

**No TERFs on our TURF:  
a Leeds queer manifesto against  
trans exclusion, transphobia  
& trans exclusionary radical  
feminism**





This collection of texts came about as a reaction to a succession of transphobic events that happened in or around Leeds since the hijacking of Pride in London earlier this year, and increasingly towards the closing of the Gender Recognition Act consultation.

Reports of leaflets being handed out in the Headingley area and stickers in bathrooms around Manchester made many of us realise there was an organised threat to our trans siblings masking itself as emancipatory politics. These and other incidents have pulled together interesting (and more importantly, necessary) coalitions across different groups comprised of both trans activists and trans allies.

All submissions to the call-out have been included,  
regardless of form or language.  
Each text is the responsibility of its author.

Leeds, November 2018

# Love or Hate?

## Billy Frugal

TERFs, or perhaps better “FARTs” (Feminism Appropriating Reactionary Transphobes), depend for their positioning on the denial of trans experience. We trans people don't have to imagine cis experience – it is all around us all of the time apart from in a few places where we can be as we are without danger. This FART denial though is not just another “view” of something, it is a fundamental position of hate based on a few quite simple processes. I think there might be three things going on:

FARTs only look at “evidence” which agrees with their view. It is laughable that A Woman's Place demand a “respectful and evidence based discussion” whilst at the same time making up statistics to suit their cause (42% of trans-women prisoners are rapists apparently – this is one of their more egregious made-up “facts”). Along with this goes an insistence on “free speech”, but this only goes as far as free speech for FARTs, the rest of us are aggressive, even though I am not aware of any transperson who ever doubted the existence of cis-people!

FARTs serve one ultimate aim; the enforcement of strict patriarchal norms. One aspect of this is the attempt to exclude of trans women from woman's spaces, many of which are currently explicitly open to trans women - they need to access those services! Another example is the attempt to deny trans men the possibility of transition. At our best the trans community are for anyone getting access to whatever they need – we do not make arbitrary distinctions based on ideology!

FARTs deny experience that differs from their hateful ideology, and they place this ideology above human need. The rabid denial of trans experience arises from a view of biological and cultural determinism which is placed at the summit of their position. This would seem to even deny parts of their own experience which must be crushed under the dead weight of their hateful beliefs – witness their attempts to deny trans-men the possibility of transition and their insistence on some kind of normative and exclusionary “woman's experience” which is frozen in time and incapable of change – such an experience is indeed dead in the fullest sense.

In responding to FART hate, It seems to me that we should not try to trade facts with them. We do not need to argue with hate, we just need to continue to exist and not be bullied into the shadows. Of course, their hate is hurtful – but we have many allies and the sea of “L with the T” placards at Manchester pride was beautiful. But let’s pause here and consider something; It is cis-women who have the capacity and opportunity to be our greatest allies due to the way FARTs frame the “debate”. In a situation in which trans people might be in danger it is cis-women that the FARTs insist join the argument. FARTs are the latest in a long line of patriarchal misogynists who insist that women take the heaviest burden in bringing about positive change, who insist that women are biologically determined and who insist, for purely ideological reasons, that there is actually some real point of division where none can be found.

It seems to me that I exist in a sea of love at the moment, largely created by cis women who refuse to abandon me. That FARTs create this burden of emotional labour for our sisters to carry is perhaps their greatest crime.

Let's not call them “Radical” or “Feminist”, let's call them what they are.

# IN YOUR CIS SPACE

## Ruth Pearce

[cn suicide, sexual violence]

I'd like to say something about how it feels to be a trans woman right now, with the emergence of a growing number of "gender critical" voices.

In the wake of Brexit and Trump, it seems that everyone feels empowered to speak out about their own personal prejudice. Trans rights are no exception.

When I first came out and transitioned as a teenager, almost two decades ago, one of the scariest things for me was using public toilets. Let that sink in for a moment. I was scared simply to use the toilet - for fear that people might shout at me, drag me out, maybe even beat me up. I have now become perfectly comfortable doing so, but not been to a public swimming pool since my mid-teens, and have not even been swimming in the sea since my early 20s. This is because of how deeply I internalise anti-trans prejudice. I have an enormous amount of admiration and respect for trans people who are able to overcome this fear.

It was hard to come out in the early 2000s - there was an enormous amount of casual transphobia in the media, with Guardian columnists writing pieces such as "Gender Benders Beware" and TV programmes such as Little Britain and the League of Gentlemen immensely popular, and the continuing popularity of 90s films such as Silence of the Lambs and Ace Ventura. Trans women were variously represented as a pathetic joke, a burly men in serious self-denial, deceptive liars or outright sexual predators.

Since various items of legislation such as the Gender Recognition Act 2004, Sex Discrimination Act Regulations 2008 and Equality Act 2010 were yet to see the right of day, it was legal for employers and service providers to know all about my gender history; it was also legal for them to fire me from a job because I was trans, it was legal to deny me services and kick me out of shops, pubs, post offices, leisure centres (etc etc) because I was trans.

