

# Polare Edition 51

Published: April 2003 Last Update: June 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015

## Editorial

by Katherine Cummings, Polare Editor

If Issue #49 was dedicated to Christine Jorgensen, and Issue #50 was dedicated to Stephen Whittle, then this issue must surely be the issue for Elizabeth Riley. All too often we neglect the people close to us and honour only the poppies so tall that we see them from afar. I have been working with Elizabeth at the Gender Centre for something like two years now and admire her energy, intelligence and integrity. I don't always agree with her, but then I doubt if I agree with anyone one hundred percent of the time. Her dedication to the cause of the transgendered community is, however, beyond argument and I feel it is an appropriate time for me to say so.

Why now, you may ask? I hoped you would.

In my editorial for Issue #50 I noted the forthcoming A.D.B.-sponsored program at Parliament House on "The Neglected Communities" and mentioned that "our own Elizabeth Riley" would be talking on transgender and transsexual issues. As I have said above, all the speakers were informed, articulate, even compelling, but Elizabeth Riley was the speaker whom I found most moving. She framed her paper, which appears in this issue in place of her regular column, within the context of the many, many transgenders who are deprived, not only of a living, but of life, who, for no fault of their own, are beaten, killed, raped or denied life-saving medical services. Elizabeth punctuated her talk with the names of some of the known victims, and their names appeared on a screen behind her as she named them. I have edited the speech where necessary to take it out of the context of a verbally delivered address (if I were to continue the list you would be here till midnight) but apart from that you are receiving the text as if you had been fortunate enough to be with us on the night.

Elizabeth has also been co-operating with S.B.S. in the production of a documentary called *Mum's the Word* to be presented on 1st April at 8:00pm. I tried hard to get this issue out early so that you would know about the S.B.S. broadcast but, alas, time ran out. The 22nd March issue of *New Idea* has an article entitled "My Dad Became My Mum" which outlines Elizabeth's story and publicises the S.B.S. documentary. The cover banner "Sex-Change Shock: Dad Became My Mum" is irritating, but the text of the article by Rachael Lloyd is sympathetic and sensible and I have received permission to reprint it. The cover picture and image on page 10 also originated with *New Idea* and I thank them for their permission to use these also.

And now an apology for the lateness of Issue #50. I was wholly absorbed in January by the need to make progress on my Anti-Transgender Violence Report and all else fell by the wayside. And then I became sick, with recurrent headaches triggered by any attempt to use the computer. Sorry! I will strive to do better in future. I'm only a poor weak woman.

## Feature Articles



"I'm all for walking in the grey areas," she says with a laugh.

### Gender Outlaw Moves Into New Territory

Albert Bornstein, born 55 years ago, underwent a sex reassignment operation in 1986 and bloomed into Kate, who considers herself neither male nor female. Bornstein has challenged society's expectations ever since, zeroing in on restrictive dualistic gender roles.

### The Woman I Was Not Born To Be

Like many transsexual autobiographies, Aleshia Brevard's is a painful story of a little boy who knows he's different, her parents try very hard to push him to fit in, she discovers the "why" to his difference about the same time he learns it is not okay to talk about it.

### Mum's the Word

Liz is a kind, gentle character who talks eloquently about what she went through in her quest to undergo her transformation. Gender Centre Manager, Elizabeth Riley shares her story with *New Idea* magazine's Rachael Lloyd, a story that also featured on an S.B.S. documentary.

### U.T.S. is Gender Aware

The O.U.T.S. Action Collective is funded by the U.T.S. Students' Association, and provides support and resources for all transgendered and intersex students and those questioning their gender-identity and also acknowledges that sexuality and gender are different matters.

### Loving a Man who Wants to be a Woman

America loves a love story, romantic films where boy meets girl, or even in recent years, girl meets girl or boy meets boy, but what about beyond that, where gender roles get yet more fluid? Transgender love is the focus of two new movies, *Normal*, and *A Soldier's Girl*.

# News in Brief

From the pages of Polare Number Fifty-One

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## Californian Transwoman Chosen as Woman of the Year in California

**California, U.S.A.:** California assemblyman Mark Leno has announced that Human Rights Commission member, Theresa Sparks, will become the first transgendered woman to be honoured by the state in its annual "Woman of the Year" ceremony, which will be held Monday 24th March. Each California assembly member selects one woman usually from the district that member represents, to be honoured at the ceremony, held by the governor in Sacramento. Sparks was appointed to the San Francisco Human Rights Commission after years of advocacy on behalf of the local community. She served as a founding member of the city's Transgender Civil Rights Implementation Task Force and became the first transgendered woman elected as chair of the Alice B. Toklas Democratic Club. "Theresa is intelligent, hardworking, committed and tenacious in her efforts on behalf of our community". Leno told *Advocate.com*. "She is a very courageous and hardworking soul and has taught me a great deal about how to be most effective in my own advocacy and legislative work". Spark's recognition comes just as California Assembly Bill 196, which would add gender identification to the protected characteristics enumerated in the Fair Employment and Housing Act, leaves the labour and employment committee for debate on the assembly floor. Leno said that by recognising Sparks as a woman of the year, he might be able to bring an element to the bill. "I think that by bringing her to the floor on Monday and introducing her to my colleagues, I can put a face on the issue of transgender rights".

## Transgender Rabbi Accepted for Training

**California, U.S.A.:** The first openly transgender rabbinical student has been admitted to the seminary of America's largest branch of Judaism, a precedent-setting move hailed as proof the faith is all-inclusive. Reuben Zellman, 24 of Oakland, California, will begin his five-year training this summer with the required first year on the Jerusalem campus of the Cincinnati-based Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion. Four years in the United States follow. Zellman transitioned four years ago. The Hebrew Union College trains clergy for reform synagogues, a progressive stream of Judaism that has 2.5 million American followers, or about half the Jews in the United States. The Reform movement has ordained women since 1974 and openly gay and lesbian clergy since 1990. In 2000, the movement officially condoned same-sex commitment ceremonies. When Zellman decided last year to apply to the Hebrew Union College, he first wrote to alert the admissions office of his transgender status. He was assured it wouldn't be a problem. "Reuben's gender and gender-identity was something he knew about, but we were looking at his academic ability, his personality and interpersonal skills and his commitment to Judaism" said Rabbi Roxanne Schneider Schapiro, admissions director. "he's a delightful, personable person. He is humble, he is brilliant, his academic record at Berkeley is certainly outstanding. He has a lot of gifts". Neither Conservative Judaism, the faith's more traditional stream, nor the ultra-strict Orthodox Judaism have taken a position on transgender clergy. Orthodox Jews, however, do believe that sex-change operations violate Jewish law.

## West Yorkshire Police Are Appealing (Or Do I Mean Appalling?)

**United Kingdom:** West Yorkshire police have won the right to appeal to the House of Lords against a ruling that it acted unlawfully in refusing to recruit a male-to-female transsexual. Last November, the Appeal Court ruled that for employment purposes the transsexual was a woman and the West Yorkshire Chief Constable could not resist her application to join. A committee of Law Lords has now decided that the police should be allowed to appeal to the House of Lords. No date has been set for the appeal hearing.

