

# TRANS SPIRITUALITY

## A TRANS-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

\$6.00, or FREE! (see p. 32)

Issue 01, Winter 2005/2006

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**TRANS SPIRITUALITY** is a new zine published by Jen Durr Press. It was born from the *Trans-Religious Dialogue*, a process begun among incarcerated T\* whose spirituality is often sharpened by enduring repeated violence to their gifted souls.



## **TRANS SPIRITUALITY** A TRANS-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

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**TRANS SPIRITUALITY** is a quarterly zine for demonstrating how the transgender experience includes a rich spiritual dimension. Our initial focus is how T\* inmates are finding incredible ways to apply their spirituality to the challenges of living in a gender-oppressed environment. If their spirituality proves effective for dealing with the challenges they face each day, what does that say about how *we* are integrating our spirituality into *our* daily transgender experience?

**TRANS SPIRITUALITY** is open to submissions. Material can be submitted to: Steph Turner, **TRANS SPIRITUALITY** Editor, N9494 Haltur Ln., Eagle, WI 53119. We prefer to receive submissions online, at [jendurpress@gmail.com](mailto:jendurpress@gmail.com). Material may be edited for space and continuity. Unsolicited material by snail mail cannot be returned without a SASE. Please request our *writer's guidelines*. Payment to writers is a copy of the issue in which the material appears. All rights reserved.

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*Introducing...*  
*Introducing...*

### **The Founding Corp of the TRD**

<u>Name of identity recognition</u>	<u>Religious affiliation</u>
Valjean Royal (aka Pinkie)	Evangelical Christianity
Bella Donna Night Raven	Wicca
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Mikki (Gypsy Otter)	Wicca
Steph Turner	Transspirituality
Amanda Armstrong (Mandy)	Christa, Christianity

“Dear God, as we begin this journey of a transreligious dialogue, reaching out in your name, bless our bearing of fruit of the spirit so that we may be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in our wisdom and spiritual understanding.”

- Valjean (June 14, 2004)

“As a transgender person I have always felt the spiritual connection related to being so. And like many others, it took me a long time to even begin to understand it. But one thing is for sure, there is a very definite and strong connection there.”

- Donna (2004)

“Through Zen I am able to see and let go of the attachments that bound me to my life of misery. ... When I sit Zazen (Zen meditation), I am able to let go of my attachments to how this life ‘should’ be. Freed of these I can accept my true nature and the situation I’m in.”

- Karen (2004)

“On a personal note, I refuse to believe a god of any kind could ‘hate,’ much less hate based on gender or sexual preference. It would not make sense in the overall balance and scheme of things. Moreover, such a god would not be worthy of worship or ‘belief’ in any sense of the word. I’ve noted throughout my travels,

study and experience, that the Creator (God) is many different things to many people.”

- Caryl (2004) (aka Tsuanmi)

“Most if not all seekers of divine truth and true worship eventually discover that there is a major difference between *religious* and *being spiritual*. Religion is a pathway to spirituality. A pathway that so many get stuck on getting all hung up on the religion, and its practices, and failing to advance to where the pathway goes. No matter what religion one practices one can still achieve spirituality.”

- Sarah (2004)

“I am flesh and spirit, I live and I will die. And this path is my sanctuary. It does not condemn me for who or what I am. It teaches me to indulge and embrace it. As a religion of the flesh, upon my altar I look at Baphome and I see it all. I see...myself!”

- Natasha (2004)

“The Goddess does not care *who or what* you are, so it accepts all people of good thought. Thus, Witchcraft is a way for those TS who feel a need for a spiritual component to their lives to fulfill that often very deeply held need. Where Judeo-Christian religions oppress and exclude, Witchcraft welcomes and heals.”

- Mikki (2004)

“The whole experience of being arrested, convicted and incarcerated has a way of focusing one’s attention on spiritual matters. Of stripping away the fluff of life and steering attention to what really matters.”

- Steph (2004)

“For me, the goddess Christa...speaks to my reality, to my dreams, and to my fears. In a sense, she is the submerged side or Christianity, the side that haunts the Christianity of the powerful.”

