

A large, stylized graphic of an eye dominates the background. The eye has long, dark, curved eyelashes at the top. The iris is a vibrant purple and blue, with a black pupil. A thick, dark purple line, resembling a stylized 'Q' or a calligraphic flourish, starts from the eye and loops around the word 'Tranny'. The background features soft, flowing gradients of purple, blue, and white, with some abstract, curved lines.

# Queering THE Tranny

New Perspectives on Male  
Transvestism & Transsexualism

ALEX DRUMMOND



# **Queering The Tranny**

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New Perspectives on Male Transvestism and  
Transsexualism

[www.queeringthetranny.com](http://www.queeringthetranny.com)



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# Queering The Tranny

## New Perspectives on Male Transvestism and Transsexualism

This above all,

To thine own self be true

And it must follow, as the night the day,

Thou canst not be false to any man.

(from William Shakespeare's Hamlet)

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## PREFACE

For some reading this book there will undoubtedly be curiosity, unfamiliarity, maybe even uneasiness; it might open a door into a world, previously unknown or misunderstood. I guess for some reading it though there will be resonance and maybe similar struggles. In presenting this work then, I have wanted to draw together in a coherent and honest whole, the things that I have learned so that others might have easier access to ideas and experiences than I had when I set out on my journey. I have wanted to bring to a wider audience some of the more abstract and complex ideas that abound in academia, ideas and philosophies which are presented in such complex language they become prohibitive to many readers. And yet language is so important – a word is only ever a symbol of an idea – and if I am to communicate these new and exciting ideas then sometimes it has been necessary to use less common words, even create new words in the service of the communication of a new idea. I hope that you as a reader, will have the patience to bear with me, to refer sometimes to the glossary, even refer to a dictionary where necessary, and ultimately have forgiven me for the times when even I have been guilty of using more abstract vocabulary.

I'd say there is a parallel process here too – one of the biggest problems in terms of understanding transgender is that the word is new and few understand it. When a friend who has known me for

years, and who has read my MSc and been introduced to these ideas previously, tells me that 'a creature came in the shop today' she is using the language of a society who does not know how to name and identify gender identities that confuse them. The so-called 'creature' to which she referred was a transsexual woman in her late 60's. And its not that the friend was being unkind: she just lacked the language. When a bunch of lads on a train see someone who has a beard and a crew cut but is also wearing a skirt and make-up they can only make sense of it by framing this as a 'boy-george'. The language is lacking here, society has new vocabulary to learn. This book attempts to introduce that language, to help introduce the new terms and constructs that will hopefully ultimately break down the barriers to understanding.

Mostly, what I have wanted to achieve in this book is to start to bring some of the more creative, diverse and abstract thoughts and philosophies of gender politics and of post-feminist ideology about sex and sexuality, out into a domain where others outside the realms of academia and living a real existence in a real world might find it; be stimulated by it, and then build on it. I hope it creates in the reader some of the fascination and the curiosity that have been constant drivers for me on the journey that has led to this book and must inevitably continue into the future. I hope you enjoy it. This is not a book of answers per se, it is more a book of ideas, of thoughts and of ways of thinking; ways of conceptualising data and phenomena that can start to transcend the previously 'known' or understood and thereby open up the potential for whole new areas of creativity and new possibilities in the quest for a more honest presentation of self to others in the world. The book in many ways chronicles my own personal quest for a genuine presentation of identity that communicates the inner self – the self that sits between gender binaries; that embraces aspects of humanity and of human

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identity that have been in a sense culturally denied me by virtue of apparent biological anatomy. In the process of reconstructing my own assumptions about maleness; femaleness; and of challenging my own internal prejudices I have found ways to become more liberated, to live a freer life.