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**The Gender Centre advise that this edition of Polare is not current and as such certain content, including but not limited to persons, contact details and dates may not apply. Where legal authority or medical related matters are cited, responsibility lies with the reader to obtain the most current relevant legal authority and/or medical publication.**

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Polare Magazine is published quarterly in Australia by The Gender Centre Inc., which is funded by the Department of Family & Community Services under the S.A.A.P. program and supported by the N.S.W. Health Department through the AIDS and Infectious Diseases Branch. Polare provides a forum for discussion and debate on gender issues. Unsolicited contributions are welcome, the editor reserves the right to edit such contributions without notification. Any submission which appears in Polare may be published on our internet site. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor, The Gender Centre Inc., the Department of Family & Community Services or the N.S.W. Department of Health.

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The Gender Centre is committed to developing and providing services and activities, which enhance the ability of people with gender issues to make informed choices. We offer a wide range of services to people with gender issues, their partners, family members and friends in New South Wales. We are an accommodation service and also act as an education, support, training and referral resource centre to other organisations and service providers. The Gender Centre is committed to educating the public and service providers about the needs of people with gender issues. We specifically aim to provide a high quality service, which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect and confidentiality.

# Gender Outlaw moves into New Territory

## Tangling with Self-Destruction

by Dave Ford, [San Francisco Chronicle](#) 

Article appeared in Polare magazine: April 2003 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Kate Bornstein

**K**ate Bornstein leans her slender body against a wall in a dim alley behind Theatre Rhinoceros in San

Francisco's Mission District, on break from rehearsals for her new play *Strangers in Paradox; The True Story of Casey and the Kidd*. She changes angles for a photographer. She burbles happily when complimented and takes direction without resistance. She is at ease; she has done this before. For Bornstein, shape shifting is second nature, if not first.

Albert Bornstein, born fifty-five years ago, underwent a gender reassignment operation in 1986 and bloomed into Kate, who considers herself neither male nor female. Bornstein has challenged society's expectations ever since, zeroing in on restrictive dualistic gender roles.

***Like many social outsiders, Bornstein has grappled with self-destruction for decades ...***

"I'm all for walking in the grey areas," she says with a laugh.

A child of the 1960s, Bornstein has explored such transgressions as books (*Gender Outlaw, My Gender Workbook*) and plays and performance pieces (*Hidden: A Gender, The Opposite Sex is Neither*). Her work is studied in universities worldwide; she has performed nationally and internationally. *Strangers in Paradox* impishly describes the adventures of Casey and the Kidd, lesbian serial killers who are the subject of a murder reality show. Bornstein does not act in the play.

As in most of her work, the narrative is but an excuse to delve into deep personal issues. Her most autobiographical work to date, *Strangers ...* took her seven years to write. "This one is a painful one for me," she says.

"As with all public people, there is Kate-in-the-Box, trailed by invisible labels and the assumptions they imply." Then there is plain Kate, although Kate doesn't seem plain this day, dressed in pink striped sweater over a red shirt, an ankle-length denim skirt with flames licking up the back and trendily chunky black shoes.

She is very tall; she looms, birdlike, and carefully observes her surroundings from behind oversize tinted glasses. Hers is the gaze of the afflicted, alert to danger. Yet, when seated and comfortable, she softens. By turns she is pointed, poignant and funny as she freely details, without self-pity, past struggles with alcoholism, drug addiction, eating disorders, self-mutilation - and suicide, a theme threading *Strangers ...*

"I know very few queer people who haven't gotten close to the edge of that chasm," says Bornstein, who lives in New York with her girlfriend, writer and performance artist Barbara Carrelas. "I think it's the common experience of 'freaks' to consider suicide. And what do you do when that urge comes up?"

Bornstein posits that the suicidal urge is no different from, say, the anger urge. Personal growth, she says is the measure of how a person deals with each.

"The healthy thing with suicide is ... not taking my own life, but taking the life of a persona that needs to die," she says.

*Strangers ...* implicitly condones alternatives to suicide, Bornstein says, including self-mutilation. "Cutting is a whole lot better than killing yourself," she says, but is quick to add that something as harmless as, say, shopping is better yet.

Like many social outsiders, Bornstein has grappled with self-destruction for decades - a result, she says, of cultural messages suggesting that those like her deserve to die.

"I don't think we're born self-hating," she says, "It's how we respond to bullies. And if any place in the world grows tough bullies, it's this country. They're our chief export. George Bush cut his bully teeth on people like me."

Bornstein's variegated past includes a dozen years spent in the Church of Scientology and immersion in Buddhism and other mystical religions (she now swears by Tarot Cards).

She spent years exploring sadomasochistic sex, where, as a 'submissive slave' she challenged every role she'd ever been assigned as a one time upper-middle-class heterosexual man.

"I had all these entitlements and chains of responsibility," she says. "It was very easy to go, 'Goodbye. I'm turning everything over'.

Remember I'd come from this whole point of view of anorexia and bulimia and cutting. You go right against the fight-or-flight option the lizard brain gives us: My body wants me to eat; I won't. My body wants me to run away from this person hitting me; I won't. See how good I am?"

"Mostly what (the experience) gave me was the understanding that, for me, an effective way to deal with the experience of a binary life is to fully explore both sides before jumping into the grey area."

Among other projects, Bornstein is now collecting stories for a book aimed at helping teens who feel suicidal. After all, she says, young people, especially those confronting gender roles, hold the promise of a cultural swing away from dualistic bullydom. "In another fifteen years, when those folks stretch their power, the pendulum will swing back again," she says.

Until then, there is *Strangers ...*, a darkly humorous work Bornstein says is perfect for adventurous Bay Area theatre goers. "It is a dangerous, in-your-face play," she says, "But please trust me - it has a lovely ending."

