of their names are lost to history, but we who have come after them will recognize their intense desire to live in their chosen gender. Risking imprisonment for "endangering public morality", they nevertheless repeatedly ventured out in public. Their resilience and utter determination is remarkable:

*"When I get out, I'm still going to put on my muslin dress."*

*On November 13, 1908, a London man, Julius Walters, 38 years of age, who called himself "Klara Myer" was sentenced to five months. The latter had already served three months in 1895 "for masquerading as a female"; in 1896 he received the same sentence for the same crime. In 1899 he received six months; in 1900, sentenced to 12 months; in 1904, to "twelve months and 12 strokes for masquerading as a woman and frequenting the streets." In 1906 and 1907 he received shorter sentences.*

Assuming the shorter sentences were three months each, not improbable since three months was the shortest sentence she had ever received, Klara spent, over the course of 14 years, about four years in prison for simply living as she wished - and then received 12 strokes into the bargain as well!

Hirschfeld also reports the story of Wee Marie, who, when asked why "he" was running around in women's clothing replied:

*"Well, I feel comfortable in them," ...Wee Marie was sentenced to pay a large fine. Since she did not have the specified amount on her, for three months she had to sit in jail. "When I get out, I'm still going to put on my muslin dress," the "pretty one" said, smiling, as they took her away.*

Hirschfeld had a significant impact on another of my favourite transgender warriors, Charlotte von Mahlsdorff. "I owe a great deal to Magnus Hirschfeld. His books reassured me that, as a transvestite, I was not alone in the world."

Her autobiography, *I Am My Own Woman*, is an incredible fight for survival, first in Nazi Germany and later in communist East Germany. Against all odds, she carved out a life for herself, sustained by a passion for antique furniture and architecture. For her work

in preserving Germany's cultural heritage, she was awarded in 1992 the State's Service Cross for service to the German Bundesrepublik.

In her autobiography, she also speaks fondly of Fritz Brandt, who owned the Mulackritze Pub in Berlin from 1921 to 1945 and who helped transvestites to survive by feeding them throughout the war.

*After the tavern closed for the night, this insignificant hero, to whom no one has dedicated a memorial, would let the transvestites earn a little money by helping in the kitchen or cleaning up. That way, they not only stayed alive, but also preserved their dignity. Since the brownshirts thought of them as "human scum", Fritz Brandt was risking his life with his "degenerate" behavior of hiding the transvestites from their clutches.*

Somewhere in the hall of trans warriors, there should be a special place set aside for people like Fritz Brandt.

## Sanitized for your convenience

By Alison Terry

*The scene is the same on any given day on two streets that parallel Moselstrasse. Junkies everywhere. Where once hard-working families operated stores, there are now sex shops, girlie kinos, prostitutes, transvestites and goodness knows what else.*

Ottawa Citizen, September 23, 1998

It seems an innocuous quote, and yet it's a nasty piece of business. In describing the decline of a certain neighbourhood in Frankfurt, it invites its readers to share in its contempt for the residents. There is no acknowledgement of the circumstances that put them there, no compassion, no recognition of the oppression or the cruelty. In another age, describing a street scene in some ghetto, a white man may have expressed in a similar way his distaste for druggies, prostitutes and "negroes".

Things haven't changed very much. Victims of oppression become objects of derision. The only difference is the target. When one oppressed group obtains enough power to fight back, it's time to find another group to harass publically. Most people don't even notice. Why should they? Druggies, prostitutes and transvestites are clearly three classes of people with whom good, respectable folk would not wish to associate. How they found their way to some sleazy neighbourhood in Frankfurt is no concern of ours.

Trans activists who work to secure legal or social rights for other trans people, or who are simply there to lend emotional support, do their part to keep trannies out of neighbourhoods like Moselstrasse. It's important work, but don't expect the larger community to be supporting you in it. You won't get the Order of Canada for helping trans people. You have to be accepted and respected by the community before the community recognizes that what you do is important. No matter how far we may have come, let us be clear. We are neither accepted nor respected.

Oh, but we are used. The entertainment industry knows that nothing titillates the general public like a good trans story. Trans people are ornaments used to stimulate the masses and sell product. Recommended for use in music videos and cheap sitcoms. From the safe distance of their living

rooms or the movie theatre, the public can engage the dangerous transgendered without having to put any effort or thought into it. Sanitized for your convenience. The appearance of open-mindedness without the trouble of conviction.

In Hollywood they make movies like *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar* in which liberal audiences are coaxed into shedding crocodile tears for our heroines and applauding their victory over narrow minded folks. But get caught with a transsexual in your car, like Eddie Murphy did, and suddenly you've got real trouble. This ain't the movies no more. The hypocrisy would make you gag if it weren't for the fact that you've been swallowing it so long you've become inured to it.

