

DRESSING UP, THE HISTORY OF AN OBSESSION

by P. Ackroyd
a book review by A. Kane

DRESSING UP explores the fascinating and complex phenomena of transvestism and drag. It is an examination of the profound psychological significance underlying most crossdressing as an expression of longing for identification, with women or with men, while maintaining one's maleness or femaleness.

It is also an exploration of the cultural and historical antecedents of this phenomenon which was (and in some cultures still is) an integral part of religious ritual and theatre — among American Indians and African tribes, and in the theatre of ancient Rome and Greece, and in the Noh and Kabuki theatre of Japan. Mr. Ackroyd discusses the depiction of crossdressing and drag in literature and in contemporary cinema, music, dance and theatre and considers famous crossdressers and drag artists such as the Duke of Orleans, the Abbey de Choisy, queen Christina of Sweden, King Henry III of France, George Sand, Colette and others.

The author also notes the reactions of various societies throughout the centuries to the practice of crossdressing ranging from acceptance and institutionalization to violent hostility. The book is accompanied by over 140 carefully selected illustrations.

DRESSING UP is one of the few serious non-pedantic studies of the crossdressing phenomenon. It is a fascinating exploration of an enduring behavior which alternately terrifies, reassures, alienates and excites, and whose practice and mythology are as old as gender differentiation itself. (This title is available from our catalog of books.)

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The Human Outreach and Achievement Institute, also called the Outreach Institute, is a non-profit, educational corporation of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It serves as a resource for crossdressers, androgynes, transsexuals and members of the helping professions.

The Newsletter is co-edited by A. Kane and N. Ledins and all inquiries should be mailed to the Outreach Institute, Kenmore Station, Box 368, Boston, Massachusetts 02215.

INSTITUTE INVITED TO NATIONAL SEX EDUCATOR CONFERENCE

In March 1980 the national meeting of the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Therapists (A.A.S.E.C.T.) was held in Washington, D.C. Helping professionals from all over the United States, Canada and Mexico attended the four day conference.


The Outreach Institute, represented by Ariadne Kane and Betty Ann Lind gave a poster presentation of crossdressing/gender issues/transsexuality. Over one hundred professionals listened as Ariadne and Betty Ann presented their viewpoint on these issues. Some of these included the gender roles — sex role distinction and preference; some rudimentary coping strategies for helping professionals in dealing with clients who come to them with a problem in this area of human behavior and, a realizable androgyny model for understanding the variety of paraculture behaviors. A healthy question and answer period followed and some misconceptions of these issues were resolved.

For the first time at this Conference, professional people who are also members of the paraculture interacted with other helping professionals. Many were curious and very interested in what we had to say. Some were very positive and gave support to the point of view we presented. There were also a few who were homophobic about the issues and preferred to avoid any contact with us.

Betty Ann and Ariadne felt that a significant inroad had been made toward looking at and rethinking the issues, not from a mental illness viewpoint, but rather as a mode of full personality expression.

Our appearance and presentation at the National AASECT Conference is another important step in the Outreach Institute's efforts toward understanding and tolerance.

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INSTITUTE INVITED TO NATIONAL SEX EDUCATOR CONFERENCE

THE TV/TS DIRECTORY

The Institute in collaboration with Tiffany Club, has compiled an extensive list of organizations and services, for social contact, publications, legal and counseling services, boutiques, and programs, with addresses. This valuable booklet is available from the Institute and costs \$4.50. The listings cover a wide range of areas throughout the United States and Canada.

LONG RANGE PROGRAMS

D. A pre-retirement planning program designed to help men and women transit from a thirty year work routine into a newly structured life and time management environment. The approach is a holistic one and involves raising awareness of the interactive dynamics of social change of the person as she/he approaches retirement age. The program will be offered to corporations, banks, insurances who have sizable employee populations nearing the period of retirement. Cost \$75,000.

Plans for these programs have been prepared and we are in the process of applying for grants to implement them. However, we need "grass roots" support from you. Any and all contributions to the Outreach Institute, which are tax deductible, are cheerfully accepted. Please inquire about our special donor package to those who make contributions in excess of \$1000.

Announcing the new location of
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CONUNDRUM *a poem by S. Machin*

I want I know not what; but the confusion that lies within my soul at this time threatens my existence.

I want happiness as we all do; but the temptation of a more rewarding lifestyle is hampered as to doubt in dream versus reality.

Do I want to start down the road of discovery and put the life I know in jeopardy; or to remain in the state of frustrated existence?

Perhaps a compromise of the two extremes that live within this but normally appearing man.

The dilemma of the unknown and the projection of the future scares me to the core of my being.