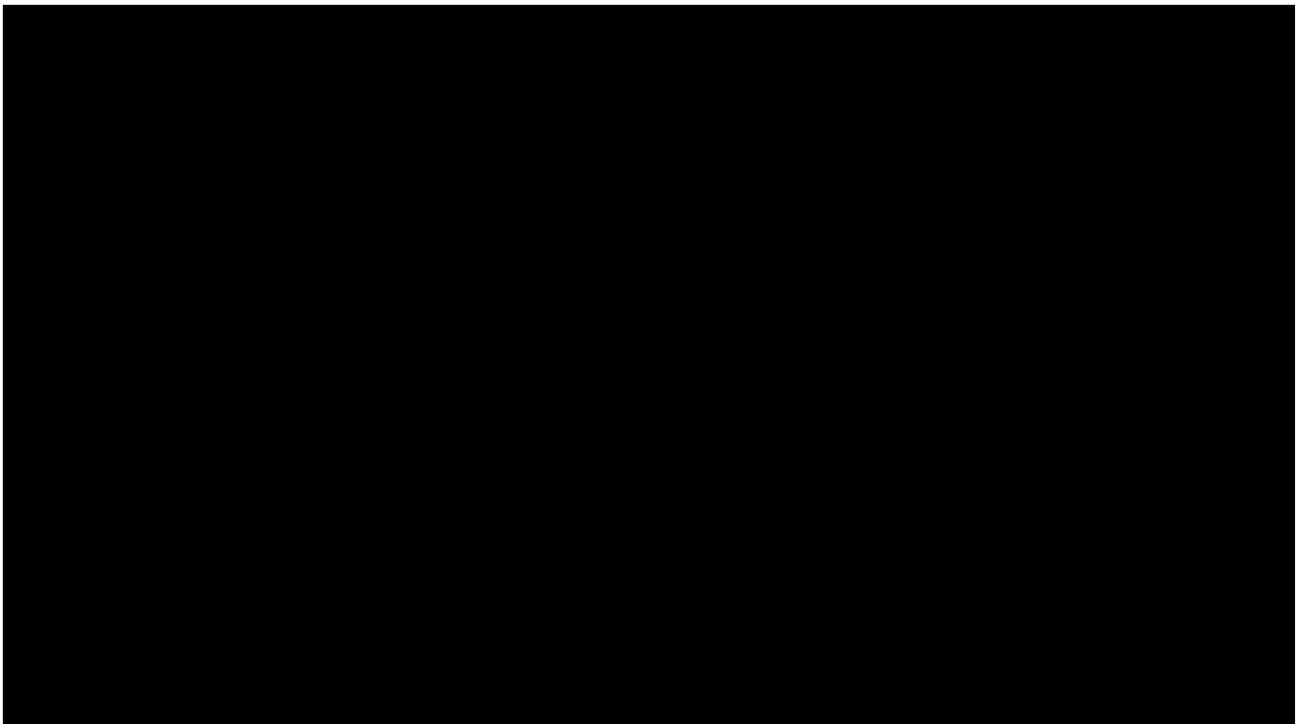
## Kate Bornstein

**From Wikipedia:**  Born in 1948, Kate Bornstein is an American author, playwright, performance artist, and gender theorist. Having been assigned as male at birth, zie underwent sex reassignment surgery in 1986 and says, "I don't call myself a woman, and I know I'm not a man". Bornstein has also written about having anorexia, being a survivor of P.T.S.D. and being diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder. Kate has chronic lymphocytic leukaemia and in September 2012 was diagnosed with lung cancer. Kate and partner Barbara Carrellas live in New York City with three cats, two dogs and a turtle.



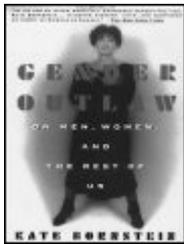
Born in Neptune City, New Jersey, U.S.A. into a middle-class conservative Jewish family of Russian and Dutch descent, Bornstein studied Theatre Arts at Brown University in 1969 and joined the Church of Scientology, became a high ranking lieutenant in the Sea Org but later became disillusioned and formally left the movement in 1981. Bornstein's antagonism toward Scientology and public split from the church have had personal consequences; Bornstein's daughter, herself a Scientologist, no longer has any contact with Bornstein per Scientology's policies.

Bornstein never felt comfortable with the belief of the day: that all trans women are "women trapped in men's bodies". Zie did not identify as a man, but the only other option of the day was to be a woman, a reflection of the gender binary, which required people to identify according to only two available genders. Another block in hir path was the fact that zie was attracted to women. zie had sex reassignment surgery in 1986 and settled into the lesbian community in San Francisco, and wrote art reviews for the gay and lesbian paper *The Bay Area Reporter*. Over the next few years, zie began to identify as neither a man nor a woman. This catapulted hir back to performing, creating several performance pieces, some of them one-person shows. It was the only way Bornstein knew how to communicate life's paradoxes. Bornstein also teaches workshops and has published several gender theory books, and a novel. *Hello Cruel World* was written to derail "teens, freaks, and other outlaws" from committing suicide. "Do whatever it takes to make your life more worth living", zie writes, "just don't be mean".



This short video is courtesy Tufts Daily and You Tube

Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and the Rest of Us  
Author: Kate Bornstein  
Publisher: Publisher: Vintage (1995)



I.S.B.N.-13 978-0679757016

**From Amazon Books:**  A thoughtful challenge to gender ideology that continually asks difficult questions about identity, orientation, and desire. Bornstein cleverly incorporates cultural criticism, dramatic writing, and autobiography to make her point that gender (which she distinguishes from sex) is a cultural rather than a natural phenomenon. The chapters range from "fashion tips" on her writing style to dialogue between herself and another about the "nuts and bolts" of the surgical

process of a gender change (which she has undergone). Confronting transgenderism and transgendered people is not easy for many individuals, but Bornstein does it in a way that sparks debate without putting her audience on the defensive. She suggests that "the culture may not simply be creating roles for naturally-gendered people, the culture may in fact be creating the gendered people". Her discussion of the "parts" of gender is based on respected sources and includes analyses of gender assignment, identity, and roles. Things get mixed up, according to Bornstein, because "sexual orientation/preference is based in this culture solely on the gender of one's partner of choice", in effect confusing orientation and preference. Seeing queer theatre as a place in which gender ambiguity and fluidity can and should be explored, she includes in the book her play, *Hidden: A Gender*. Bornstein uses the term "gender defenders" to describe those who work hard to maintain the current rigid system of gender, and she claims that her "people" (i.e., the transgendered) are just beginning to challenge the system and to demand acceptance and understanding. Bornstein's witty style, personal approach, and frankness open doors to questioning gender assumptions and boundaries. - Copyright ©1994, Kirkus Associates, L.P. All rights reserved.



Nearly Roadkill (High Risk)

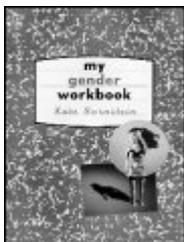
Author: Kate Bornstein and Caitlin Sullivan

Publisher: Serpent's Tail (1996)

I.S.B.N.-13 978-1852424183

**From Amazon Books:**  *Nearly Roadkill* apparently takes place in the not-so-distant future, where Internet users are required to register online and all transmissions can be policed by government agencies. Big brother is watching our hero/heroines (you make the call), Winc and Scratch, as they lead the charge against government intervention in cyberspace. The text is written as a series of online dialogues, much like what you'd see in a chat room. You'll also get a fly-on-the-wall

experience reminiscent of Nicholson Baker's *Vox* as these rebels with a cause take time out to participate in graphic cybersex. But except where the sex thing gets in the way, *Nearly Roadkill's* intent is to raise questions about gender issues, censorship, and who should have authority over the Internet.



My Gender Workbook: How to Become a Real Man, a Real Woman, the Real You, or Something Else Entirely

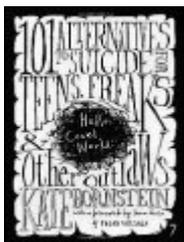
Author: Kate Bornstein and Diane DiMasa

Publisher: Routledge (1997)

I.S.B.N.-13 978-0415916738

**From Amazon Books:**  Gender isn't just about "male" or "female" anymore - if you have any doubts, just turn on your television. RuPaul is as familiar as tomato ketchup with national radio and television shows, and transgendered folk are as common to talk shows as screaming and yelling.

But if the popularization of gender bending is revealing that "male" and "female" aren't enough, where are we supposed to go from here? Cultural theorists have written loads of smart but difficult to fathom texts on gender, but none provide a hands-on, accessible guide to having your own unique gender. With *My Gender Workbook*, Kate Bornstein brings theory down to Earth and provides a practical approach to living with or without a gender. Bornstein starts from the premise that there are not just two genders performed in today's world, but countless genders lumped under the two-gender framework. Using a unique, deceptively simple and always entertaining workbook format, Bornstein gently but firmly guides you to discover your own unique gender identity. Whether she's using the food group triangle to explain gender, or quoting one-liners from real "gender transgressors", Bornstein's first and foremost concern is making information on gender bending truly accessible. With quizzes and exercises that determine how much of a man or woman you are, *My Gender Workbook* gives you the tools to reach whatever point you desire on the gender continuum. Bornstein also takes aim at the recent flurry of books that attempt to naturalize gender difference, and puts books like *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* squarely where they belong: on Uranus. If you don't think you are transgendered when you sit down to read this book, you will be by the time you finish it!



