

As Performed on 5th Feb 2009 at the LGBT Centre in Glasgow and
on 21st Feb 2009 at the LGBT Centre for Health & Wellbeing in Edinburgh

Transgender Creative Writing Celebrating LGBT History Month



TRANSforming Arts

SCOTTISH TRANSGENDER ALLIANCE

www.scottishtrans.org

EQUALITY NETWORK



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Introduction:

In October 2008, the SCOTTISH TRANSGENDER ALLIANCE started running a transgender creative expression course called **TRANSforming Arts**. During the 2008/2009 financial year, fourteen intensive **TRANSforming Arts** workshops were run, mostly held in the Glasgow LGBT Centre. Further **TRANSforming Arts** workshops are being planned for the new financial year by the SCOTTISH TRANSGENDER ALLIANCE.

The **TRANSforming Arts** participants performed a selection of their creative writing to mark LGBT History Month in February 2009. This booklet contains the creative writing they performed.



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A Brief History of Gender Deviance in Great Britain

By Kristiane Taylor

Thank God for historians and archaeologists, without them we wouldn't know that, prior to the industrial revolution, there were no transgender people at all, or even mildly gender variant people, except alas those poor unfortunates skewered with red-hot pokers. It is down to the skills and thoroughness of these academics that we know for certain that no positive contribution has ever been made to any historical event prior to the modern era by a trans man or woman, an effeminate man, a butch woman, or even someone with the most marginal gender ambiguity whatsoever. That is a historical FACT.

For example, it is a proven archaeological FACT that no gender variant people were involved in the construction of Stonehenge. Under the druids flowing robes, there were no women sporting facial hair of any description (all women had neatly removed this using a primitive concoction made from bird shit not unlike I Mac). Nor were there any intersexed individuals with ambiguous genitalia. Nor any female-identified males praying to their pagan gods to be released from the prison of their body. This is an archaeological FACT (The rigour that archaeologists consistently display in establishing their FACTs means, regrettably, that this FACT is indisputable).



It is also widely known in academic circles that no gender deviance whatsoever was displayed by anyone in the building of Hadrian's wall. Not one single Roman centurion had slightly less facial hair than any other, or slightly larger nipples, or marginally softer skin. They were all very butch and manly, with very deep voices and mainly sporting moustaches (the hetero kind, of course) despite wearing skirts.

It is also recorded that a rebellious Boadicea never ever pulled her braided hair across her face to mimic a false moustache for a bit of fun in between slaying a few hundred terrified Romans.

It is also widely accepted that Guinnevere never once wore a pair of trousers, and always took care to shave her legs prior to watching a really good joust. Arthur likewise never drank pregnant mare's piss, even when very drunk. Claims that Arthur had a high-pitched voice, puffy nipples and minced like a girl are unfounded and can be traced back to malicious rumours spread by his arch enemy Mordred. FACT.

Furthermore, it is a proven FACT that Alfred the Great never once tucked his genitals between his thighs to admire his mangina in the mirror.

Not one Viking woman ever smuggled herself aboard a ship and took great and justifiable delight in smashing her way through the misogynistic monasteries lining the British coast.

And in those pillaged monasteries not one monk had sought to escape the gender confusion that had plagued his days only to have it cruelly ended, by some bizarre twist of fate, on the end of a rampaging Viking woman's sword.

It is another historical FACT that no trans people whatsoever were involved in the production of the Bayeux tapestry. All the women observed their appointed female roles, there was no farting or swearing at all. It is known that none had a large clitoris or a flat chest. And none felt their life as a woman was meaningless, or thought for one second "Why the fuck do I get stuck with the fucking sewing?"

Somewhat miraculously, prior to the development of modern medicine, not one person developed testicular or ovarian tumours that lead to the development of sex characteristics of the opposite sex. We know this for a FACT because there were no trans people in the past and therefore this would be a historical impossibility.

Not one lord or lady, not one labourer or shepherdess, not one mother or father, not one child, one sibling or orphan has been given to us.

Our anomalous, diverse, lives have been censored and our identities erased from the past in favour of a two-dimensional ideal that never existed.

So, tonight, we will do what historians and archaeologists have failed to do for us and start to breathe life back into our past.

The Phoenix Clan

By James Morton

The myth proclaims that only one exists
All on its own in the world
To painfully sacrifice its body for rebirth
A rarity occurring in very few centuries

Does any phoenix even exist at all?

If it does, it surely should be kept away from fire
Given talking therapies to reduce its self-destructive drive
No funding provided for kindling or matches
Only useful for research into abnormality

Is physical transformation even possible?

Surely it is too far-fetched, too extreme
It must just be a fantasy
Yet across continents and oceans
Such varied descriptions seem to be recorded

Could there be more than just one?

With plumage ranging from flamboyant through to dowdy
Courting controversy or flying quietly beneath radars
Gentle peaceniks, spiritual guides, caring healers
Occasionally even Molotov cocktail hurling warriors

Could there be a phoenix clan?

Certainly there is a potted history of legendary sightings:

Joan of Arc burning instead of renouncing wearing armour
Just one of many instances alighting religious passions

Dr Barry performing the first successful caesarean section
And chauvinistically insulting Florence Nightingale

Sylvia Riviera sparking the heat at the Stonewall Inn
With her multi-ethnic Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries

Reed Erickson earning millions from mechanical engineering
And spending it on gender reassignment research, drugs and leopards

April Ashley enduring aversion and electro-convulsive therapies
Before embarking on a life of controversy in modelling and marriage

Leslie Feinberg organising generations of anti-war protestors
And union workers on oil-drum heated picket lines

Lynne Conway soldering electronic innovations while being
Advised to read a textbook she'd written in her previous life

Sir Ewan Forbes celebrating with his Highland Dancing Troupe
After winning in court his birth certificate and baronetcy

Few are named to others
Most build their nests high up for safety
And allow only the most respectful of observers
Close enough to try to identify them as

A phoenix
Or a benu
Or a fenghuang
Or even a peacock or flamingo

Or transgender, transsexual, transvestite
Or androgyne, polygender, genderqueer
Or intersex, hermaphrodite
Or hijra, berdache, kathoey, fa'afafine

Struggling to categorise the multi-coloured fire
Which burns throughout the ages
From glowing embers to blazing flames
Sparking new connections and creation

The smoke of stereotypes merely masks
The image of our phoenix clan
To squinting ground-based observers
Not the imagination of our soaring dreams



The Berdache Speaks: Of Becoming

By Jo Clifford

So there I was sitting at my loom
weaving.