- Amanda, the originator of this amazing project (2004)

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Cover credit: painting by Alana, thanks.

## A Fresh Look at Gender in the Bible

Carl Gordon

**Note:** this piece from Carl was originally drafted as a response to a pen pal of hirs. S'he refers to each of hir pen pals as "Soul." So when you read "Soul" this can be addressed directly to you, since we are all Soul.

I must say that I am not convinced that transsexualism or transgenderism are "disorders." Consider how God is both male and female in ONE. How can it be a "disorder" to find this same female-male principle combined in the same human soul – unless God has the same "disorder"? Either God is also "disordered" or the innate integration of masculine and feminine energies in the same being is not a disorder at all.

Seems to me that the only *disorder* is the lack of proper understanding of transsexualism/transgenderism, and the many "disordered" ideas about those realities. The *combination* of male (positive) and female (negative) is the bedrock of existence, nature and reality – physically and metaphysically. It is the primordial nature of existence to have both masculine and feminine energies integrated into an original wholeness.



### PART ONE

#### Genesis of gender

We can find such a combination between spirit  $\triangle$  (male) and matter  $\nabla$  (female)  $\star$  manifested in the very first verse of the Bible. Genesis 1:1 reveals the foundation of manifested reality, stated as Heaven  $\triangle$  (positive/male) and Earth  $\nabla$

(negative/female)  $\star$ . This correlates with the polarity of Day and Night  $\odot$  in Genesis 1:5. Which is also of course negative-female and positive-male. These manifested polarities emanate from the original male-female oneness of Creator God. Humanity tends to emphasize these later polarities in their social structures, missing the divine essence of male-female coexistence within the same entity.

Just because humanity has become accustomed to much of a polarized existence doesn't make it the only legitimate social order. In fact, it is a popular illusion to think of human beings as absolutely male or female. Human beings always manifest in the womb first as female, and then for a time are both male and female, until maleness or femaleness begins to predominate over the other. Echoing the divisions of the original creative energies, the fetus (typically) emerges biologically as male or female, while the other gender characteristics remains in abeyance. Each person continues to have the opposite sex organs in a rudimentary form and therefore is really bi-sexual, as was primitive man.

The King James Bible<sup>1</sup> tells us specifically in Genesis 5:2 that Adam was first created an androgyne/hermaphrodite before the physical separation of the female from the male in Genesis 2:21-22. Genesis 5:2 states that the male and female were both named "Adam" by God when he first created them. Genesis 5:2 clearly tells us that God first created Adam as both male and female physically

<sup>1</sup>Every biblical reference I make will always be from the original authorized King James Version. I find so many of these so-called "new" and "modern" translations are merely biased arrangements to coincide with bias schools of thought.

together as one, which is why God called *their* name Adam. Proof that God created Adam as an androgynous (hermaphrodite) being before dividing into male and female individual beings is in Genesis 2:21-22, as Adam himself informs us in Genesis 2:23. In Genesis 2:24 Adam tells us it is through marriage that man (male) and woman (female) can approximate the original androgynous being he initially was when God first created him.

### Elohim

As I've said, Soul, you are correct that Genesis 1:27

defines God (and man) as being both female and male combined together in/as ONE. Especially in conjunction with Genesis 5:1-2. In addition to what those particular verses clearly states is the fact the word "God" in the first chapter of Genesis was translated from the Hebrew word ELOHIM. This word is highly significant and very revealing. Though I am not trained in the Hebrew language, I have learned that the first part of the word "Elohim" is "Eloh," which is a feminine noun. The letter "h" indicates a feminine gender. If a single feminine Being were meant, the word "Eloh" would have been used. The feminine plural is "oth." So if the intention had been to indicate a Dual composite God of feminine genders the correct word to use would have been "Elooth." Instead of either of those forms, however, we find the masculine plural ending "im" added to the feminine noun "Eloh," indicating a female-male, double-sexed Being, expressions of the Dual, Positive-Negative Supreme Creative Energy.