Hello Cruel World: 101 Alternatives to Suicide for Teens, Freaks and Other Outlaws

Author: Kate Bornstein and Sara Quin

Publisher: Seven Stories Press (2006)

I.S.B.N.-13 978-1583227206

**From Amazon Books:**  Celebrated transsexual trailblazer Kate Bornstein has, with more humour and spunk than any other, ushered us into a world of limitless possibility through a daring re-environmentment of the gender system as we know it. Here, Bornstein bravely and wittily shares personal and unorthodox methods of survival in an often cruel world. A one-of-a-kind guide to staying alive outside the box, *Hello, Cruel World* is a much-needed unconventional approach to life

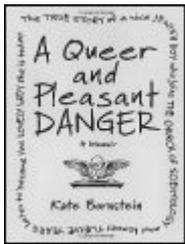
for those who want to stay on the edge, but alive. *Hello, Cruel World* features a catalogue of 101 alternatives to suicide that range from the playful (moisturize!), to the irreverent (shatter some family values), to the highly controversial. Designed to encourage readers to give themselves permission to unleash their hearts' harmless desires, the book has

only one directive: "Don't be mean". It is this guiding principle that brings its reader on a self-validating journey, which forges wholly new paths toward a resounding decision to choose life. Tenderly intimate and unapologetically edgy, Kate Bornstein is the radical role model, the affectionate best friend, and the guiding mentor all in one.



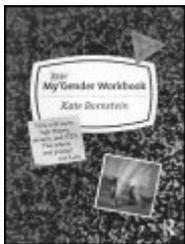
**Gender Outlaws: The Next Generation**  
Author: Kate Bornstein and S. Bear Bergman  
Publisher: Seal Press (2010)  
I.S.B.N.-13 978-1580053082

**From Amazon Books:** In the fifteen years since the release of *Gender Outlaw*, Kate Bornstein's groundbreaking challenge to gender ideology, transgender narratives have made their way from the margins to the mainstream and back again. Today's transgender people and other sex/gender radicals are writing a drastically new world into being. In *Gender Outlaws*, Bornstein, together with writer, raconteur, and theatre artist S. Bear Bergman, collects and contextualizes the work of this generation's trans and gender-queer forward thinkers — new voices from the stage, on the streets, in the workplace, in the bedroom, and on the pages and websites of the world's most respected mainstream news sources. *Gender Outlaws* includes essays, commentary, comic art, and conversations from a diverse group of trans-spectrum people who live and believe in barrier-breaking lives.



**A Queer and Pleasant Danger: A Memoir**  
Author: Kate Bornstein  
Publisher: Beacon Press (2012)  
I.S.B.N.-13 978-0807001653

**From Beacon Press:** Scientist, husband and father, tranny, sailor, slave, playwright, dyke, gender outlaw — these are just a few words which have defined Kate Bornstein during her extraordinary life. For the first time, it all comes together in *A Queer and Pleasant Danger*, Kate Bornstein's stunningly original memoir that's set to change lives and enrapture readers. Wickedly funny and disarmingly honest, this is Bornstein's most intimate book yet. With wisdom, wit, and an unwavering resolution to tell the truth ("I must not tell lies"), Bornstein shares her story: from a nice Jewish boy growing up in New Jersey to a strappingly handsome lieutenant of the Church of Scientology's Sea flagship vessel, and later to 1990s Seattle, where she becomes a rising star in the lesbian community. In between there are wives and lovers, heartbreak and triumph, bridges mended and broken, and a journey of self-discovery that will mesmerize readers.



**My New Gender Workbook: A Step-by-Step Guide to Achieving World Peace Through Gender Anarchy and Sex Positivity**  
Author: Kate Bornstein  
Publisher: Routledge (2013)  
I.S.B.N.-13 978-0415538657

**From Amazon Books:** Cultural theorists have written loads of smart but difficult-to-fathom texts on gender theory, but most fail to provide a hands-on, accessible guide for those trying to sort out their own sexual identities. In *My Gender Workbook*, transgender activist Kate Bornstein brings theory down to Earth and provides a practical approach to living with or without a gender. Bornstein starts from the premise that there are not just two genders performed in today's world, but countless genders lumped under the two-gender framework. Using a unique, deceptively simple and always entertaining workbook format, complete with quizzes, exercises, and puzzles, Bornstein gently but firmly guides readers toward discovering their own unique gender identity. Since its first publication in 1997, *My Gender Workbook* has been challenging, encouraging, questioning, and handholding those trying to figure out how to become a "real man" a "real woman" or "something else entirely" In this updated edition of her classic text, Bornstein re-examines gender in light of issues like race and class. With new quizzes, new puzzles, new exercises, and plenty of Kate's over-the-top style, *My New Gender Workbook* promises to help a new generation create their own unique place on the gender spectrum.

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# Book Review: The Woman I Was Not Born to Be

## A Transsexual Journey

reviewed by Linda Heidenreich, Newsletter of the Committee on Lesbian and Gay History, Issue 16/1 Spring 2002  
Article appeared in Polare magazine: April 2003 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



"The Woman I Was Not Born To Be" Author: Aleshia Brevard.

### The Woman I Was Not Born To Be: A Transsexual Journey

by Aleshia Brevard  
Published by Temple University Press (1982)  
I.S.B.N.-13 978 1566398401

*Her work differs from these earlier monographs because she writes after living as a woman for four decades: from the early 1960s through the 1970s.*

**L**ike so many M.T.F. transsexual autobiographies, Brevard's is a painful story of a little boy who knows he is different, whose parents try very hard to push him to fit in with his playmates, and who discovers the "why" to his difference at about the same time he learns it is not okay to talk about it.

Brevard's transsexual journey from little "Buddy" to Aleshia, the writer and "off off off Broadway" actress, is plagued with transphobic neighbours, unsteady employment, and men and boys who do not respect the word "no." Brevard's account also carries many stories of triumphs, of family support, successfully completing two college degrees, and landing acting parts in a number of B-Grade movies. Like earlier M.T.F. autobiographies (Conn, 1974; Morris, 1974; Richards, 1983) Brevard's work contains a powerful critique of the gendered society in which she grew up. Her work differs from these earlier monographs because she writes after living as a woman for four decades: from the early 1960s through the 1990s. As such, her work carries a wonderful sense of change over time that many

earlier transsexual autobiographies lack.

The biography opens with a young adult Aleshia awaiting surgery and reflecting back on the journey that brought her and her supportive family to Westlake clinic in California. Brevard's early life reads like a frightening ride through a hostile and foreign city with no street map and few people who can tell you anything about where you need to go. And perhaps this is one of the strongest points of the first part of the autobiography. Like so many transgendered youths coming of age in the 1950s and '60s, Brevard had to make her own map. Once she reaches her destination, the reader is left with a sense of relief that she made it there alive. Her childhood was a difficult one with parents who loved her, yet did not hesitate to deride the "sissy" they encountered in her. By the time Buddy was five, he knew not to tell anyone about the feelings and questions he had about his own identity. He suffered and survived the sexual violence to which so many effeminate boys are subjected in high school, fled to California where he had a long-term relationship with a priest named John, and began a stage career as a female impersonator at San Francisco's infamous Finocchio's. It was there that Aleshia met Stormy Lee, a mentor who would help her in her early years of transitioning from living as a man to living as a woman, and it was there that she met Hank Foyle, her first husband.