And this man came in. Distracted me. He was wearing trousers.
(These barbarians have no shame)
Watching me. Muttering under his breath.
Writing in a book.

"An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Native North
Americans. Or Redskins.

It must be confessed that in these parts effeminacy and lewdness are
carried to the greatest excess. Men are seen to wear the dress of women
without a blush. And seen to so debase themselves as to perform those
occupations peculiar to that sex. From this follows a corruption of morals
past all expression."

He did seem a bit upset.

But I couldn't understand a word he was saying.

"These creatures are termed berdache.

From the French bardache. And the Italian bardascio.

And the Spanish bardajo.

Meaning catamite.

The most degraded form of human life."

I was thirteen when my vision came.

my clan were hunters, yet

I could not dispatch the deer felled by the arrow

or the fish writhing on the river bank

my heart would twist with pity and my strength would fail me.

and I knew that on the war path I could never kill a man.

I longed to perform the tasks that women do:

sit at the loom, cast pots and cultivate the earth.

this troubled me.


I implored the spirits for guidance.

"They sit among the women and spin.
They wear women's dress and ornaments.
Yet they are clearly men. And they sit and they spin and they have no shame. To report this strains credulity yet I must. For I have seen it. I have seen it with my eyes. And they have the effrontery to claim this all comes from I know not what principle of religion.
From this it can readily be seen this whole people are irredeemably debased."

The moon came to me
she came dressed in white
she held a bow and arrow in her right hand
in her left a woman's burden strap
one is the path of men
and the other is the woman's.
I understood this, I saw this clearly,
and a voice said: Choose.
my arm reached for the bow, as I'd been taught
but I reached for the burden strap with my heart.
when I looked down to see what I was holding in my hand
I saw it was the burden strap.
I had chosen women's ways
the spirits had approved my choice
and my heart was glad within me.
I went to the elders. I renounced men's clothes.
I wore women's dress and I performed the women's tasks
and my days of hiding were over.

"As Christians these are practices we can only abhor. We can only be grateful in our hearts that the truth has been vouchsafed us. And we can only pray for the strength to disseminate it.
To be sure, the Christian faith has much work to do amongst these dissolute people"

I weave blankets. I paint pictures in the sand.
I am honoured among my people.
I sleep with the warriors when they need solace
I sleep with the women when they need strength.
The women give me courage: the men give me tenderness.
Both give me pleasure and both give me joy.



"There is profound gender malfunction here"
- and now the man had a white coat on -
"a chronic confusion of gender roles.
We could offer surgery.
Remove the genitals that cause you so much pain.
Give you classes in make up and deportment
Teach you to do your hair in a more becoming style.
So you look a little less conspicuous.
Frankly, just now, you don't look like a woman at all"

Why should I look like a woman? I am not a woman.

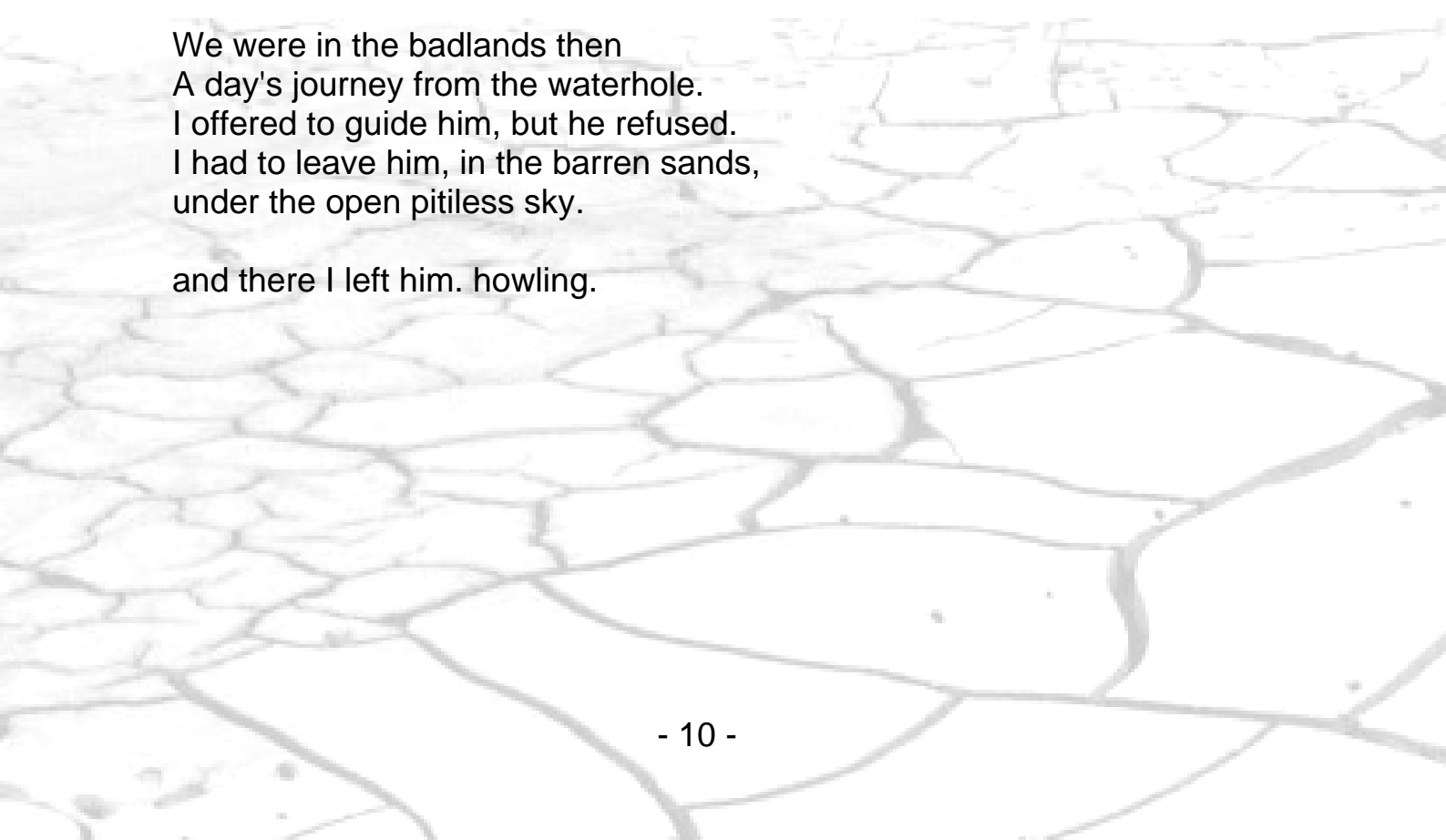
"Then learn to be a man"

I am not a man.
I am becoming! I am transformation! I am change!