**(1997) Ma Vie En Rose**  
**(My Life In Pink)**

**Ludovic Fabre:** I'm a girlboy.

**Jérôme:** A girlboy?

**Ludovic Fabre:** To make a baby, parents play tic-tac-toe.  
When one wins, God sends Xs and Ys.  
XX for a girl, and XY for a boy. But  
my X for a girl fell in the trash, and I  
got a Y instead. See? A scientific  
error! But God will fix it and send me  
an X and make me a girl and then we'll  
get married, okay?

**Jerome** That will depend on what kind of girl  
you are.

Director: Alain Berliner,  
Writers: Alain Berliner, Chris Vander Stappen  
Featuring: Georges Du Fresne as Ludovic Fabre  
Julien Rivière as Jérôme

## **SECTION TWO**

### **Doing Transgender**



## How am I looking?

I'm sitting on a train: its late, and I'm on my way back from a long day in London - but I'm feeling good; energised. The headache of earlier has shifted and I am knocking through a book on gender studies and feminist theory, impatiently reading it with a combination of fascination and curiosity. My 'passenger services host' tells me through his scratchy tannoy that the buffet car, "located between coaches F and E in the middle of the train is now open for refreshments": which is nice to know. And actually, a cup of complimentary coffee (a privilege of first class) could be just the thing. I decide to make the excursion, leaving my bag and jacket on the seat as it seems quiet, but taking my phone and wallet just in case, and my top hat.

The coach is almost empty, and I am unnoticed as I stand up and straighten and smooth the pleats of my denim mini skirt. I would say here that its kinda cute as skirts go, fifteen inch from waist to hem, it moves and hangs well, the box pleats giving it fullness and shape. My friend Tina couldn't believe that I'd actually made it myself - she said it looked amazing but I'm aware of the flaws in my stitching,,, maybe in a way that carries personal symbolism. But I love it, not least because it actually fits: Annoyingly, I've got the classic snake hips and no bum that makes getting a skirt or dress to hang nicely, nigh on impossible.

I remember an article in Cosmo that said how easy it is as a girl to focus on the parts of our bodies we don't like. Focus instead it suggests, on the bits you do like and make the most of them - I think I have nice eyes, and today I'm really pleased with the 'classic smoky eye effect' I created with my new Clinique pony-tail smudge brush (its so important to have the right tools for a job I find). That, and some notes I made from a tutorial on YouTube, which showed you how, in easy step-by-step stages. I should explain that I'd kind of missed out on the whole learning about make-up thing when I was younger - it has to be said that my mother certainly didn't approve so I never got the chance to experiment. Thank goodness for YouTube. In fact, thank goodness for the Internet, it's an ideal place for a girl like me to learn the things I missed out on or never knew.

I move through the carriages of the train towards the buffet. In coach F are some Cardiff City fans drinking lager. It's a concern. There's a rowdiness evident and for a moment I wonder about turning back. They are in first class though; maybe this is a better class of football hooligan - maybe I mis-judge them; stereotypes are so destructive. I decide to brave it out but my optimism starts to seem misplaced.

*"Oi: Boy George",* shouts one of the group as he spots me.

I'm walking steadily past them, ignoring the comment. I suddenly feel something brush the hem of my skirt, a hand reaching under,

*"Skirt: here you are, sit on my dick."*

It's not an offer I'm inclined to give consideration to. The last of the group has his leg across the gangway and momentarily distracted by what just occurred, I inadvertently kick it as I try to step over him. This is not a good plan and I'm starting to regret a lot of things - not least of which was dismissing the thought to change into my jeans once I'd got on the train. I give him eye contact and a 'sorry mate' and he seems ok with that. I move through the automated sliding door and thankfully I find myself in the sanctuary of the buffet car.