The remainder of the text focuses of Brevard's life as a woman: looking for Mr. Right, trying to succeed in a career, and learning that sexual violence threatens not only effeminate men, but all women regardless of their place on the gender spectrum. It's in the latter part of the text that some of her strongest critiques of twentieth-century western social structures emerge. Surgery does not bring paradise. Instead, segregation continues to structure life for whites and African Americans in her hometown; in the workplace her husband is hired over her simply because he is a man; and she continues to look for Mr. Right, even after two divorces, because in the 1960s the majority of American women were still perpetuating the archaic myth that without a man, a woman is worthless". Within this social milieu, Brevard completes both a bachelor's and master's degree, and she launches a career teaching and then acts in theatre and several B-grade movies, including *The Love God*, with Don Knotts.

Brevard's work is a highly readable account of a transsexual woman coming of age in the middle of the twentieth century. Like other transsexual autobiographies, her account attempts to explain transsexual lives and experiences to larger audience. Like many of these other works as well, Brevard provides a strong critique of the structural inequalities she had to negotiate first living as a male, then a female in modern America.

### Aleshia Brevard

From Aleshia Brevard's website:  I grew up balancing a *Modern Screen* magazine on my bony knee and dreaming of becoming the silver screen's next bombshell. I was on a Greyhound bus out of Appalachia almost before the ink had dried on my high school diploma. It was a wild ride that took me from boyhood



to womanhood. Oh, sure, along the way I had a layover in San Francisco where I worked at Finocchio's, a club world famous for female impersonation. I was performing for and partying with headliners like Sal Mineo, Lana Turner, Betty Davis, Carman McRae and Errol Flynn – but "an impersonator" wasn't who I wanted to be ...

My gender transitional surgery was in Los Angeles in 1962, one of the first such operations in the United States. Within a year of that life changing surgery I was balancing a showgirl's headdress at the Dunes Hotel - but "a showgirl!" wasn't who I wanted to be ...

I studied acting, learned my craft, and landed the role of Sherry in *The Love God*, with Don Knotts. After a stint as a Playboy Bunny at the Sunset Strip hutch I broke into television as a regular on The Red Skelton Show. Following that was The Partridge Family, The Dean Martin Show, and Rod Sterling's Night Gallery. [Read more about Aleshia Brevard at her website.](#) 



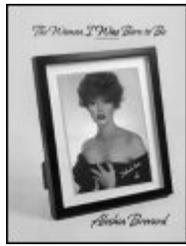
This A.B.C. News Productions interview was filmed in 2002, shortly after the publication of Ms. Brevard's memoir, *The Woman I Was Not Born To Be*. She continues to write, make theatre appearances, and work on behalf of transsexuality as Dr. Harry Benjamin, who coined the term, envisioned a successful transsexual's life could be.



Woman I Was Not Born To Be: A Transsexual Journey  
Author: Aleshia Brevard  
Publisher: Temple University Press (2001)  
I.S.B.N.-13 978 1566398404

[From Amazon Books](#)  Told with humour and flair, this is the autobiography of one transsexual's wild ride from boyhood as Alfred Brevard ("Buddy") Crenshaw in rural Tennessee to voluptuous female entertainer in Hollywood. Aleshia Brevard, as she is now known, underwent transitional surgery in Los Angeles in 1962, one of the first such operations in the United States. (The famous sexual surgery pioneer Harry Benjamin himself broke the news to Brevard's parents.) Under the stage name Lee Shaw, Brevard worked as a drag queen at Finocchio's, a San Francisco club, doing Marilyn Monroe impersonations. (Like Marilyn, she sought romance all the time and had a string of entanglements with men.) Later, she worked as a stripper in Reno and as a Playboy Bunny at the Sunset Strip hutch. After playing opposite Don Knotts in the movie *The Love God*, Brevard appeared in other films and broke into television as a regular on the *Red Skelton Show*. She created the role of Tex on the daytime soap opera *One Life To Live*. As a woman, Brevard returned to teach theatre at East Tennessee State, the same university she had attended as a boy. This memoir is a rare pre-Women's Movement account of coming to terms with gender identity. Brevard writes frankly about the degree to which she organized her life around pleasing men, and how absurd it all seems to her now.

The Woman I Was Born to Be  
Author: Aleshia Brevard  
Publisher: Blue Feather Books Limited (2010)



I.S.B.N.-13 978 1935627920

**From Amazon Books** For nearly fifty years, Aleshia Brevard hid the fact that she was one of America's first transsexuals from her friends, step-children, fellow actors and actresses, film producers, students and university administrators, and even from her four husbands. *The Woman I Was Born to Be* is a sequel to Ms. Brevard's earlier book, *The Woman I Was Not Born to Be*. This book covers the second half of her life, describing the many challenges she encountered and triumphs she achieved after the fulfilment of her boyhood dream to change genders and become accepted as a woman. *The Woman I Was Born to Be* is not merely a transsexual tale. It is a story of personal evolution, of coming of age, and realizing that to deny one's history is to deny oneself. In this memoir, Ms. Brevard addresses present-day gender issues in counterpoint with flashbacks from her own personal story, which includes her professional success in the theatre, television, and in academia. *The Woman I Was Born to Be* is both an autobiographical account of one woman's life and a retrospective on the ever-changing landscape of the gender community. With wit, candour, and insight, Ms. Brevard entertains, educates, and enlightens as she tells her unique saga. Find a comfortable seat and turn the first page. By book's end, you'll agree Aleshia Brevard is living life to the fullest as the woman she was born to be.

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## Mum's the Word

### Elizabeth Riley Shares Her Story with New Idea Magazine and [S.B.S. Television](#)

by Rachael Lloyd, New Idea magazine, 22nd March 2003

Article appeared in Polare magazine: April 2003 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015

**S**ixteen-year-old Chenji Riley battled to control her emotions when the father she'd always adored confessed that he wanted to have a sex change. Tears tolled down Chenji's face as her father - a well-built secondary school teacher with a deep voice - held her hand and told her how he'd lived his life in torturous denials because he felt he should have been born a woman.

"I wasn't aware that Dad had these feelings," says Chenji, now twenty-five, who has two younger brothers. "He was always a typical father, doing sports with us, taking us swimming and nagging us to do our homework."

"I was shocked when he told me how he felt and I cried. But I love Dad and I wanted him to be happy."

Chenji's father, who is reluctant to divulge his former name, is now Liz Riley, a woman in her late forties living in Sydney's outer suburbs.

Liz is a kind, gentle character who talks eloquently about what she went through in her quest to undergo gender transformation.

She is sharing her story in a bid to give some insight into the psyche of transgender people, and she can be seen on the [S.B.S.](#) documentary, "Mum's the Word" on Tuesday, 1st April at 8:00pm.

"People make a lot of judgments about transgender people," Liz explains. "We live in a very sexist culture which is dominated by the notion of having kids, getting a mortgage and career, and anything outside of that is frowned upon."

"Transgender people are socially isolated and it's very difficult for us to integrate into the wider community."

Liz, who had electrolysis to get rid of her beard, and a full sex change operation, says there is absolutely no way she would have put herself through the agony of the transgender process if she hadn't felt compelled to do so. Most of all, she was terrified of losing her children.