"No this is all profoundly incorrect.
There is a universal human mind: and mind has to categorise.
There are categories of gender. You must belong to one of them.
You have to choose."

I have chosen. I am who I am.

But he would not hear me. He just babbled on.
About binary opposition and correct gender roles.



We were in the badlands then
A day's journey from the waterhole.
I offered to guide him, but he refused.
I had to leave him, in the barren sands,
under the open pitiless sky.

and there I left him. howling.

The Only Fencing Class

By B.

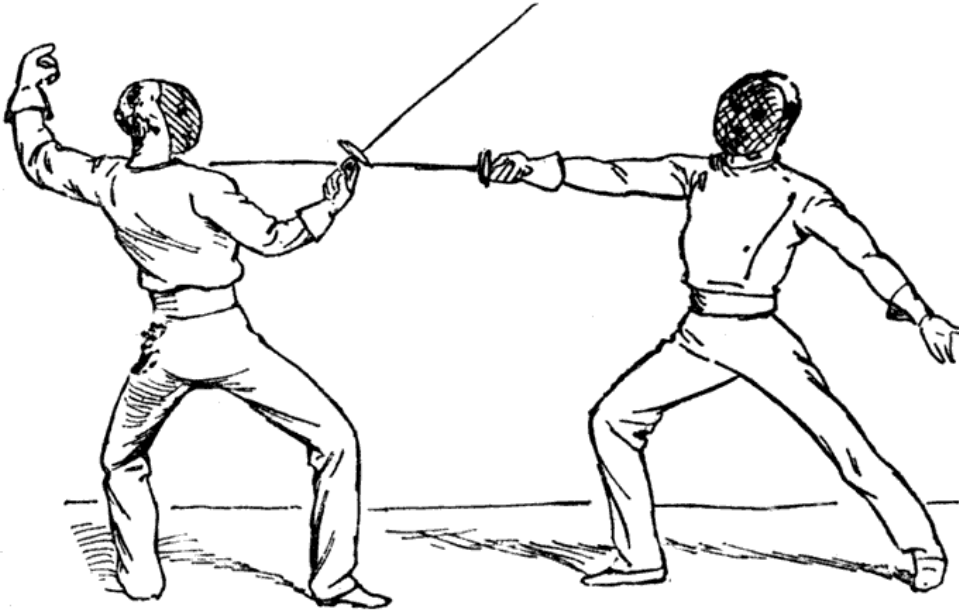
My friend A is a very enthusiastic person. In elated, enlightened moments, he screeches in a high-pitched voice, and presents the world with a relentless gender-queer identification. He is free of some otherwise so common social inhibitions in unfamiliar environments, so if you meet him, you are faced with the full personality, take it or leave it. A and I are very different from each other in temperament, age, circumstances, world experience. What bonds us together is the fact that we are both trans and share some enthusiasms. Fencing is one of them.

7 pm – Commonwealth Pool - Edinburgh's only public fencing class. My other friend, J, had already pulled out. I'm nervous in case A decided not to favour a theatre in the last minute. He turns up late, but – to my relief – just in time for class, so in we go, A and I.

We queue for equipment, we find the right sizes. The class is full of girls and boys, I fit in – teenage-looking, sporty. A is over 50, ages with the elder instructor, and carries a portly body. As newcomers, we get our technical levels tested on the piste. A short match with the elder instructor decides our ranking. We also exchange basic personal information – name, where we're from, what brings us to the fencing class. We give strikingly diverging info, makes one wonder how we ever got to meet in the first place. I turn out to be the son of a famous fencer nation and immediately get kudos I never deserved. "It's great to be a sun king! I like this place!" – say the feelings I try to cool down with my rational head. A is assumed to be an older gent, but emphatically corrects the instructor: "I am a woman!" after the gender-neutral name comes out into the public domain. A short raising of eyebrows happens, followed by a word of apology, which A takes amicably. A has clearly scored on an invisible record sheet. I am silently praying for invisibility. A friend is a friend, nonetheless, and A is a friend. So I quickly brush up my list of retorts, and my brain changes gear. I prepare to be aggressive in defending A and I. Then everyone settles into the lesson.

Beginners are explained rudiments and shown basic movements. More advanced fencers are set to do a series of manoeuvres taking turns. I am identified as an aggressive fencer with good foot-work, A turns out to be a vehement albeit less skilled fighter, whose enthusiasm is kept at bay with great difficulty. He fights in a stage manner – he learnt the lot from the movies. "Come on, if you dare! I'll slay you!" The slashing causes

bruises and mumbled complaint. After all, it is not becoming of a fencer to shy away. A apologises chivalrously every time there is a whimper from behind the opponent's mask. It's not meant to hurt!



At the end of the 2-hour session, we end up side-by-side again. A's eyes are glowing, body sweating, chest heaving from the unusual physical experience. He's seen me fence, and is patting my shoulder in a congratulatory fashion. He is mighty pleased with the experience. We're already planning a come-back. The instructors are thinking of putting me up for a silver medal in fencing technique. I am flattered, and have all-in-all found the lesson enjoyable. I say I'll definitely think about the silver medal. I am asked some questions and – feeling easy and care-free – divulge some information about myself. It's 15 years since I last fenced. A quick raising of eye-brows, and mental maths takes place in the younger instructor's head: "How old was this guy when he last did fencing?". I brush over this detail. Well, boasting about the things you can still do 15 years on is an older person's line. I don't think they get it.

We peel off the sweaty-wet padded coats. I realise I still look large-breasted for a slim boy. My previous easy mood has melted away. A is weird, and I am weird, too. For A, this is a message successfully conveyed. As for me, I have torn off any semblance of ordinariness in my careless pride.