Perhaps confusion can better be defined as finding two dreams beautiful but the realities of both threatening


A CALL FOR ARTICLES

For subsequent issues, we invite our readership to submit articles, either professional or personal, about some aspect of the paraculture, to the editors.

The article should be at least two 8½x11 doublespaced, typewritten pages in length. They should be received at least one month prior to the date of publication of the Newsletter. Dates of publication are April 30, July 31 and November 30.

The Editors reserve the right to edit all materials for publication, to conform with space requirements and standards of good taste.

CRITIQUE

accepted by the professional community that surgery should be preceded by a period of "living out" accompanied by hormone therapy and fully experiencing the new role. Indeed those who do so have the fewer post-surgical problems. The paper also noted that the greatest improvement was among the operated group and least among those who obtained the operation by bypassing rigors of the program. Yet, little mention of this is made in the popular press. Rather, great emphasis is made to the one sentence, "Sex reassignment surgery confers no objective advantage in terms of social rehabilitation . . .", a statement that the report never proves. In short, an *editorial* comment stuck in at the end of the report is the basis for headlines all over the country!!

The meat of the report is the presentation and analysis of data intended to show relative social adjustment. As I will demonstrate shortly the sample size is so small that the results are virtually meaningless. Had the work simply been reported in the vein of a "laboratory report" or similar work with no attempt to draw any more than the conclusion about the necessity for screening before surgery, etc. that would have been fine. Alternatively a larger group of people could have been sought. (If the paraculture had been contacted, more than twice the number of people in both operated and unoperated categories could have been easily found.)*

The report uses an adjustment scale based on four factors: legal, economic, cohabitation, and psychiatric. All these to me are questionable. In the legal area the one relevant question would be that of whether sex reassignment could be considered as materially causing a person to have more trouble with the law or less, not particularly past performance. The other point is the nature of legal transgression. One could argue, for example, that sex-reassignment would prevent future arrests for crossdressing. More to the point is insuring, for example, that sex reassignment would not prevent the person from earning a lawful living. As for economic success it must

cont. on page 6

be borne in mind that above a certain point economic success is quite subjective and individual. In short, a person might find that earning a smaller amount of money with less stress and more free time is preferable to earning more. As for the nature of relationships, it is highly personal. There are many happy persons who are living together without being married (quite acceptable in this society nowadays), and there are happy gay people. As for seeking psychiatric help, it can mean simply a desire for help and not necessarily more problems than those who do not seek such help.

If the paper points up nothing more it is the need which exists now for additional research into the question of sex reassignment. It would be possible, for example, to find a population of a few hundred gender dysphoric persons who have had and not had sex reassignment. An evaluation subject to multivariate analysis techniques yet reasonable to administer is quite possible. Such a criteria in my view should emphasize the person's degree of self-actualization, ability to handle everyday problems, and ability to form friends and deeper relationships without so much regard as to the nature of such relationships.

I know personally more operated transsexuals than the 15 cited in the report and perhaps I can offer some comments more relevant than discussions about OC curves and normal distributions. I can only say that of all the people I know, I have respect for no group to a greater degree. If I were to make one comment it would be that they have found the "pearl of great price and were willing to sell all they had to possess it!!"

"Sex reassignment confers no objective advantage in terms of social rehabilitation."

On a purely rational objective level it indeed is hard to justify sex reassignment particularly the male to female. The arguments against the operation are legion. Yet we uphold the principle that people have the right to seek happiness. In the sense that people can be helped to make the correct decision, screening procedures are useful. Living out is still probably the best test. No psychologist, however, has the right to play God.

*Specifically on page 1014, we note differences in the initial mean of 0.74 between the operated and unoperated group. $(-2.02 - (-1.33)) : = 0.74$. Making the assumption that the sigma for the entire population is 3.0 (they note sigma = 6.68 for the unoperated and 2.61 for the operated), a very first step is to test the hypothesis that the true mean is within 0.74 of the sample mean. Otherwise a difference of 0.74 is meaningless totally. Recalling that alpha is the probability of rejecting the hypothesis when it is true (a Type I error), and that beta is the probability of accepting the hypothesis when it is false, (Type II error), we perform the following:

$d - (\text{sam mean} - \mu) / \text{sig} = 0.74 / 3.0 = \text{approx } .25$
 letting alpha and beta be 0.1, and referring to a standard OC curve it is seen that the sample size needs to be in order of a couple of hundred. Specifically for a sample n in the order 15-20, beta, or the probability of accepting the hypothesis when it is false, is around 90%. Hence drawing any substantial conclusions about shifts in mean in the order of 1.0 are meaningless.

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