**So yes, there is no doubt that in Matthew 19:12 Jesus was including transsexuals and especially transgendered male-girls as eunuchs.**

Therefore, the "Elohim" used exclusively in the first chapter of Genesis during creation is itself denoting both male and female potencies combined together as ONE Supreme Absolute Being. This is *not* lost in the translation of "Elohim" to the English "God" simply because in the English language that word is seen as singular. It is still plural because it represents "Elohim" in its plural meaning.

This is why in Genesis 1:26 that word "God" becomes "Us." So the words Elohim/God/Us are all clearly telling us the exact same thing.

### Elohim exemplified

Genesis 1:26-27 does not stand alone in informing us that God is male-female in ONE. The New Testament also speaks to this sacred integration of gender traits. In Matthew 19:11-12, Jesus tells us there are three kinds and levels of eunuchs. Obviously the eunuchs you mean are the ones Jesus said are born eunuchs. The lack of testosterone and other male hormones definitely makes such males feminine in many ways: physically, mentally, and emotionally. Even though they are considered "male" because they possess male genitalia.

And yes, a transgendered male who has male genitals but is femininely wired mentally and emotionally – with feminine mannerisms, expressions and desires – would also be a *secondary*-eunuch. This kind is on the level Jesus speaks of in Matthew 19:12, "which were so born from their mother's womb." So yes, there is no doubt that in Matthew 19:12 Jesus was including transsexuals and *especially* transgendered male-girls as eunuchs.

*Transgendered* is the modern equivalent to this ancient tradition of gender transcendence. Isaiah 56:4-5 refers to the honor these ancient transgendered male-girls were due in the eyes of God.

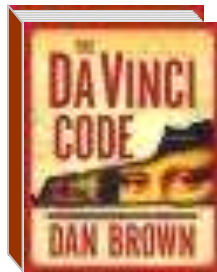
### Applied today

Soul, I wonder what the First Human – the transsexual/androgynous Adam – Jesus the Christ, and His Apostle John, would say about the transsexuals and transgirls of this technological Age of Ignorance? What would they think about this latter day belief that *their* primary natures, which is more a mirror of God's (Elohim) Nature than most peoples', is a "disorder." That belief never ceases to amaze me! It is my hope that the word "Elohim," as used in the first chapter of Genesis, is eventually fully understood by everyone. Then more people can begin to realize the *truth*. Which is, if GOD is the transcendent "ELOHIM" then transsexuals/transgendered souls are most definitely "elohim" (Psalm 82:6). They are indeed the natural highest degrees of the gender-dichotomy transcendent image of God, as stated in Genesis 1:26-27.

## PART TWO

### The da Vinci Code Decoded

Perhaps you have heard about the fictional book and movie "*The da Vinci Code*." Author Dan Brown lays out a fascinating if not contorted scenario that has Jesus the Christ married to Mary Magdalene, and siring a child by her. To help support this claim the author points to a peculiar image in Leonardo da Vinci's painting of the Last Supper – who is said



to have special knowledge of Jesus' true legacy at odds with the Church's agenda.

On Jesus' right is an image of a feminine appearing person, and author Dan Brown asserts this is a depiction of Mary Magdalene, "wife" of Jesus. But as opponents to this theory point out, if that is Mary then where is *John*? If that is Mary Magdalene then John would not have been at the Last Supper among the twelve disciples surrounding Jesus, as the Bible (especially the Gospel of John) repeatedly states. So who was at the Last Supper? Was it Jesus and the twelve apostles as the Bible states in Matthew 26:20 and Luke 22:14? Or was it Jesus with only eleven of the apostles along with Mary Magdalene, as Dan Brown implies? Let's see which of the two the *King James Bible* points to the most.

### Transcending Sex

According to the Bible, Jesus is the highest manifestation of the Holy and Divine that has ever physically manifested in this world. Also according to the Bible the highest principle of divinity is absent of and beyond sex with women, for a man, due to male's physical and metaphysical makeup. Which means that for a male to reach and maintain the highest states of holiness/divinity he must continuously abstain from sex with women.