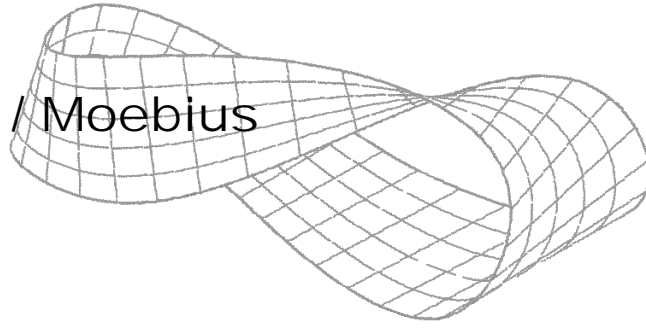
"We're going for a pint across the road. Wanna join us?"

A and I look at each other. "Not now, thanks. Maybe some other time."

We never do.

Mine Own Nature / Moebius

by Alex Rainbow



Part One - Alice

I think I must have been slightly mad for most of my life. I have certainly been screaming with loneliness for as long as remember. I was born into a working-class family in the West of Ireland. Being the only girl in a family of seven was bad enough but there were no other girls anywhere near my age in our local area either.

I was very tomboyish and my parents allowed me a great deal of freedom until that magic day came when I was supposed to become 'a little lady'. Prior to my fifteenth birthday I had asked for train sets and cowboy suits for xmas and birthdays, and until I was eighteen I spent Saturday afternoons making tea and sandwiches for my Mam and some girls from school as they talked endlessly of 'fellas' and clothes and make-up - subjects never of any interest to me.

The obsession of my life was the whole phenomenon of sex, of gender. Why only two sexes? Why not one, or three, or ten? Best of all, why not none? Why only two sexes and why is the female sex oppressed in every culture on this planet? When, as a teenager, I read D. H. Lawrence's poem 'The Tortoise', the line 'O why are we crucified into sex at all?' seemed to me the most basic and profound of all existential cries. I brooded constantly why my being a girl rather than a boy would make me so different from my brothers'. It was always assumed they would get a job, a home, a wife and children, in that order. It seemed they could have everything merely because they were boys, they would not have to sacrifice anything for anything else. I, however, could only be a nun like aunt or I could be like my Mam. My Mam was a attractive, passionate, extrovert woman who lived her life for my Dad and for all of us. Unremitting poverty, seven children and a husband unable to do hard physical work because of a series of minor heart attacks, caused my Mam .to have a 'mental breakdown' when I was seven years old; the treatment for this breakdown included her having twenty electric shocks in a two-year period. Her life was a ceaseless round of hard work, of struggling to make ends meet and keeping up appearances, and yet her lion-like spirit showed through. My Mam was 'the boss' at home but outside that house she was merely a wife and mother, never a person in her own right.

I would have cut my throat rather than grow up to be like my Mam. When I was ten years old the first sensational accounts of 'sex-changes' appeared in the Sunday papers. The first time I read about a sex change something happened deep inside me: my vague feelings about being a girl found a focus even though all the stories were about men who became 'wimmin'.

It was all so simple. I would become a boy. When I grew up would become a man in the way that other girls would become hairdressers or nurses or teachers or whatever. My obsession took root then. I kept a secret scrapbook throughout my teens of every sex-change report in the papers. Since I was ten years old I walked about our little town mentally transforming every woman I saw into a man and every man into a woman. I looked at myself in shop windows and mentally transformed the self that I was, a girl in a dress with ribbons in her hair, into the self that I would become, a muscular man on a motorbike wearing a leather jacket. When I was ten years old somehow choosing to be a boy seemed a good idea, a logical plan to follow. From being a child to being an adult this apparent choice changed to the overriding, deep-rooted belief that I was actually a boy, that nature had somehow made a mistake biologically but that I was really a boy. I lived only for the day when I would come into my own.

From when I was eleven years old I felt totally alone. I did have one close childhood friend, Maeve, but her family had moved to a different part of the country and I never saw her again. There was never anybody I could talk to about my transsexual feelings. I kept them to myself, where they constantly grew in depth and everything else became merely a backdrop to my private obsession: home, family, school, everything. . I wanted to be a man in every way.

I knew my family would never accept me as a boy or a man, so I began to withdraw from them. It was pointless making friends who would reject the 'new me' in the future, so I stopped making friends. I went through everyday life merely marking time until I could leave Ireland for Britain to become the real me. To keep my distance from everybody, always being a polite child, I became an unusually polite teenager. I knew I would be alone all my life so I started preparing for it as soon as possible. I read a lot as a child, but as a teenager I read every book in our local library. I was at the local convent school from twelve to eighteen years old and I was considered clever but 'strange'. My habit of going for long walking and cycling trips alone further exacerbated my reputation for oddness.

As my transsexual obsession deepened I was prone to bouts of morbid depression and I spent a great deal of time thinking about suicide; suicide was almost a twin obsession at times.

Always conscious of the power in female-male relationships, I was bitterly aware of my own inferior position in the scheme of things. Five of my brothers are older than me and one younger. Relatives always made disparaging remarks about me 'breaking the chain' of five boys, but consoled my parents that they at least had a girl to look after them in their old age. My brothers were always called 'fine, handsome boys' while 'the little girl is nice too'. My self-loathing deepened all the time. I felt totally alienated from my body, the inferior female body that labelled me second-rate, the body that I did not ask to have. I have never questioned my sexuality. I have always been exclusively attracted to girls and women in any sexual or deep emotional way; it has always been a part of me like grey eyes or dark hair. All the time I was growing up I had never heard the word 'homosexual' or even jokes about 'queers'. I think my transsexual obsession might have been triggered at puberty when I could not reconcile the fact of my being a girl with my intense crushes on other girls. Only if I were a boy could I ask girls out on dates; only if I were a boy could I have sexual contact with girls. It never occurred to me that somewhere women might love other women precisely because they were other women and that this love could include a sexual dimension.

The year I was eighteen I left our town for college. I had a place to study engineering, my major in electronics. I made no friends or even close acquaintances during my eighteen months at college. There were about ten girls on the engineering course but I kept entirely to myself. My perennial thoughts of transsexualism and suicide never left me, but in many ways I was happier than I had ever been in my life. However, financial problems, ever-increasing feelings of personal isolation and frustration, and constant pressure from my family to give up something like engineering, forced me to leave college halfway through the course. Eventually, I got a job as bank clerk in London when the banks went on a recruiting drive in Ireland. So, aged twenty, I finally left Kerry for London to begin my transformation into a man.