Two Asian girls in traditional dress are picking up their order and putting the change away: I'm not sure if they have noticed me, they avoid giving me eye contact. The attendant standing behind the counter looks up and greets me with a warm smile. Now in a position to attach a visual image to the scratchy tannoyed voice who told me he was my 'passenger services host' I establish what one actually looks like: In this case, he reminds me of Marc Almond of 80's pop group 'Soft Cell' - only with a quiff. His small frame and soft young face perform a gender that somehow sits between biological binaries and I read him as slightly effeminate, may be even gay. Not in an overt campy way but you understand, more in a soft, gentle way that tells me he is clearly not a 'PROPER MAN'. I ask for a coffee; just black coffee thanks. He places the cup in a dinky little paper carrier bag and I contemplate my return.

The thought of the Cardiff football fans now concerns me. Maybe I should just stay at this end of the train until the end of the journey. DAMN; left my bag and my jacket at the other end; I just can't leave it. I've got to go back; I conjure with metaphors - back through the 'lions den' or is that 'gorilla pit'. For a moment

I consider asking the guard who has joined my 'passenger services host' if he could accompany me down the train to keep order (protect me) but decide to tough it out 'like a MAN'. As I re-enter the carriage the lads eyeball me and the loudest one starts the chant -

*"Karma, karma karma karma karma chameleon: Oi, Boy George"*

The boys chorus together, chanting the first line repeatedly, throwing in the odd 'Oi Boy George' for lyrical effect until it begins to take on the form of some avant-garde fugue you'd find created by music college undergraduates. I fear this is not the case sadly, these Neanderthals simply lack the intelligence or wit to know any more of the song. A pity really as the irony of their choice of song is also lost on them. When Boy George wrote the song he was encouraging people to be true to the self; have the courage of your conviction, he was telling people; to express their true selves rather than always trying to blend in with the crowd - changing their colours to suit the environment: he says being false to the self leaves bad karma. That's all very well for him to say but I'm on a train with a load of soccer thugs wondering if I'm about to pay some karmic price for trying to be myself.

The lad who invited me to 'sit on his dick' has possibly worked out the paradox of his request - in front of his friends he did just ask a bloke to sit on his penis and since I'm not the one with the homosexual desires it places him in an awkward imbroglio. He remedies this by clarifying - "its got a beard". The "its" is emphasised:- a kind of verbal rubric.

Yeah; well done Captain Observant of the Sharp Eyed People - albeit I'm wearing a skirt I think you'll find we carry the same chromosomal format XY: but does that make me just like you - a 'guy' a 'geezer' a 'bloke' a 'MAN'? I mean, how can one know; how to decide; what you do you read - the skirt or the beard. Some kind of primeval mechanism was moving through his reptilian brain (by which I mean the amygdala in case you think I'm just being nasty now) assessing 'do I fuck it or fight it?' Actually dear boy, perhaps we can do neither. I'd quite like to just go back to my carriage and drink my coffee and read my book.

The lads are chanting still, but an internal dialogue is taking over which is louder - a steady reassuring voice that calms me. I avoid eye contact and continue with faux-nonchalance, my heart is pounding; my ears hyper-vigilant to the possible sound of footsteps behind me. I reach the door at the end of carriage F and wait an eternity for the automated door mechanism to open. Finally, the door slides to the left and I make a silent sigh of relief and pass through, returning now to the relative safety of my carriage, my table, my seat.

I'm annoyed: annoyed with myself for putting me through that; annoyed that others are like that. I'm annoyed at men; at faux masculinity and the sexual aggressiveness. I'm annoyed at Football, the locus of so much destructive masculine identity. I'm annoyed at the memories of being terrified in the playground by lads like that. And at a life lived in stealth, endlessly trying to 'pass' as a boy, as a guy, as a MAN.

My inner voice has calmed me, and congratulated me on handling things really well in a way I never had at school; at home. I'm proud of myself: that I didn't over-react or run scared. I wonder if now is the time to change into my jeans - but no, damn it: I determine to wait until I reach Newport before I change. I smile and reflect on the thoughts and memories of my day 'out'.