Meanwhile, there were exceptionally few openly trans people involved in public life - and none of them looked, sounded or acted much like me. I delayed coming out for years because I wasn't sure if I was "really trans". It was not easy to come out in this environment. I thought that I might be ruining my life.. It was only the awfulness of the alternative - becoming a man - that persuaded me to take the enormous step of coming out.

Consequently, I was very isolated during the first few years of my transition. I find it very hard to say just how intensely lonely that experience was. Fortunately, my friends (mostly cis girls my own age) were immensely supportive, but it was difficult not to have anyone with similar experiences to me to talk with. People who had a very deep complex relationship with our gendered movement through the social world, and/or our sexed bodies, such that we knew the assignation we received at birth was not right for us. People who felt a deep, deep \*relief\* upon transitioning socially and/or changing our bodies as appropriate.

It wasn't until my 20s that I began to slowly, gradually meet trans people my own age - and what a relief that was! We could relax completely around one another, talk about our issues and experiences, reflect on our differences as well as our similarities. It was at this time that I encountered the term "trans bladder" - used to refer to the pain and urinary infections that could follow from not being able to use toilets outside of the home. Let that sink in.

I also began to realise the wider extent of the damage caused to other trans people by both external and internalised transphobia.

Many of my friends attempted suicide, sometimes on multiple occasions. The first trans person I knew to take their own life was a member of a trans youth Internet message board I frequented when I was 16. Others would follow, including a housemate, whose body I discovered shortly before I was due to head into work to teach a university class.

Others have experienced quite severe sexual violence. There is plenty of research showing that trans people are at particular risk of domestic abuse, sexual assault etc. Many of my friends have been raped - one in her school playground as a teenager, by boys wanting to show her what it was "really like" to be a girl. Another friend was raped while I was in university. I remember talking with our mutual friends about

whether it was safe for her to go to the local rape crisis centre. This was something we could not take for granted. Fortunately, they were a trans-inclusive service and were able to support her.

When people "come out" as "gender critical", scaremongering about changes to the law we have been fighting for for decades, representing trans women and girls as sexual predators, debating our access to legal rights and public spaces and women's services, I wonder if they know who we are, what our stories are, what our experiences are like. Is it simply that they don't know any trans people, that they are ignorant? Or is there a deeper cause for their hatred? Do they realise they sound less like feminists, and more like the fundamentalist religious right? (for a great example of how fundamentalist Christians and "gender critical" feminists are employing the same language and discursive anti-trans tropes, I recommend looking at the organisational responses to the Scottish government's recent consultation on gender recognition).

As for the notion that anti-trans campaigners are "gender critical", and my use of inverted commas in my use of this term - I spent an enormous amount of time thinking about gender, sex and sexism as a teenager. I read about the social construction of gender, and it made sense to me as a concept, but it took me a long time and a lot of theorising to figure out how to make sense of that with relation to my own body and experiences. I began to figure out that sex was a social construct too, reflecting the construction of gender, many years before I would encounter the work of Judith Butler. In my 20s, I got involved in the National Union of Students Women's Campaign, and I am now (among other things) an academic gender theorist. In recent years I have been interested as a scholar and campaigner in the drawbacks and possible benefits of gender equality schemes, and the fight to tackle staff-on-student sexual misconduct led by the 1752 Group.

People who object to pro-trans legislation and oppose our access to public space do not have a monopoly on being "gender critical", any more than those who oppose abortion rights have a monopoly on being "pro life". People such as academics, journalists and trade union leaders who hold these positions wield an enormous amount of power over others, and have the potential to cause an enormous amount of harm.

And there are more and more trans people for them to exert power over every year - of course there are. The exponential growth in the visible



trans population is an outcome of our increasing visibility in public life and a far more positive legislative environment. The growth we see now was predicted on multiple occasions many years ago - by Lynn Conway in 2001, by GIRES in 2009. This is the outcome of an invisible population gradually becoming visible - just as the number of young people prepared to be out as lesbian, gay and bisexual also continues to rise. This growth will, eventually, flatten out - but it will be a fair while before this happens, especially if the current backlash continues.

I would like to encourage you to reflect on what it feels like for me to be involved in feminist and women's groups at this time, especially as conversations such as this become more common.

I worry every time I see a message has been posted on a Facebook group or mailing list, fearing that someone will start raising "reasonable" concerns about my existence or civil rights, or lying about the supposed threat that I and others like me pose. I start wondering what place I have in these groups, and how many people secretly hate me.

When these messages are posted I feel like I have a choice. Either I respond - and it will inevitably be an email like this - an enormous outflow of nervous energy, fear and anger first thing in the morning, time and energy that I will not get back repeating stories I am quite frankly bored of telling. Or I try to ignore the message, even as it plays on my mind for the rest of the day/week/month, knowing that the environment in question has become a little less safe for other trans women as well as myself.

Or I just leave, which is of course what "gender critical" women would like me to do.

Not today.

# What is at stake?

## On Gender and Liberation

### Gloria Dawson

All writing on gender, sex, sexuality that claims not to be provisional should be treated with suspicion. This essay is very provisional.