Part Two - Alan

For the next ten years I lived in London. It was like a vast playground to me, full of excitement and interest. I loved the anonymity of London. I lived near one of my brothers, but I was still alone as always. The first year was a magical mystery tour. I went to my first gay pub. Although it

was mostly men I felt totally at home. I loved the whole ambience. After almost a year of immersing myself in a new culture, I went to my local GP with a long letter explaining my wish to see a psychiatrist. He referred me to the first of two psychiatrists I was to visit for several months. All this was merely a convention as far as I was concerned, an exercise I had anticipated for nearly ten years. I knew the questions they would ask me. I emphasised my 'masculine' traits, ignored any aspects of my interests or temperament which could be termed remotely 'feminine'. I glowed when they gave me their expert opinion that I was in most respects 'a normal young man'. My motto became: 'I am really a man trapped in a woman's body.'

In the beginning they offered me aversion therapy but I furiously refused that. I continually demanded my right to have hormone treatment and operations, to become a man physically as much as possible. When all this was going on I left my job as a bank clerk to work as a messenger. Finally I got my long-awaited appointment to see Dr John Randell, the 'patron saint of transsexuals'. Dr Randell was blunt. Current medical technology could never make me a man in full fact, but I could have what was available. I accepted his offer as Sir Galahad must have accepted the Holy Grail. I left my job to "sign on." I moved from my little flat to join a transsexual community, people the other way round to me - men to wimmin - but who understood me. I stayed at home as much as possible while I took massive doses of testosterone, the male hormone. The risk of liver cancer associated with this did not bother me in the slightest; I would have done anything to get what I wanted. I wore a corset over my breasts for a manly appearance: It hurt at first. Next, I went to the barber's for a crew-cut. I bought a man's tweed jacket, trousers and suit. I registered my new name, Alan, with the local DHSS. During this time I tried to avoid going out. People often asked me the time just to hear my voice so they could proclaim my gender to their friends. I was unable to use the public toilets since I was told I was in the wrong one whichever I went to.

Gradually I put on body weight, a lot of it muscle bulk, and took to daily weight training. My voice deepened. I grew sideburns. I looked and talked like a lad of sixteen instead of a woman of twenty-two. I was ready to fulfil the condition of my having the operation: I had to spend a year 'passing' as a male in stereotypical working-class jobs.

I formed a real friendship with the transvestite man who owned the house where I lived. His room was the most interesting I had been in up to then. Books dealing mainly with science and the occult lined the walls,

bits of engineering projects littered the table, his ultra-feminine dresses hung in one corner and the printing press of the transsexual/transvestite magazine he edited was in the other corner. Daily life at home was often like a scene from a very shabby version of the "Rocky Horror Picture Show" with transvestites and transsexuals continually visiting. We were often hassled by the neighbours and occasionally by the police. Verbal abuse on the streets was commonplace, a brick through the window was not unusual. Every day I ventured forth on my series of jobs: guard on the railway, driver's mate, window cleaner, warehouse assistant. I was always on my guard,, always playing the `macho' role but always worried sick in case I was found out. Probably the worst day of that year, though a typical one, was a particularly hot day in August. I was working with three men at a warehouse near the airport. We were lifting metal girders onto a lorry and securing them in place with wooden slats which we nailed together. As the day wore on the men stripped to the waist in the burning sun. I, however, had to keep wearing my jacket because of my pullover because of my shirt because of my corset ... Amazingly, during this trial year nobody ever seemed to suspect that I was a woman, though I occasionally got called 'poofster'.

I had my double mastectomy when I was twenty-three. It is a painful operation. Regardless of how I feel about it now, this period was one of the happiest times of my life. Having my breasts removed was having my stigmata removed, the outer sign of my inner affliction of inferiority. About a year after my mastectomy I had my hysterectomy, an even more painful operation. Between these operations I did occasional voluntary work, mainly on an archaeological site. I had full social acceptance as a man. I took a government training course, got a full-time job in computing and I moved to a different part of London. I was beginning to realize that I would never actually be a man and I already had experienced what I probably wanted more than anything else - the power men have in society. Moreover, there was the sheer pain of the future operations, to permanently deepen my voice and to have my pelvic basin altered to narrow my hips for that distinctively masculine appearance. Surgical techniques for an artificial penis and scrotum were still experimental and any success there seemed a long way in the future. Consequently, I decided I would be an androgynous sort of person and I found old esoteric idea about being a whole person in the alchemical or shamanic sense, a female-male composite, increasingly attractive. I stopped taking my testosterone tablets and went back on the dole again.

Part Three - Alexx

A year later my life changed radically. I was twenty-seven and working in a food and book collective. I read Gyn/Ecology by Mary Daly, followed immediately by The Transsexual Empire by Janice Raymond. I locked myself for two days and nights in my room without food or water or sleep. I was weeping bitterly for most of the time. I could not talk. I was eating the mat on the floor. I had no self. I lost my identity. I was nobody. I was a traitor to half the human species - my own half of the human species. The oppression and suffering of wimmin in every culture throughout the millennia overwhelmed me.

The links between what the medical profession had done to me in British patriarchy and the cruelties and outrages perpetuated by every patriarchy throughout the world were glaringly obvious. The most fitting, though inadequate, analogy I could think of for my situation was to be a light-skinned black person who identified with white people all her life, who had `passed' as a white person for years, and who had suddenly discovered the reality of Black Power. For a while my self-loathing and judgment of self went deeper than they had ever been in my life. When I came out of my room again I had a new identity, I was a new person. I was a radical lesbian feminist. I changed my first name because I actually felt I was a new person. I changed my surname because I did not want my sire's name. I wanted my own name because we as wimmin never have our own last names. I felt as though I had been reincarnated in the same lifetime.

Part Four - Alex

It was in the Autumn 2006 that, for the first time in my life, I met people truly like myself. I was fifty two years old.

I had been identifying as genderqueer – i.e. outside the standard binary gender divide – for several years by then. I knew that I never quite fitted into lesbian circles despite my deep feminist convictions. Thus, I was fascinated when I heard about the Trans Men Scotland group that met in Edinburgh. I rang them to ask if I could come to a meeting; they were very welcoming and supportive. After attending a few meetings at Trans Men Scotland, I decided to ask my G.P. to arrange for me to see Dr. Myskow, the psychosexual specialist at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary.

I had not expected my appointment with Dr. Myskow to – yet again – change my life.

She's a warm, charismatic sort of person, but I certainly was not expecting that the next 50 minutes would be among the most intense of my life. She didn't see me as "cool" or "interesting," or as "weird" or "perverted." She saw me as a person in torment.