"It's hard to explain just how scary it is to literally lay your life on the line to the people you love and risk losing them forever," says Liz, who is divorced from Chenji's mother. "I was terrified of losing Chenji because we'd always had such a good relationship."

"As I explained my situation to her, I almost felt detached from myself - like I was watching someone else talk to my daughter. It was a very traumatic thing to do, but I'd reached a point where I just couldn't go on lying to myself and to my family.

"Chenji and I cried a lot and hugged. Chenji handled it beautifully, although she must have felt overwhelmed."

She said: "I don't know why anyone would want to be a man anyway!" Chenji says the hardest part was losing her father as she knew him.

"It really struck me when I was looking at a photo taken of me and Dad when I was eight," Chenji says. "I felt so sad and thought: "Oh, I'll never see that person again."

But it was tougher for Liz's sons to adjust to losing their male role model.

During a counselling session, one of the boys burst into tears. He confessed that he'd started forgetting what his father was like prior to his sex change.

"My brothers feel they have lost Dad. To them he's died," explains Chenji, who is four months pregnant with Liz's first grandchild.

"But Liz will always be my father. That's probably hard for her as a woman. Sometimes when I answer the phone, I'll automatically say 'Hi Dad!' which probably makes her wince."

However, Chenji, a beauty therapist, doesn't hide her father's unconventionality from her friends.

"All my friends know and it's not an issue," she says. "Sometimes I'll say to one of my clients in passing: "Oh, I've got to go and do Dad's nails tonight!"

*It's hard to explain just how scary it is to literally lay your life on the line to the people you love and risk losing them forever*

Liz says she felt "different" from her peers almost from birth and secretly wore her mother's clothes when she was just eight.

"Cross-dressing is a very secretive activity," admits Liz, who now has a partner whom she met through the gay press. "I didn't know what my cross-dressing meant when I was a child, but I knew it wasn't acceptable to my parents so I hid it. It was only when I was fourteen and stumbled across the word "transvestite" that I realised I wasn't the only person in the world who was having these feelings."

Interestingly enough, Liz says she's always been attracted to women.

"I'm a hardcore lesbian!" she quips. She adds: "I did tell my ex-wife (Chenji's mother) that I cross-dressed before we got married. Her reaction was to assume, wrongly, that I was a gay man. I went through the whole rigmarole of being marched off to psychiatrists. Of course they all reckoned after four sessions they'd cured me!"

When Liz started wearing women's clothes in public, she admits she looked pretty disastrous.

"It was all very haphazard," she smiles. "We [transsexuals] all do it badly at the beginning because we try too hard. Someone told me I had good legs once, so I wore miniskirts for a while. Then Chenji came to the rescue and gave me a makeover."

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## U.T.S. is Gender Aware

Make the most of It!

by Michelle Sparks and Joni Gear

Article appeared in Polare magazine: April 2003 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



University of Technology,  
Sydney

**S**tudying at University can lead to some fantastic and interesting new adventures. You can meet some great people, have a fabulous time dodging classes here and there, struggling to make financial ends meet, but eventually come-out, having regurgitated a lot of information, with that special piece of paper, affectionately known as the degree.

***While we are aware that "transphobia" still exists, even at times within the queer community, we are working with the Gender Centre to help foster more genuine diversity.***

But what if you're transgendered or intersex? Or if you are questioning your gender-identity? Or your sexual identity? Or both? For some, this can add additional hurdles to the University experience. The [O.U.T.S.](#) Action Collective at University of Technology Sydney (U.T.S.) is here to help!

The [O.U.T.S.](#) Action Collective is a collective funded under the [U.T.S.](#) Students' Association, and provides support and resources for all transgendered students, intersex students and those questioning their gender-identity. The Collective also caters for gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, queer and questioning students, and also acknowledges that sexuality and gender are different matters.

We are a creative, enthusiastic and dedicated group of students. As the queer political activist group at [U.T.S.](#), we work closely with the queer social group, Out-2-Party. There's a lot of cross participation - because all work and no play makes Johnny or Joni a very dull individual!

While we are aware that "transphobia" still exists, even at times within the queer community, we are working with the Gender Centre to help foster more genuine diversity. We work to create safe and welcoming spaces at [U.T.S.](#), and within wider society, for all who identify as queer. This is partly achieved by raising our visibility and providing opportunities for our members and the wider [U.T.S.](#) community to become informed on queer issues.

Each year in August we put on Sexuality Week, which is a major event, practically taking over the University. There are stalls, show bags, workshops and forums on as many queer topics as possible, as well as plenty of fun and frivolity. Last year our theme was "Visibility, Awareness, Safety" and we had a huge response. Anna Lawarik, who is involved in the Justice Action campaign for the rights of transgendered people in prison, attended on behalf of The Gender Centre and conducted a workshop on transgender issues. Loads of questions were answered so together we were definitely achieving our aims. We're looking forward to an even bigger and better event this year, so if anyone out there is keen to present a workshop, forum or activity please don't be shy about getting in touch!

We started off this academic year with, of course, participation in the Mardi Gras Parade. We helped organise a combined universities entry which was a fantastic success. There were 145 students from [U.T.S.](#) alone! We marched together with queer students from sixteen other Australian universities, calling for rights and recognition!

To further raise awareness, we recently published an article in the [U.T.S.](#) student newspaper, Vertigo. Drawing on resources from the Gender Centre and elsewhere, the article was aimed at the entire student readership. It sought to educate readers on some of the issues faced by transgender and intersex students and reinforced their right to an education free from discrimination.

[O.U.T.S.](#) also provides a safe space for transgendered, intersex, gay, lesbian and bisexual students. It is a comfortable small lounge room with back issues of Polare, and copies of fact sheets relating to gender and intersex issues. There are also heaps of safe sex materials and information.

[O.U.T.S.](#) aims to defend the rights of all transgendered and intersex students at [U.T.S.](#), and we believe that all people should be empowered to live the gender they choose. We're here to speak out against discrimination and to provide queer and questioning students with materials and access to information. We are a voice for you on campus and we want you to get involved with our Collective to help make transgendered and intersex issues on campus visible ... as well as having fun in the meantime!

**It seems that O.U.T.S. has been renamed "The Queer Collective of the University of Technology, Sydney".  
For more information, [visit the Queer Collective's website](#). 📧 We look forward to seeing you!**

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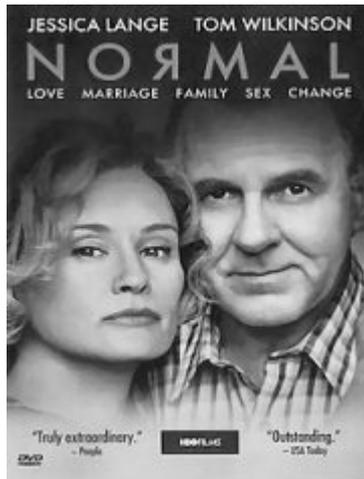
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# Loving a Man who wants to be a Woman

## An Analysis of Transgender Characters and Roles in Movies and Television

by Diane Werts, Staff Writer, Newsday

Article appeared in Polare magazine: April 2003 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



In the fictional *Normal*, Tom Wilkinson plays a middle-age Midwest factory foreman who's celebrating his 25th anniversary with wife Jessica Lange when he blurts that he can only continue living if he can live as a woman.