What is at stake here? Our whole lives. But some of our lives are more whole than others. Why is this? How can it be that at this moment, when supposedly we have come so far, we are here? What is at stake? Autonomy. But some of us get so much more access to autonomy than others. Some of our autonomy is recognized, but never all of it. For some of us, not much of it. What is at stake? Solidarity. Some of us get a lot more of that, some of us give a lot more of that, than others.

How might these principles meaningfully make up the body and the work of what we call feminism?

Andrea Long Chu's article 'On Liking Women' helped me think about trans-ness and feminism in a different way. A trans woman, Long Chu makes it so that what is at stake in these disagreements and conflicts over sex and gender is not so much identity ('I am x') but desire ('I want to be x'). This is a political challenge. Desire seems to me closer than identity to what I understand as a politics of liberation, something that's often been hard to express or manifest in all my years of being a feminist as an activist (I don't merit the title 'activist' at the time of writing, nor do I want it, ever).

In reading Long Chu on wanting to be and to be with women, I realized again that I didn't ever choose to be a woman – nor can I remember now, ever wanting to be one. It was just what I was named to become. However, in social terms, the life of a man, the being of a man, as I have observed it, is almost totally undesirable to me, apart from in two specific aspects: 1) To walk through the world without being commented on sexually (A negative freedom). 2) To be able to have anonymous sexual encounters in public; to cruise, to sweat (A positive freedom. Mostly). Long Chu's piece enables me to look through and walk through the overlapping pathways of sex, gender and desire in order to understand and articulate their relations better.

So the life of a man is mostly undesirable to me, and the life of a woman is enough what I am comfortably used to not to reject, and I exist uncomfortably, sometimes pleasurably, but rarely neutrally, in these ways of gender (which often subtly include femme-ness, butch-ness, masculinity, androgyny, softness, and all the things we do not have words for yet but in our desiring we shall name) (and I want, too, to be desired for these things, but never these things alone). Relatedly, then, I have a lot of sympathy with people accused of not being a 'real woman', from whatever direction this comes, and whatever that person's gender and sex history has been.

bell hooks says patriarchy has no gender. I have not come to a place of understanding that, but at present I suggest that it may be that we will at some time no longer speak of patriarchy to explain or analyse a form of gendered oppression in order to do away with that oppression. I say this partly in response to feminists who claim trans rights are in some sense at odds with the need to do away with patriarchy, which they understand as the oppression of women as a sex class. It may be that we speak of kyriarchy, or there may be more emphasis on border nationalisms and autonomy as movement (or movement as part of autonomy). In terms of now, I ask, what should our movement's political demands be? And by movement, I mean a communist feminist movement, of the colour red (as described in Plan C London's statement on Red Feminism and gender). Full bodily autonomy seems to be one such demand – for people (usually women) giving birth, or choosing not to, for a healthcare system that provides access to reproductive/biological equity (abortion/ contraception/ sterilization/ hormones/ surgeries/ IVF etc.) and choice with regards to issues like intersex conditions . Intersex people are often forgotten in these discussions but intersex people are part of my life and very much part of my understanding of sex, biology and gender.

If autonomy is what is at stake, autonomy also means freedom of movement, freedom from domestic violence, from a controlling abusive family, from genital mutilation. Freedom of movement also means somewhere to go. So the spaces in which people have safety must be expanded and prisons must be abolished (but this is a conversation which goes somewhere else, for the time being). And it means freedom from sexual and gendered violence both within and beyond those borders.

What is at stake and what is the field on which these contentions are being played out on? The clinic, the hospital, the school, the

workplace, the women-only space, the field of science, the arena of border control.

What is at stake when women claim that some of the ways of women, or some women's protections, are being lost? Well, there is always something being lost. The idea of a man who desires men being in love with his mother, desiring to be a woman, a perverted masculinity: The lesbian as 'congenital invert', she hates to love women, but she can't help it, it's a disease: The idea of a perfect lesbian as non-feminine, never having had sex with a man, and rejecting submission (in any, and perhaps especially sexual terms) – all these are lost or losing ideas. Science (which is not a neutral territory, but does at least deal in large-scale studies of what some human bodies actually are and do) has done away with the idea that biological sex is binary. So gone, too, is the idea of a perfect 'natal woman' or man. We are all entangled in the failure to be the categories science and society imposes. From that failure arises, instead, an expanded possibility of how we can be.

The framing of transphobia and disagreements about sex and gender as a question of 'What is at stake?' partly arises from Monique Wittig's (1981) description of lesbianism as a provisional, not essential identity or rather, better, practice. In the context of the abolition of gender (different from, though this is for someone else to take up, being 'gender critical'), 'lesbianism provides for the moment the only social form in which we can live freely... because the designated subject is not a woman, either economically, or politically, or ideologically'. But this changes. New ways happen.