Dr. Myskow uses both a medical model and a counselling model in her practice, and the combination of both worked like molten lava. She was perceptive and caring in an objective way, and I responded accordingly. Her probing questions and comments elicited responses from me that I had not gone there intending to say. As I talked on with Dr. Myskow, I was desperately trying to anchor myself emotionally in the maelstrom of feelings that were flooding me. I felt like an early test pilot trying to break through the sound barrier, and I clung desperately to that image "...If only I can get through this ... if only I can stick with this...if only I can come out the other side of this..."

The terrible thing that I was trying to assimilate was that I had apparently wasted the last 26 years of my life. Through my tears, I said despairingly "But that would make the last 26 years of my life a meaningless farce!" We explored the issue farther. My own temperament, and my strong Catholic background, make me try to find the "right" thing to do. I have always done what I sincerely believed to be the "right" thing with what resources were available to me. In existential terms, I have always tried to be "authentic." My gender dysphoria has always been my burden. But even through my despair I felt a strange kind of relief.

Afterwards, as I walked to the bus stop, I just sat down on the pavement for a few minutes with my head in my hands. Damn damn damn this endless search for identity and truth! This is drinking vinegar. What philosophical and political position should I adopt now? What should I do? What resolution? "Take this chalice from me..."

Many transsexual and/or transgender people are not particularly interested in trying to understand why they are so, but I am. Dr. Myskow's own hypothesis is that the brains of some people may receive extra doses of the "wrong" sex hormones while in their mothers' wombs. I have to say that I have secretly felt this myself for a very long time. When I was a child, my Mam often told me that "God gave you the wrong brain." She never said what I had always felt myself then, that God had actually given me the wrong body and not the wrong brain, but then she

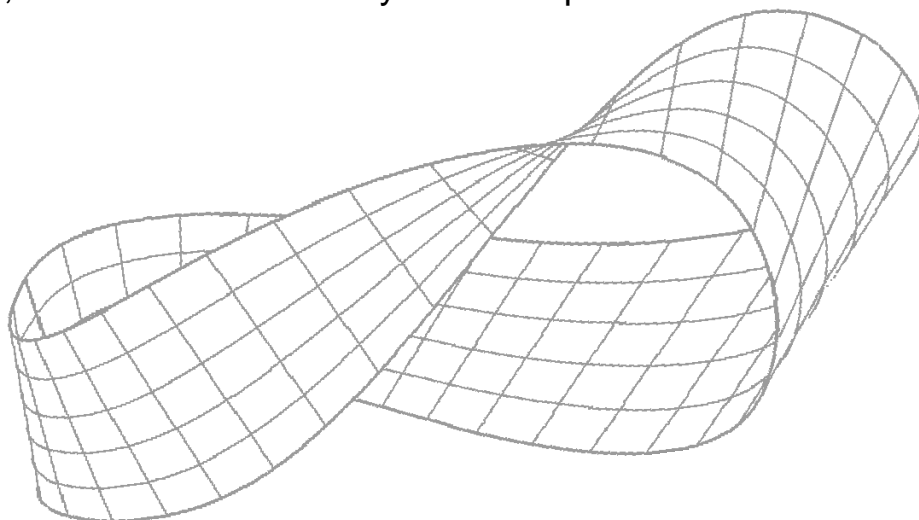
had always desperately wanted a daughter...Once, after she and I had a huge row when I was a teenager, she shouted at me that I was a “caibin,” an old Irish slang word for a fowl of indeterminate sex.

But how to test Dr. Myskow’s hypothesis? I think that I might leave my brain to medical science when I die. But I would prefer to know now if my brain has extra testosterone, so if any new imaging technique becomes available I shall ask to try it. Of course I am not trying to argue that would be the only factor involved in my being transsexual - far from it - but it may well be the clincher.

If the “male brain” hypothesis, or something similar, is correct for my situation, it would give me a medical validation, a biological substrate for everything I have always felt about my own gender and sexuality. I had thought that being transsexual and being intersex were two different phenomena that illuminated each other, but now I see them as being much more closely related.

“Intersex” (it used be called hermaphroditism) is actually a whole cluster of medical conditions which can be genetic and/or hormonal and/or physiological. It is rare, but we now know it to be more common than was previously believed. There is a fledgling (and radically challenging) intersex rights movement which questions whether intersex babies should be “given” a gender at birth at all, whether “corrective” surgery should ever be applied, whether there should be any “official” sexual orientation categories, etc.

The LGBT communities now need to be extended again to call ourselves the LGBTI communities: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex. My vision is of an obvious multi-gender and multi-sexuality society, just as we are slowly struggling towards a multi-racial society, all free and equal in status. I am proud and glad to carry the self-chosen last name of Rainbow, an emblem of diversity and of hope.



Those Places

By Amy Redford

She was soaking in the bath when the phone rang. She lifted it from the wee table beside her, looked to see who it was, and got a pleasant surprise. It was her, the girl she'd got together with, just a few short weeks ago. Smiling, she hit the answer button.

"Helloooo", the voice said in its cute little accent, "I know we said we'd have the night off, but I'm missing you. Do you maybe fancy coming over, and grabbing a curry and a bottle of wine on the way?"

"Sure! But I'm in the bath just now, gimme about an hour and a half and I'll see you then. What'll I get you?"

"Well... you know me... bottle of shiraz and a mushroom curry please."

"Sure, no worries sweetheart, I'll see you soon".

They said their goodbyes and hung up.

"Ah well..." she muttered to no-one in particular. "Best get moving then."

It was about a twenty five minute walk door to door. A right out the gate, through the stadium car park, and onto the main road. It was always busy here, what with the newsagents and the take-away shops. There was a good curry house on this stretch of road but it would be cold by the time she got to there. As she walked past the shop, there was a row of parked cars alongside. She heard an electric window behind her.

"You're a big fucking tranny bastard!" There was a pause as her latest abuser waited for a response. She didn't break her stride. She heard pretty much the same thing every day she went out the door.

"Either that or you're a really fucking ugly woman!" Well at least that's original she thought and carried on regardless.

A left turn at the chemist, a few hundred yards, across the road, then a right into the park. It was a beautiful evening. The sun was out of sight behind the hospital, but it lit the tops of the trees as the leaves shimmered in the breeze. She could see the moon though, in the other half of the sky, as the oncoming dusk overwhelmed the last of the day. It was a beautiful evening, and she'd have been able to enjoy it too, if it hadn't been for the sight of the gate at the far side of the park. To anyone else it was just the park gate. But to her it was one of those places.