London was amazing. I'm walking through the centre of London, almost invisible. I start to feel like the Matt Lucas character from Llanddewi Brefi - no one seems to have noticed. "Excuse me - I am transgender you know, gender-queer. I like girls but I like dressing like one too." The voice in my head (which took on a west Wales lilt for added effect) has narrated it silently to the passers-by who seem un-phased; yeah; whatever. Children are brilliant - their reactions, the double take. A girl of four or five at the museum has paused to look at me, and like an anchor that halts the giant ship as it catches something misshapen on the sea bed, her tiny hand has gripped her father's and halted him: stopped him in his tracks.

*"I like the man's pink boots"*

I smile at her and look over at her parents; the mother adds, "and she was admiring your purple scarf too". Perhaps there's a hesitation in her voice, uncertainty mixed with warmth but maybe somehow lacking the innocent honesty of her daughter's tone.

*"That girl's got good taste" I quip as I walk on, smiling; amused.*

But then it has to be said my pink furry Ugg boots are well lush and the purple mohair scarf set against the black leather biker jacket and top hat create quite an ensemble if I do say so myself: that, and the pleated denim mini-skirt of course. I'm wearing black woolly tights today, which I have chosen to balance the dark polo neck jumper. And being January I'd prepared for cold weather of course.

I return to reading my book, and the world is at peace. I am at peace.

Time passes slowly on the train but I'm making good progress with the book when my attention is taken by the arrival of two of the soccer rowdies in my carriage. Their coarse language, rumbustious physicality and loud tone perform a hegemonic masculinity that tells the world they are real MEN. They stop at a table further up the carriage but their presence can be felt from where I am sitting and I conclude it is time to quickly change back in to my jeans, a task I can achieve from under the table without being noticed. Their conversation is animated as they discuss football, arguments between the group, and the importance they place on being able to engage in a relaxing activity at the weekend after a hard week's work and not have to deal with the aggro. So, maybe we are very much alike. Constrained to a role; meeting the demands of others, these guys have dressed up for a day's relaxation. I wonder if they think of their football shirts as a form of drag - which of course it is, intrinsically serving the same purpose: identification, belonging, escapism, relaxation.

The train arrives at Newport and I step onto the platform. It's quiet but then it's late: two Police officers are on duty and I catch the eye and smile at the WPC. I walk towards the exit and notice a young woman emerging at pace through the main doors. She has the most amazing purple hair, and tights to match: I read her as a kindred soul, a bohemian, she's no karma chameleon. She looks up at and smiles at me,

*"Hmm, I'm liking.."* she says, turning her head for an extended gaze as she passes me.

She's read my top hat, my scarf, my biker jacket, my skinny black jeans, my pink furry boots; the smoky eyes. For a moment we share a connection; the artistic; creative; the expression of the self against convention. I think she'd have loved the pleated denim mini skirt too. I'm almost sorry I don't still have it on. I feel a desire to reciprocate - to validate her, for having the courage of her conviction, but the moment has passed. I've not commended her on the purple hair, which I'm liking but it's too late. A slight sadness and regret passes through me.

Outside the air is cool and the streets quiet. The car is barely quarter of a mile away and the decision is whether to take a taxi or chance going through the underpass and just walk. I go for it, it seems quiet and in the underpass I follow behind a guy who seems reasonable; I'm walking more quickly so I pass him and walk ahead. I'm counting the steps like seconds ticking, each drawing me closer to the exit, back to the safety of the car. I'm nearing the end of the underpass when from around the corner I hear voices and my heart skips for a moment. A middle-aged couple return from a night on the town - the woman is pulling up

her tights in a somewhat undignified manner. In my head I say to her, "cheap tights yeah; what a nightmare, tell me about it - I prefer M&S myself". I resist the temptation and merely smile at her and wink. She smiles back - I don't think she knows I'm wearing tights too.

Emerging from the underpass and turning the corner I make the short walk up the hill to the safety of the car. It's been a long day but a good one.





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