America loves a love story. Romantic films where boy meets girl. Or even, in recent years, girl meets girl or boy meets boy. But what about beyond that, where gender roles get yet more fluid?

We're about to find out. Television today is stretching those boundaries in the same way medical science has in the 50 years since Christine Jorgensen went to Sweden as a man anatomically and returned as a woman with an extraordinary story. Transgender love is the focus of two upcoming cable movies - H.B.O.'s *Normal*, and Showtime's fact-based *A Soldier's Girl*, screened at January's Sundance Film Festival in advance of its 31st May television debut.

Romance remains at the films' core, even as one partner in each smitten couple aspires to sexual reassignment surgery. In *A Soldier's Girl*, a male Army recruit falls for a transgender nightclub performer who's living as a woman. In the fictional *Normal*, Oscar nominee Tom Wilkinson (*In the Bedroom*) plays a middle-age Midwest factory foreman who's celebrating his 25th anniversary with wife Jessica Lange when he blurts that he can only continue living if he can live as a woman. Sound tragic? Far from it. The television credits of *Normal* writer-director Jane Anderson include *The Positively True Adventures of the Alleged Texas Cheerleader-Murdering Mom* and *When Billie Beat Bobby*, both of which eyed factual events through a comic prism depicting how wackily weird this modern life can get. There's humour throughout *Normal* - Lange insists Wilkinson is fully a man, because "only a man could be this selfish" - and it parallels the pain, confusion and cultural discomfort of these

still-unusual circumstances.

"I don't want anybody to approach this too earnestly," Anderson said when her film was screened at television critics' midseason press tour. "It is a strange situation." It's one that Anderson first approached fifteen years ago as "the adventures of a transsexual" in starting to write her stage play *Looking for Normal*. But over the years, the story evolved into "adventures of a couple who are soul mates," she says. "The movie is about a marriage. I'm using this situation as a metaphor for the ultimate challenge - what it takes to stay together with someone you love."

After Lange's character initially kicks Wilkinson out of the house - "I want my husband back!" she screams, to his anguished response, "I'm still here" - the film takes shape around their enduring connection. "To me, the essence of the piece really was the definition of love," Lange says. "Can you look beyond the external and actually see into the heart of another human being? What happens when you have the external suddenly going through this extraordinary and kind of unnatural transformation?"

Television hasn't always answered that question with sensitivity.

"Transgender characters are usually there more as a plot device than as real people," says Nick Adams, entertainment media manager for the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (G.L.A.A.D.).

In series especially, "their appearance is usually about the reactions of others, about the surprise, shock, horror and confusion of the regular characters." The only transgender series regular Adams has found was Helen Shaver's on the C.B.S. 2001 drama *The Education of Max Bickford*, an Erica who used to be star Richard Dreyfuss' best friend, Steve. "That was groundbreaking," says Adams, who is transgender female-to-male himself. "She was a college professor, she was totally open about her transition, she was accepted and well-respected."

Otherwise, transgender characters "are primarily brought in during sweeps," laments Adams, "where they're either the "tragic tranny" - homeless, murder victim, killer - or, when there's a sort of liberal paternalism: "Oh, these poor sick people, we really need to help them." He notes that a recent episode of the C.B.S. top-rated *C.S.I.*, centred on "an elusive criminal mastermind, a serial killer, where it's revealed that he had a sex-change operation from female-to-male, with creepy flashbacks and horror music behind it."

**... transgender characters are primarily ... the "tragic tranny" - homeless, murder victim, killer - or, when there's a sort of liberal paternalism: "Oh, these poor sick people" ...**

Male-to-female transition has inspired many more television depictions, including a landmark two-part episode of the *C.B.S. Medical Centre* in 1975. Robert Reed of *Brady Bunch* fame earned an Emmy nomination as a distinguished doctor seeking transgender surgery, battling the resistance of his wife and son, along with the ignorance of hospital officials, who think he's gay or might change his mind. Subdued, compassionate direction from Hollywood veteran Vincent Sherman (*The Hasty Heart*) kept all the characters sympathetic and all the plot twists rooted in reality. Such heartfelt humanity has been denied most transgender characters, even three decades later in an era of better psychological understanding. *G.L.A.A.D.* has recently found "offensive" characterizations in *Law & Order*, *N.Y.P.D. Blue* and *Ally McBeal* where Lisa Edelstein's recurring male-to-female role had "Ally freaking out and making faces just because she has to be in the elevator with her."

That conforms to the sitcom mould Adams describes as "Isn't this hilarious, X doesn't know this woman is really a man." Archie Bunker got "tricked" on *All in the Family* in the nineteen-seventies, and John Larroquette's nineteen-eighties *Night Court* character recoiled when a beautiful woman turns out to have been his old fraternity brother.

Television movies and miniseries at least have more "time to explore the complexity of transgender lives," says Adams, citing the *P.B.S. Tales of the City* and *C.B.S. Second Serve* starring Vanessa Redgrave as real-life tennis pro Renee Richards.

The story of *A Soldier's Girl* hit the headlines in 1999, when *P.f.c.* Barry Winchell was beaten to death by a fellow soldier while dating a transgender club performer. Because his lover, Calpernia Addams, was undergoing hormonal transition at the time (she had sexual reassignment surgery last year), the film, directed by Frank Pierson (*Citizen Cohn*), illustrates the personal difficulties and rewards of already living as a woman - and loving a man who considers himself "straight." "I think it's sort of irrelevant to put any definition on it," says Troy Garity, who portrays Winchell. "The film, as life, has a lot of ambiguity. Barry Winchell, to me, is a hero, because he was able to recognise a truth inside of him that to many is taboo and, in his environment, possibly dangerous. He embraced it and walked with a high head about it." The real-life Calpernia Addams admitted at Showtime's press tour presentation, "I exist somewhat differently on the gender continuum than a lot of people." So she's pleased with Pierson's dramatisation, written by *Philadelphia* script writer Ron Nyswaner. "They really got the spirit of this story right. And that was just a kind and gentle man loving someone." Asked about such "feminine" hurdles as walking in high heels, both films' stars responded less about surface performance than intrinsic personality. *Normal* star Wilkinson said, "I've played people who were princes of Denmark who went off to kill people, I've played crazy kings who've thrown away their entire kingdom. I can certainly act somebody who wants to change his body. I trusted the story, and I trusted my instincts." Young Juilliard graduate Lee Pace, who portrays Addams in *A Soldier's Girl*, faced not only playing a woman but playing his first film role and a living person he'd met. "You just play your moments, you try to fall in love," he said, "and you hope for the best."