There was a whole list of those places. It was always that bit harder to go back to a place on that list. And now she'd have to add the curry house to the list too. She hated those places.

The hole in the wall at the end of the Trongate. Where from the moment one of them clocked her and shouted "Aw fuckin hell! That burdz a guy!" they'd chanted "She's a man! She's a man! She's a man!" till they were three blocks away and got a bit bored with it all. That was at closing time on a Saturday night and even her heterosexual friends who were with her feared for their safety as a thousand drunken eyes sought their victim.

Then there was the Chinese takeaway just along the road from her house. She and a friend were sitting inside waiting on their order, when five of Glasgow's shell-suited finest walked in. Perhaps he couldn't read, but one of them chose to look around rather than peruse the menu. His gaze fell on them and at first he liked what he saw. Then there was that rabbit-in-the-headlights moment of realisation. Without a word, he walked outside, only to return with two more young gentlemen. When the girls stood up to collect their meal one of them very politely enquired, "Er excuse me, I hope you don't mind me asking, but do you know you're a big tranny bastard by the way?"

One of his less eloquent fellows merely laughed and said "Bet you, you've got a nine inch cock". The girls were quite lucky and got as far as their friend's car, but the car got surrounded and kicked and spat on before they could drive off. She hated those places. She couldn't go to any of those places again without re-living the episode attached to it.

She felt the adrenalin again as she reached the park gate. It was just the other morning on her way home, after staying over at the girl's place again. The guy walking towards her suddenly stopped in his tracks, and then, probably more by accident than design, pointed roughly eastward and shouted "Haw you cunt, Bangkok's that way!" Thankfully, there were no more of those places the rest of the way to Oddbins.

As she entered the take-away the guy behind the counter looked over and smiled. She ordered, and winced inside as the guy's eyes got visibly rounder as her voice gave her away. He stood, silently scrutinising her as she dug the money out of her purse. She sat down as he disappeared into the kitchen. There was an excited clatter of foreign tongues from behind the partition. She didn't know what they were saying, but she knew what was being said. By the time the food was ready, three other staff members had come from the kitchen for a look. Although one of them made it look like he wanted a can of coke from the chill, another saw the need to collect a menu from the counter, and the third simply walked out, went to the window, glanced outside and walked back into the kitchen. All to the soundtrack of the clattering tongues. As the

counter guy handed over the bag of food, he deliberately stroked her hand, looked her in the eye and said in his best seductive tones "Enjoy your meal".

Three minutes later she was inside. Hug. Kiss. Breathe. Relax.

Safe.

"Right, I'll get the plates if you open the bags", she said. There was a rustle of polythene, then a "Huh?", then laughter. "Which takeaway did you go to? I think you made an impression. Here, look at this."

She put the plates down and took an order slip from the other girl's hand. There was a mobile number followed by "Call this number after midnight".

She laughed. "Cheeky bastard. He didn't even sign it."

About ten days later she was passing the same takeaway, when the counter guy came out with a whole load of bags for their home delivery driver. He looked at her coldly as their paths crossed. Behind her, she heard him open the passenger door and talk to the driver. There was loud guffawing, then the sound of the drivers' window going down. "Ya fucking tranny bastard!" followed her up the street. She could do nothing more than just keep walking, mentally adding another one to the list of those places.

Daddy's Girl

By Campbell Lauder

A mobile phone, a full beer glass, and a wine bottle and a full wine glass sit on a table. At opposite ends of the table sit STEVEN and her DAD – both seem very uncomfortable.

DAD: So, what's wrong with being a bloke, then son?

Steven winces and shrugs.

STEVEN: Nothing! *(nervously)* I've always felt I should've been born female.

DAD: Oh... *(long pause)* ...and your girlfriend? You have got one?

Steven shakes her head. Steven, knows what's coming next and looks down at her feet.

DAD: Well, when you do - how's she going to feel when you try on some of her make-up and clothes and...y'know...stuff...?

Steven noticeably cringes at this remark.

STEVEN: Dad - I'm transsexual, not a transvestite!

DAD: What's the difference? Besides the spelling – obviously!

Steven groans, as she looks at her Dad in disbelief, and takes a sip of wine.

DAD: Look...Steven...I just want to help. What do I know about being a woman... *(sadly)* ...look...son...it's not like you can ask your Mum...

Steven sighs, but she doesn't say anything as she and her Dad respectfully clink the their glasses together, before silently drinking their drinks for a moment.

DAD: I used to always know what you were thinking - but now? You liked your Action Men, and them fiddly Transformer thingies, and you loved football. *(pause)* And now...I'm picturing you tarted-up like Lilly Savage!

STEVEN: *(angrily)* I don't look like Lilly Savage! *(softly)* ...and folk change, y'ken?

Dad shrugs and nods thoughtfully, before clearing his throat.

DAD: When your Mum *(sighs)* ...em, well...you were twelve...and Jenny, was ten. You became the man of the house for a bit - you took care of your sister and me!

STEVEN: Because you'd totally lost the fucking plot Dad! You were skipping work!

DAD: And you were skiving school! You almost had yourself and your sister taken away from me by social services!

STEVEN: Aye, but it brought you back to your senses!

DAD: That's what scares me son...you sure you're not having a mental breakdown now – 'cause of what happened back then?

STEVEN: Naw am no, Dad! But I probably will if I dinnae do this.

Dad vigorously shakes his head in disbelief and abject worry, he slams down his beer.

DAD: What if at university - you're bullied, or you're beaten-up, because you're a dressed like a bird? What about finding work? Or - or what if you need the bog and go to the gents and some bastard rapes and murders you? For God's sake, you're just eighteen, and a shy and sensitive lad at that!

STEVEN: *(furiously)* I am not a BOY, My name's HELEN, and I AM your DAUGHTER!

Dad is utterly taken aback. HELEN quickly downs the rest of her wine. There is a prolonged pause as Helen stares blankly at her Dad, who looks away guiltily.

DAD: (stammers) So...Helen...

He shakes his head in disbelief at the name he just uttered.

DAD: ...do you want to go to the next Hearts match? I'll get us good seats...

Helen's mood can't help but lighten, a cheeky grin spreads across her face.

HELEN: Aye, I'd love to Dad!

Dad's posture noticeably relaxes.

DAD: (jovially) Phew...I'm glad to see you still love fitbaw!"

Helen's grin slips into a grimace.

HELEN: Why wouldn't I? Dad, a lot of girls love fitbaw! Mum loved fitbaw!