I wrote here already of all the things we do not have words for yet but in our desiring we shall name. New ways of being are happening – felt, then expressed, spoken and written, spoken to be felt, written to be spoken, expressed to be felt – across our lives and bodies like a web of living. Sometimes these are codified in law and in science. I wouldn't call law and science 'progress' (perhaps this is the only specific thing I want to say here about the amendments to the Gender Recognition Act 2004), but they can be an uncomfortable and strategic part of this journey towards liberation, where we don't ever arrive, but we must travel together, freedom as our constant struggle, but also constant constellation of our solidarity and our numerousness, our variousness, ever widening and ever closer, for us, by us, to us, with us, as us, and what we are becoming.

## References:

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# Janice Raymond: The Donald Trump of gender studies

## Ian Rory Owen

Like the taste of marmite, it's difficult to have neutral feelings when oneself, one's expression of gender and gender identity, could be the subject of attack. If the attack is physical, the first defence is to run away. If when meeting a stranger in the street, the attack is merely some disapproving words softly spoken, the damage is receiving contempt from someone unknown. In the second example, the assumption is that normal courtesy is expected when walking down the street past strangers. The usual expectation about meeting a stranger on the street is that what will happen is some form of friendliness, good manners and respect for our differences.

Therefore, it may come as some surprise to receive dogma and hatred in the place of academic discourse. The expectation when reading an academic work is that the contents are well presented and that while there might be a call for action, such action would be non-toxic, not demanding hatred because of false accusations made without a shred of evidence to support them. The essay below makes some brief comments on the connections between Janice Raymond and Donald Trump as regards gender politics, the politics of identity. It also brings out for discussion one hard science approach to understanding personality and the role of biological cause. The hard science stance is called behavioural genetics and quantifies the heritable aspects of what comprises gender identity in relation to the social space in which human qualities are expressed.

### **Accusation: The evil empire of transgender clones**

In 1979, Janice Raymond dropped her bombshell on an unsuspecting world. *The Transsexual Empire* is a work of hatred passed off as reasoned academic critique. It is a call for unity among cis feminists against trans people, and hence non-binary people also, and asks its readers to view trans women as rapists. Although in an interview in 2014, Raymond backtracked against the accusation of trans women being literally rapists (2014), this was not clear from her original writing on the subject. The argument of *The Transsexual Empire* is that hormones and surgery can never make trans women become cis women, and that more generally, trans women have ulterior

destructive intentions towards cis women. Raymond's 1994 work is available on the website scribd.com. There is a reprint of chapter 4 of her 1994 republication of the original work (Raymond, 2006).

One way to get an immediate insight into her attitude as a writer, requires explaining her writing style. Her style of writing is a polemic. There is no attempt at making reasoned critique or providing feedback, appraisal of complex issues. Instead, Raymond uses the voice of a divisive leader, rallying their troops to take no prisoners. The writing style adopts the voice of a leader who enjoys a declamatory style, like Donald Trump. She asks readers to occupy a position in regards to trans and non-binary people. When writing about trans women, she complains that "it is precisely because the transsexually constructed lesbian-feminist is a man, and not a woman encumbered by the scars of patriarchy that are unique to a woman's personal and social history that he can play our parts so convincingly and apparently better than we can play them ourselves. However, in the final analysis, he can only play the part, although the part may at times seem as, or more, plausible than the real woman (as is the case with the male-to-constructed-female transsexual who appears more feminine than most feminine women)", (Raymond, 1994, p 85). She concludes that the ascribed gender is always present after hormones and surgery (Raymond, 1994, p 92). And she follows that up with a second declaration of inauthenticity. Raymond compares gender-affirming surgery to white people becoming black, all the while benefitting by remaining within the pre-existing power relations in society (1994, p 94). She concludes her piece by commenting on the disharmony that she sees amongst various rivalrous forces that make up the discourse of gender politics. Cis men and women can never be peers, nor can trans women and authentic cis women (1994, p 95). So her vision of the whole is to see discord and a clash of opposing voices.

Raymond is against the idea that gender affirming surgery is at all helpful to women in that it makes gender the subject of the baronial empire of the medical profession. Her aim is to prevent the acceptance of trans and non-binary people within cis feminism and gender studies more broadly. Her accusation is that femininity is hijacked and wrongly understood by the medical profession and by trans women, her sworn enemy. "All transsexuals rape women's bodies by reducing the real female form to an artifact, appropriating this body for themselves ... Transsexuals merely cut off the most obvious means of invading women, so that they seem noninvasive.

However, as Mary Daly has remarked, in the case of the transsexually constructed lesbians-feminists their whole presence becomes a “member” invading women’s presence and dividing us once more from each other”, (Raymond, 1994, p 86). The use of the word “rape” means that the social body of women, the sorority of cis women as a social whole, is invaded by trans women who she accuses of wanting to dominate their social movement. She accuses them of inserting themselves, via surgery, into the social body of the host like some kind of parasite or Trojan horse. In doing so, she wants to refuse the possibility of trans women ever be considered authentic women by cis feminists, and more broadly, by society. Hence, her argument is a critique of personal identity and trans and non-binary places in society. For Raymond, transitioning away from ascribed gender, or refusing the cis binary ideal, is a sexual attack – rape. The means of her justification is her belief that the personal physical body of cis women qualifies them as the only ones who can assert female identity and comment on gender issues. Her identity fascism declares trans men and non-binary people inauthentic by extension of this demarcation.