## Soldier's Girl

**Actors:** Troy Garity, Lee Pace, Andre Braugher, Shawn Hatosy, Philip Eddolls

**Director:** Frank Pierson

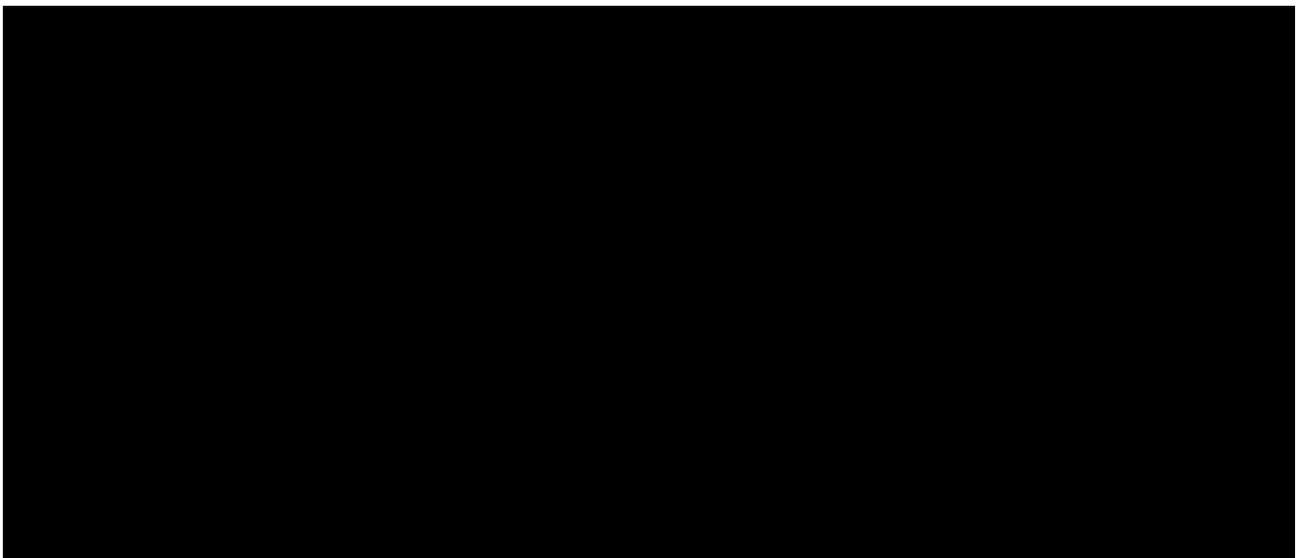
**Writer:** Ron Nyswaner

**Producers:** Doro Bachrach, Lena Cordina, Linda Gottlieb, Ron Nyswaner

**Released:** 2003

The 2003 drama, *Soldier's Girl* is based on a true story: the relationship between Barry Winchell and Calpernia Addams and the events that led to Barry's murder by fellow soldiers.

Barry is a private with the 101st Airborne Division of the United States Army, stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Calpernia works as a showgirl at a transgender revue in Nashville, Tennessee when the two met in 1999. Barry's roommate Justin Fisher (Shawn Hatosy) brings Barry to the club where she performs. When Barry and Calpernia begin seeing each other regularly, Fisher begins spreading rumours on base about their relationship, which appeared to be a violation of the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy about discussing the sexual orientation of military personnel. Barry faces increasing harassment and pressure, which explode into violence over Fourth of July weekend. While Calpernia performs in a pageant in Nashville, Barry is beaten to death in his sleep with a baseball bat by Calvin Glover, who had been goaded by Fisher into committing the crime. The film ends with a discussion of the aftermath.





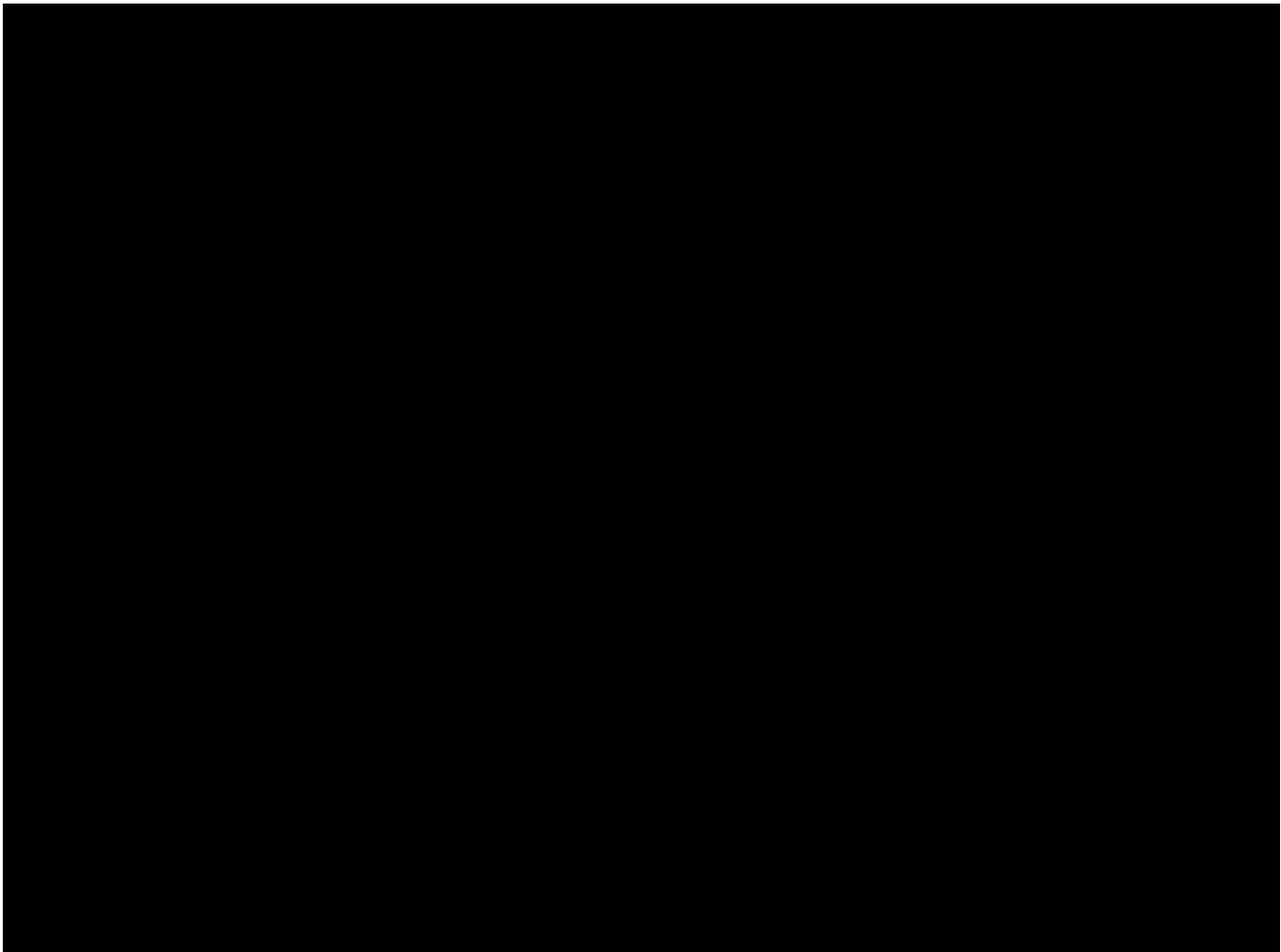
## Normal

Directed by: Jane Anderson

Written by: Jane Anderson

Producer(s): Cary Brokaw, Thomas J. Busch, Lydia Dean-Pilcher

Released: January 2003



**From the [I.M.D.B.](#)  In the countryside of the United States of America, Irma Applewood and her husband Roy Applewood have been happily married for twenty-five years and they are model citizens in their community. Roy brings Irma to meet Reverend Dale Muncie, who is their pastor and friend, to tell that he is a woman trapped in a man's body and he will have a sex-change operation. Now Roy has to face the deception of his wife and the intolerance of his colleagues, members of his church and his son Wayne. But Irma loves him and after the impact of the news, she understands and supports him with their teenage daughter Patty Ann (Hayden Panettiere) and Roy's boss Frank (Clancy Brown) that is their friend.**

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