DAD: I know...I know son, I know...

HELEN: (spitefully) And Dad, I also love fitbawlers too!

DAD: WHAT?! Now you're telling me you're a shirt-lifter, as well as a woman?!

Helen gasps at her Dad's using that phrase, she finds herself breaking down in tears.

DAD: Steve...I'm...so...

Dad fidgets in his seat, clearly not knowing what to do, he momentarily reaches his arms out – but stops himself mid stretch. Flustered, he fidgets, before deciding to pour Helen more wine.

DAD: (without-thinking) How can you be gay, if you think you're a woman, surely you'd be a lesbian?

As soon as he realises what he just said, buries his head in his hands. Helen despite being somewhat offended by that remark, can't help but giggle slightly at it.

HELEN: I'm a straight woman, I'm not gay.

Dad frowns – clearly unable to comprehend this, but he stays quiet and awkwardly pats Helen on the shoulder. Helen understands and smiles softly.

DAD: I guess I have to accept that you're a grown man now...
(pause) ...woman now.

Another – albeit less painful - silence begins as both continue drinking. Helen nervously crosses his legs and then brings out her mobile phone and holds it close to her face and starts fiddling with it.

DAD: (a little sharper than he intends) Stop messing with that flippin' thing, you know how I hate you doing that!

Helen jumps in fright.

HELEN: Sorry Dad!

Helen stops messing about with her phone, but keeps a grip, as she takes a sip of wine.

HELEN: Dad?

Dad nods as he continues drinking his beer.

HELEN: Oh...this is weird... (she hesitates) ...would you mind if...I show you a picture of me...dressed as a woman...as my real self?"

Dad chokes on a mouthful of beer, but soon nods very guardedly.

DAD: Um...I...suppose so!?

Helen tensely hands her phone to her Dad, to show him the picture. Dad takes it, but clear barely glance at the picture, he frowns, before he quickly hands it back.

DAD: Son, that's the wrong photo - That's a picture of your Mum.

Tears form in Helen's eyes, and roll down her cheeks. Helen slowly shakes her head.

HELEN: No...no...it's not Dad...it is me...I just...I just look a lot like...her.

There is an agonising pause, as an unreadable expression fills Dad's face, as he nods.

HELEN: Dad?

Dad roughly grabs the phone and inspects the photograph, he looks at his daughter's face, then back at the photo, he gasps, and again, he looks at Helen's face right before him. Dad visibly trembles, tears well in his eyes as he looks at the phone for a final time.

HELEN: Dad...are you alright?

He finally looks back to Helen, his hand covers his mouth as he shakes his head.

DAD: *(practically inaudible)* Get-out...

Helen shakes her head and tilts her ear – did Dad say what she thought he said?

DAD: ...get-out...Steven, I said GET OUT!

HELEN: But Da--

Dad slaps Helen hard across the cheek.

DAD: I said GET THE FUCK OUT of my house!

Helen quickly grabs her phone, gets up and hurries toward the door. Dad reaches for the bottle and goes to throw it.

CODA

DAD: We haven't seen Helen in two months and we're worried sick. I'd never been violent in my life until then. I'm so ashamed. Jenny came home later that day, she found blood on our front path I think I must've cut Steven - Helen with the glass, when I threw that wine bottle. I told my daughter everything – she was bloody furious. Turns out Jenny know all about Helen already. She was the one who taught him how to do make-up and all that stuff, and it was she who took that picture of Helen.

We text and phone her every day, but they're never answered, not even Jenny's. My real concern wasn't that my son is actually my daughter. It was seeing him look so much like Rebecca – I felt like she was insulting her Mother's memory. But how can she be, she never chose to be how she is.

(long sigh) I...wish...she...was still here...God, I love her so much!



Prodigal Daughter

By Jo Clifford

(adapted from her new play

'The Gospel according to Jesus Queen of Heaven')

There was once a father who had two sons.

And the younger son knew she was his daughter and went to her father saying

"Forgive me, for I can no longer be called your son."

And the father did not forgive her, but called the whole household together and said:

"This can no longer be called my son. This creature has brought disgrace on all of us"

And he cast her out. But because in spite of everything he still loved his child, he slipped her a bit of money on the side.

And the son who was now a daughter went off to a far country and then, not being very inclined to be prudent, spent all the money her father had given her on gorgeous dresses and shoes and soon found herself out on the street without a euro to her name.

And all her friends who loved her when she wore Prada and Versace now called her a chav and would have nothing to do with her.

And there she was in a far country where there was no-one to help her, and there was much poverty in this place and she had to take work where she could find it.

So she worked in a hotel kitchen cleaning pots and pans and it was dirty work and the pay was wretched and she went hungry.

And in the kitchen they threw out much food that in her country would have made very good food for pigs

But they had to throw it away, for they were not allowed to touch it, and she said to herself:

"In my father's house they treat the animals better than they treat the employees in this place. I will go back to my father and say I can no longer be called your son and if you think me unworthy to be called your daughter then at least employ me as your cleaning maid."

So she went back to her father's house, hitching rides and hiding in goods wagons and her father saw her coming from a long way off and ran out to meet her, and she fell at her feet and said, "Father forgive me for I can no longer be called your son" and the father shouted out in joy and said to his servants "Fetch her a gorgeous dress and run her a scented bath and let's have music and a feast for she that was gone has returned and she that was dead has come back to life".

And there was music and feasting and the elder son who had been working in the office came home. And he asked, "What is this?" for their house tended to be a very serious kind of place and when he heard he was furious.

And he said to his father, "I have been such a good son! I have done everything I was supposed to and you haven't so much as bought me a decent suit! But when this pervert comes home it gets everything!"

And the father said, "It's true you've always done your best and tried to be a good son to me but the fact is you're rather dull. And you have never loved me! And you have lost yourself..."

"Whereas this new daughter of mine was dead and is now alive.

She was lost, and is now found. I have found her and she has found herself.

And so of course we must celebrate."

And so they did. Because the queendom is like that.

The queendom is like a grain of mustard seed, tiny tiny tiny

And you can try to hide it if you like

But if you do it will grow inside you big big big

Until it feels like there is no room for anything beside it.

For I tell you that what was hid shall come to light.

For inside us we all have a light, and it's maybe the very thing that we have been taught to be most ashamed of

And when you have a light, do you hide it under a bucket?

No! you bring it out into the open where everyone can see it

And be glad it exists to shine in the world.

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