Just to make the terminology clear, in this essay, “gender” refers to historically created psychosocial aspects of being human. The word “binary” assumes an alleged conformity between two sexed bodies and the only permissible personality and social places that are permitted with one of two types of sexed body.

When the physical body is categorised as only male or female, with no third categories, there is a refusal to acknowledge the areas of overlap between being physically sexed male or female. Specifically, intersex embodiment, and all variation in physical bodiliness and gender identity, is replaced by two ideal categories, male or female (more of this below). In the cis view of those who neither question their gender nor want to change it, the general belief is that it is impossible to change gender. In the cis view, the idea of transitioning, or being a third gender, or acknowledging the very real “masculine” and “feminine” qualities in the psychosocial expression of being human, is not understood. In the binary view, the body can only ever be male or female but to achieve the categorisation means omitting a whole host of relevant information.



## The reception of Transsexual Empire by trans and non-binary academics

The reception that *The Transsexual Empire* received from trans and non-binary people is that it is considered as hate speech. While this is true, it is not the only devastation wreaked on the academic world and society. When a text like *The Transsexual Empire* becomes accepted as bona fide academic discourse, the divisive consequences spread out. There are consequences to cis feminism in a similar way that the Republican Party shoots itself in the foot when it accepts a candidate like Donald Trump. However, the major consequence of the splitting between cis women, in the name of feminism, and all other gendered persons – is that Raymond modelled a polemic attack in the name of academic discourse.

The first casualty is the quality of academic discourse. Polemic attacks have never been, and must never be, the stuff of academic debate. The second casualty is to note that her arguments are not backed up with evidence or argument. Raymond must have felt entitled to break with academic tradition, and substitute abuse and monstrous accusations, in the place of the showing evidence and reasoning to support her conclusions. Even in hard science, there are grey areas, the consideration of error and probability, and caution when moving outside of the band of probable conclusions, into the murky waters of the less well known. Leadership of the sort that Raymond models opens the door to vitriol in the place of discussion. One consequence is urging readers to take sides in a war where there can be no middle ground. Raymond wants readers to join her in conclusions that are hateful and divisive. There can only be more conflict in the polarisation: authentic cis women - versus the rest. In short, Raymond made TERFs possible (trans exclusionary feminists).

Raymond agrees with the binary and cis interpretations of the human condition. Her version of feminism fights against women as second-class citizens in family and society. Indeed, the day that women are no longer placed in second-class roles or are subjected to dominance and control by cis men, or social institutions more generally, then the job of feminism will be over. At the time of writing in 1979, the long-standing tradition was to identify a binary sex distinction as the only indicator of who is friend or foe in the battle against masculine oppression that produces harm to the feminine. The appeal is that all male-bodied persons are the enemy, and simplistically, no female-bodied persons are considered as facilitators of the power imbalance.

Toxic masculinity is never acceptable. Nor is the verbal and emotional damage that some women do to their children, for instance.

In Raymond's view, one consequence of her binary idealisation is that intersex people are erased from consideration immediately. The problem she introduces is primarily non-scientific and says nothing about real complexity at the biological level. Worse than this, there is no place for the highly complex set of interactions between the biological, the personal psychological and the larger spheres of social and historically-based interaction that make thinking gender highly complex. Those neuroscientists who take the trouble to attend to the evidence of brain anatomy, for instance, refuse the idea that there can be a cis categorisation of male or female brains (Joel, 2011, 2012, Joel & Fausto-Sterling, 2016, Joel, Hänggi & Pool, 2016). The problem of appealing to a binary idealisation is that gender is completely misunderstood.

### **The substance of human personality and identity**

From a trans and non-binary perspective, human personality and identity are much more elusive. The core fact of asserting oneself as trans and non-binary, within the social mass of a cis world, is that the substance of the daily experience of having, making and being gendered in any form, is experiential. Specifically, gender refers to thoughts, feelings, relationships and behaviours between self and others. To consider one's own gender and assert it in the cis world is at once a personal act of defiance and an attempt at placing oneself in a gender community, which is well known by the cis categorisation male or female (but not both).

However, empathising gender and self-gendering are comparative. Attempting to reinvent the self and assert self as genuinely different is creating a personal identity that exists against the traditional assumptions that all genders assigned at birth must comply with the sex of the child's body. The point is that what the words "identity" and "personality" refer to are meaningful experiences that lie within the social world.

Only individuals can know their own personality and identity regardless of what the cis world reflects back to them, about how it thinks they should be. The developmental trajectory of anyone's gender is that through the contexts of family, educational and social systems, individuals themselves identify how they are, and consider, in

a rational way, how to best to present themselves. From an experiential viewpoint that is social psychological, gender is primarily the act of gendering oneself within a pre-existing social context: identifying what is authentic about oneself is created from the possibilities on offer in the local world of family, friends and society. From a scientific perspective, to cite some evidence, the behavioural genetic research into the biology of transness suggests that it is 62 per cent biologically inherited (Coolidge, Thede & Young, 2002). This type of hard science research suggests that transness (and hence non-binary and gender questioning itself) is 62 per cent biologically caused and 38 per cent caused psychosocially. This means that there are concurrently two forms of the acquisition of being trans and non-binary.