There is a telling scene in the 1995 film *Die Hard With a Vengeance*. Bruce Willis is on the phone insulting the terrorist, played by Jeremy Irons. Amongst other things, he calls him a crossdresser, an improbable epithet that reduces Jeremy Irons to stuttering apoplexy. As an insult, crossdresser is a poor substitute for faggot. It's too long a word, too neutral in tone. It doesn't fire off your tongue in a staccato burst. Faggot one can spit out with suitable disgust. We know intrinsically the Willis character would have called Irons a faggot had he not been stifled by Hollywood political correctness. He's just that kind of guy. Their sensitivity to gay issues was touching, if ridiculous. Their choice of alternate epithet, however, demonstrates how trans people in general and transvestites in particular have become the new whipping boys of society.

We've come a long way, but there is no cause to become complacent. The need for more trans warriors is evident. Enlistment, while not mandatory, is still vital.



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PO Box 81115, 755 Lake Bonavista Dr  
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(403) 271-6247

Edmonton Transgender Support Line  
(403) 988-3738

Illusions in Edmonton  
Box 1852, Main Post Office,  
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Cornbury Society  
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Vancouver, BC, V6B 3Z1  
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E-mail: [cornbury@bc.sympatico.ca](mailto:cornbury@bc.sympatico.ca)  
Web: [www.transgender.org/tg/cornbury/](http://www.transgender.org/tg/cornbury/)

Foundation for the Advancement of  
Trans-Gendered  
People's Society  
1-1727 Wiliam Street, Vancouver, BC,  
V5L 2R5  
(604) 254-9591

Zenith Foundation  
8415 Granville Street, PO Box 46,  
Vancouver, BC, V6P 4Z9  
(604) 261-1695  
Web: [www.GenderWeb.org/~zenith/](http://www.GenderWeb.org/~zenith/)

Zenith Foundation - Victoria Chapter  
Ste 303, 955 Cooke St,  
Victoria, BC, V8V 3Z1  
(250) 384-4635

Dream Girls  
P.O. Box 535, Kamloops, BC, V2C 5L7.

## Manitoba

Prairie Rose Gender Club  
PO Box 23 Grp 4 RR1,  
Dugald, MB, R0E 0K0  
(204) 257-2759

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ATG (Atlantic TransGender) in  
Halifax  
E-Mail: [atggrp@geocities.com](mailto:atggrp@geocities.com)  
Web: [www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/7557/](http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/7557/)

ValleyPRIDE (Kentville)  
E-Mail: [mike.giffin@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:mike.giffin@ns.sympatico.ca),  
Web: [www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/Heights/2377/](http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/Heights/2377/)

## Ontario

Canadian Boyz and SOFFAs  
Chapter of American Boyz FTM  
Support Network  
Marcus Charles Frappier  
(416) 466-0235  
E-Mail: [mc@oil.ca](mailto:mc@oil.ca)  
Web: [www.netgsi.com/~listwrangler/](http://www.netgsi.com/~listwrangler/)

Canadian Crossdressers Club -  
Wildside (Toronto)  
161 Gerrard St E, Toronto, ON,  
M5A 2E4  
(416) 921-6112  
E-Mail: [info@wildside.org](mailto:info@wildside.org)  
Web: [www.wildside.org/](http://www.wildside.org/)

Gender Mosaic of Ottawa  
PO Box 7421, Vanier, ON, K1L 8E4  
(819) 770-1945  
E-Mail: [gender\\_mosaic@geocities.com](mailto:gender_mosaic@geocities.com)  
Web: [www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/9630/](http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/9630/)

Ontario Female to Male Network  
378 - 532 Montreal Road, Ottawa, ON,  
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Ottawa TS Discussion Group  
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Ottawa, ON, K1K 4L8  
E-mail: [ts-ottawa@canada.com](mailto:ts-ottawa@canada.com)  
Web: [members.xoom.com/ottawats/](http://members.xoom.com/ottawats/)

SOS Club - TS (in Toronto)  
Support for Spouses of Transsexuals  
in transition  
C/O The 519 Church St. Community  
Centre  
519 Church Street, Toronto, ON,  
M4Y 2C9  
E-Mail: [sosclub@idirect.ca](mailto:sosclub@idirect.ca)  
Web: [webhome.idirect.com/~players/](http://webhome.idirect.com/~players/)

Toronto Transition Support  
519 Church Street, Toronto, ON,  
M4Y 2C9

Xpressions  
PO Box 223, Station A, Toronto, ON,  
M5W 1B2  
(416) 410-6949  
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