Furthermore, the quality of being male or female in the world's leading system for understanding personality, the five-factor model (Costa and McCrae, 2003), suggests that the amount femininity or masculinity is also biologically inherited. The estimate for this aspect of the agreeability aspect of personality is 41 per cent, the one that models gender, according to various cohorts of experimental participants (Jang, Livesley & Vernon, 1996). If this research is true, when people feel the need to assert themselves as trans and non-binary, then the driver is their biology pushing them forwards against the taboos that the cis world puts in their way. If this research is true, then all trans, non-binary and cis people are better understood as intersex in a broad sense. There is no purity of physical sex as there is no purity of male of female gender. The biological driver of genetic material seeks its expression, even in the face of massive programming from cis history being enacted in the present moment. For the biological view, the source of the tendency to inhabit a gender of personal choice seeks expression in gender nonconformity. To be trans or non-binary is to swim upstream against the full force of the cis world. In order to decrease inner tension, the answer is to present oneself in the new gender, and then face the backlash from the cis.

Cis normativity starts the moment a foetus is recognised in an ultrasound scan in current reproductive practice. Even before the child is born, the bedroom will be painted pink or blue. The social straightjacket is already being planned: pink or blue. This is one example where the cis view of gender perpetuates itself. In its view of the gendered world, it is the only show in town.

The trans exclusionary radical feminist view was made possible by Janice Raymond. It causes there to be gender wars; not the discussion of differences of perspective with respect to evidence. The danger of TERFs as acceptable within academic discourse is that intolerance is championed as the moral majority of what right thinking people should do and be. All hesitation means siding with the enemy. Difference cannot be tolerated. Instead of reasoned disapproval against male, female and transgender violence, and the facilitation of any violence, Raymond and the TERFs want a war between cis women versus everyone else. One enemy of traditional feminism is violence to cis women, coercion and control, in the family, around reproduction and divorce, and in society. In themselves, these are noble causes. Yet the larger strategy requires something more Gandi-esque if the war is to be won. The first problem is to know your enemy and the reasons why male violence, coercion and control exist need to be understood so that they can be defeated by better parenting, better education, fairer laws, better policing of domestic violence, etcetera etcetera.

There have always been trans, non-binary and intersex people. The fact of the matter is that there is biological variance and gender variance. The two coincide to produce highly complex variations that are attempted to be narrowed down into the cis mould, where there are only two categories. Given that cis gender practices have historical weight behind them, there are already enough taboos in the way when trying to explore one's gender and manifest it in society, as best one can. Gender nonconforming persons are taboo and outcasts. The communicated hatred that abounds is internalised as shame and stigma, even in confident trans and non-binary people. From a first person perspective, to work to reduce one's inner stress by changing gender in any way, puts one in conflict with the cis world. There is no need to be intellectually assaulted by academics like Raymond when the cis world feels entitled to attack and murder gender nonconforming people. Indeed, it is more than ironic that the best way to avoid attack is to appropriate cis gender codes of how to be and enact them well. This is why the older generation of trans people stayed within the binary and erased their personal histories. There is a great deal to be said for living in stealth; when being out as trans and non-binary entails the risk of murder. Furthermore, it is hard to be non-binary when there is no clear history and tradition of how to be or dress; and how to become accepted by the cis. It is only through scholarship and detective work that past successful role models are found. Claude Calhoun is one name that springs to mind.

## The binary ideal

Before going any further, let's take stock of what has been presented about Raymond and the TERF agenda. The manner of explaining the binary viewpoint is best expressed by noting the original definition of Harold Garfinkel (1967, pp. 122-128). The profound refusal to acknowledge trans and non-binary lifestyles by Raymond is best understood via the ten points Garfinkel made in his original list. I have condensed his argument and written it in a more contemporary phrasing.

1 The initial claim is that human beings are gendered in a masculine-feminine binary. This idealisation defines the majority compulsory congruence between two genders according to bodily sex. These ideals are totems to be worshipped and used to define the self.

2 There is a law of categorisation by which all persons are either moral or immoral, and there are punishments to promote morality. The totem is to obey the gender rules that bodily sex dictate. Taboos operate against all transgressors of the law. Its weakest form is disapproval and contempt. The strongest is murder.

3 People need to promote their own moral compliance so that they can achieve self-esteem and avoid punishment by taboo enforcement. When the compliant cis majority maintain male or female adherence, they can be shame free and achieve self-esteem for good role performance.

4 Persons who accept their ascribed gender are moral and the only ones to exist authentically. Personal decisions about gender are irrelevant and cannot be asserted.

5 The possession of male or female genitals is the signifier of bona fide membership in a morally sanctioned gender community: either the fraternity or the sorority.

6 The possession of one of two types of genitals marks membership in one of the gender communities forever.

7 The binary is a mutually exclusive categorisation and there can be no co-occurrence of masculine and feminine aspects. If there are any deviations from the binary, then these are morally unacceptable and are open to taboo enforcement because the totem is disobeyed.

8 It is impossible for persons to alter permanently their gender or sex and maintain moral acceptability (except for trivial reasons of entertainment, play or mental ill health).

9 However, people who transition gender or sex must be reclassified and accepted into their new community according to their new genitals, to re-achieve moral credibility. Genital surgery is the price of moral redemption.

10 People who transition can only be reclassified because surgery and hormones allow moral justification, and so the binary is maintained.

Garfinkel expresses historical acceptance of the idea that masculinity and femininity are allegedly two opposed aspects of physically sexed people, and are easily classifiable. Raymond and the TERFs support the cis binary ideal, are committed against transitioning and gender nonconformity. For them, being and trans and non-binary can never be credible, rational, or authentic.

### **Argument and analysis**

Because the Garfinkel definition above is so pithy and makes the moral unacceptability argument so clear, it is worthwhile to use the same points to state a new liberated case: a perspective where there is considerable overlap between the psychosocial qualities traditionally called masculine and feminine and notes that biological cause operates. It is the case that what one has biologically inherited, one is responsible for. Yet the inheritance is biologically caused, not something personally chosen. Like so many potentials in life, to look after one's body or gain adequate exercise parallel the rationally-inspired maintenance and development of one's body and gender identity. Here are 10 points to counter the cis binary perspective.

1 There is variance in gender that may not correlate with the variance in physical sex according to historical assumptions. There have always been feminine men and masculine women. It is a basic human right to express and develop oneself.

2 All gender presentations and identities are inherently moral. Punishments of gender nonconformity are not required. Nor is gender non-conformity a mental health problem either unless it causes

excessive distress and impairment in functioning because of the level of distress.

3 People are often able to manage their moral compliance with local laws and avoid sin, moral wrongdoing. Most people are able to conclude on their gender identity, while others may recognise and express different aspects of themselves at different times. Such changes may include expressing a range of gender presentations over time, including living in two genders, and presenting differently in different contexts.

4 Trans and non-binary people can lead moral lives.

5 Prior to the invention of genital surgery, trans and non-binary people merely asserted their presentation and identity. All bona fide assertions of gender identity are valid attempts to enter a gender community and take a valid place in family and society.

6 There is no mandatory connection between genitals and gender identity.

7 Non-binary gender and intersex embodiment are all-inclusive and recognise the influence of pre-existing cis society and its rules. Trans and non-binary people are the only ones who have lived experience of two genders. To do so requires a re-appropriation of cis standards of personal presentation, and the use of pre-existing gender codes for deportment and behaviour. If anything is problematic in this regard, it is how to find an agreed perspective on how to conclude about what is right and wrong in these areas according to agreed evidence, in a wider view.

8 People have the right to explore a new gender presentation and identity. After having done so, some may feel confident in their identity and wish to use hormones and surgery.

9 Being trans or non-binary does not necessitate having hormones or surgery.

10 People who transition have no sin to assuage and can self-disclose their personal histories if they wish (or not as the case may be).

## Gender politics in the style of Donald Trump

A case has been made to consider Raymond, queen of TERFs, as someone who has profoundly failed to understand what she criticises. In a parallel to the way, that Donald Trump begins a trade war to “make America great again”, against economists who expect that prosperity will be damaged by such a strategy, Janice Raymond and TERFs want a gender war between cis women and gender nonconformity. The leadership of Janice Raymond is comparable to Donald Trump’s treatment of complex political and economic issues. For Raymond, in a contemporary way of speaking, being a trans or non-binary person is fake news. It is a hoax to think that being trans or non-binary, gender questioning, gender queer or gender fluid, are at all credible or rational ventures. Raymond declares they have no justification. They are invasions of the host social body. Raymond accuses trans and non-binary people of desiring to take over cis women for their own ends of control and exploitation.

On the contrary, if it is true that gender ideals and stereotypes are historical creations influenced by genetic inheritance, then what is really happening is the expression of what is biologically caused in society, where the expression of gender slowly develops and changes, despite the historical influence.

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It is clear to me that those people who espouse and subscribe to TERF ideology are either ignorant of or seek to ciswash queer history and the prominent roles played by members of the trans community.

**Richard Firth**

## Once more with feeling: Thoughts on cis and trans lesbian solidarity

### Joana Matias

The recent wave of organised transphobia of the feminist persuasion might make some assume that it is only now that cis people know trans folk exist that it rears its head in politicised women's groups. The same could be said for transphobia amongst cis lesbians, most explicitly materialised in this year's Pride in London. Obviously, cis and trans queers have always coexisted, including in lesbian spaces, and the implications of relationships between cis and trans lesbians have become a particularly interesting talking point in TERF rhetoric - the idea of a cis lesbian being "forced" to have sex with someone with a penis being often used as a tactic to paint trans experiences as threatening.

Lesbian desires have a historically fraught place in (straight) feminism. From Betty Friedan's coining of the term "lavender menace", to the notion of political lesbianism as the ultimate feminist praxis, to the ensuing denouncing of elements of lesbian culture like butch-femme relationships, lesbian erotica, lesbian BDSM - there are interesting patterns to be observed in how lesbianism seems to often throw a wrench in overzealous feminist politics. Considering this, we can trace TERF "what about the lesbians" talking points to feminist critiques of lesbian sexuality intimately tied in with what we now call the sex wars. Both share a purported enunciation of concern for what is *supposed* to be *true* lesbianism, and a denouncing of something that threatens that because it is in some way patriarchal or male-identified. It echoes the work of historians like Joan Nestle and Pat Califia, who recall a time when butch-femme culture was bad because it replicated heterosexual norms, when lesbian porn made by and for lesbians was bad and exploitative because all porn is bad and exploitative, when organising meetings for lesbians who practice kink meant potentially cutting ties with your other comrades. It also echoes, on a personal note, my own experiences of attending screenings of queer porn in different countries and there *always* being someone that (sadly in its predictability) gets up during the Q&A to protest there being too many penises/too many dildos.

What I find to be different in the way lesbianism is constituted as a transphobic argument is that it doesn't speak of a specific reality that is unseemly, but rather to a vague threat, something on the outside. And in this sense, I've found it quite difficult to assess who is speaking for whom. Cis lesbians fighting for self-exclusion from LGBTQ+ politics will usually, but probably not always, also be involved in TERF groups opposed to trans rights more generally. Likewise, there is a statistical likelihood that most TERFs aren't queer. And while both will speak disparagingly of relationships between cis and trans women, I've seen an extra layer to the arguments used by cis lesbian transphobes: that, as a result of the presence and visibility of trans, non-binary and genderqueer people, they feel invisible, disempowered and isolated from queer spaces. To me, this speaks to something that is much more longstanding than a result of identities, labels, and the materiality of access to spaces having changed. However, it's important to know and understand this affective charge, if anything because it can make things all the more dangerous.

To be clear, transphobes of any persuasion aren't poor little victims. Many cis lesbians gleefully endorse transphobia, and the possibility of observing a historically conflicted relationship between feminism and lesbian sexuality doesn't excuse the damage these people cause. But knowing our history gives us clues about what is and isn't unique about present struggles. It helps us see how something that might appear to be a reaction to something new is actually much more complex; it can help us locate successes, and discard failed strategies. It might, even, help cis lesbians not yet committed to hateful views who come across "what about the lesbians and the penises" understand that straight feminists have never given a crap about the legitimacy of our desires and they're not about to start now. Lesbian sexuality, coopted for all kinds of means – ideal desexualised state of being or misogynistic, objectifying male-abiding desire – now serves as the paradigm that justifies transphobia. For if a cis lesbian isn't attracted to a trans woman, this alone must mean the truth of gender.

I don't have answers or solutions save for the fact that cis lesbians in particular but all queer-identified cis women in general need to pull their weight, refuse the commodification of our desires as a justification for transphobia, and support our sisters in whatever way, shape or form

they need. And because this might feel quite heavy, I thought it best to end on a more positive note and go through some examples of cis and trans lesbian solidarity in recent history.

The case of Beth Elliott being heckled off the stage at the West Coast Lesbian Feminist Conference in 1973, and Sandy Stone being forced to leave Olivia Records in the mid-1970s, reveal a similar praxis to that of TERFs today. Beth was a trans lesbian folk musician who had previously served as head of the San Francisco chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis. Sandy was a sound engineer for Olivia Records, a radical feminist lesbian separatist music collective based in California (she would, more famously, come to author the infamous response to *The Transsexual Empire*, “The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto”). In both cases, a few cis lesbians disavowed the overwhelming opposition and stepped up to the plate to engage in physical confrontation to defend their sisters from attackers.

Physical manifestations of solidarity are also part of the history of Camp Trans, a coalition of cis, trans, queer and intersex people of all ages who camped outside the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival site to educate attendees on transphobia. It started in response to the festival’s policy that resulted in several trans women being physically removed throughout the years. In 1992, the first organisers ran a survey that revealed festivalgoers’ overwhelming support of the presence of trans women at the festival. When they were told to leave the festival site in 1993, one cis organiser decided to stay inside, a simple and effective use of privilege. In 1994, the Lesbian Avengers offered to escort the campers inside so they could attend a workshop. They marched loudly, beat drums, and sang songs around the campers to make visible the fact that security was even needed in the first place.

These examples show us that trans women have always been present in lesbian spaces, and that cis lesbians have long opposed this before the GRA consultation panic came to be. It shows us that TERF rhetoric is not, as it is sometimes framed, a justified fear of something new and threatening, but rather part of a long history of transphobia in feminism. They also show us that whether transphobes were in the majority or otherwise, they were met with successful resistance from which we might learn something for the future.

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**No TERFs on our TURF**

**Leeds, November 2018**