We begin to see a direct indication of that fact in 1 Samuel 21:4-6. In verse 4 we see that the priest would not give them hollowed (holy) bread unless they had "kept themselves at least from women." The key words being "at least," which demonstrates that sex with women is the worse indulgence for males' spiritually. Becoming attached to women sexually, emotionally, metaphysically, infringes on the male's capacity to achieve the highest manifestation of divinity/holiness, which

in that case was the hallowed (holy) bread. It's as if to lean on women to tap into their feminine energies undermines the spiritual responsibility to tap into one's own innate feminine energies. And this could lead to a loss of spiritual freedom and integrity.

According to that verse and the usage of "at least," other things (sex?) may slow males' spiritual progress. But they do not prevent males from attaining the *highest* degree of holiness/divinity like sex with women, because sexual attachment with women *does* prevent males from the uppermost liberty of divinity/holiness/heaven. That is, males having sex with females. Verse 5 drives the point home even more directly when David says their bodies were *holy* because they had been kept from women for three days. Meaning a male's body is not holy/sanctified when he has sex with women. Interesting.

### **Need more examples?**

In Revelations 14:1-5, 144,000 male souls will be eternal companions and devotees of Jesus after achieving the highest state of divinity/holiness possible. And verse 4 plainly states that the 144,000 have not been "*defiled with women* for they are virgins." Again, meaning sex with women undermines males' potential for reaching the highest state of divinity/holiness.

Most preachers preach Jesus and the Apostle Paul when preaching from the New Testament. And Paul is usually held in higher esteem than the other apostles. Let's examine what Paul says in I Corinthians chapter 7. In verse one he specifically states that, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." In verse 7 he says he wished all men were like him in not touching (i.e., having sex with) women.

In verse 8 he says it is good if the unmarried men and widows did not have sex at all, as he didn't. In verse 32 he points out why. Freedom from sexual attachment equates with spiritual liberty. Just as the undefiled 144,000 (Rev. 14:4): "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." Isn't this Paul's point?

But if they weren't ready for that level of spiritual commitment, he says in verse 9, then it is better for them to marry and have sex in marriage (exclusively with one's spouse/mate) rather than to be consumed with lust (*burn*). This is understandably worse and keeps one from reaching as high of a state of divinity/holiness as those with sex in a loving marriage.

So the question is, would the Bible hold Jesus' 144,000 pure devotees to a higher standard than Jesus himself attained and maintained? And would Paul hold himself to a higher standard than Christ Jesus achieved? Or is Dan Brown somehow correct in portraying Mary as being impregnated by Jesus? According to the King James scripture the answer is an emphatic "*no*"!

### **In Jesus' own words**

But let's see what Jesus himself said on the matter of sex with women. According to biblical scripture, Jesus descended into this material world from the kingdom of heaven and then ascended *back* to the kingdom of heaven from whence he came. Jesus constantly preached that reaching the kingdom of heaven is the ultimate and supreme goal. And Jesus, being the greatest physical manifestation of holiness/divinity, came from and returned to the Highest Goal, which according to biblical scripture is the kingdom of heaven.



But look at what Jesus said about the highest level of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 19:11-12. Correlating with what not all men are able to achieve, the highest level of divinity/holiness, verse 11 states, "All men cannot receive (understand) this saying, save they to whom it is given." To that statement Jesus adds, in verse 12, "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."

These passages point to how not all males can understand or achieve the highest teachings of attaining the highest levels of the kingdom of heaven. And Jesus did say there are many levels in the kingdom of heaven. "In my Father's house," Jesus states in Luke 14:2, "are many mansions." Paul later speaks of the third heaven, in Corinthians 12:3, further attesting to heaven consisting of multiple levels. Among the difficult-to-receive/achieve-teachings for finding these higher levels is the making of oneself into a eunuch.

Jesus and his disciples were discussing men marrying women when Jesus took it to a higher level by saying how some men make themselves "eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." This doesn't mean that such males are actually removing their testicles, but retain their seed (sperm) within their bodies, especially from women, as John also said in 1 John 3:9. As the 144,000 devotees also did in Revelations 14:4, the virgins that "were not defiled with women; for they are virgins."

Therefore, according to numerous scripture, the answer again to whether Jesus could have impregnated Mary (or had sex with any other woman) is a definite *no!* Jesus is the highest manifestation of holiness/divinity in human form, which transcends the sexual experience. As One who achieved the most supreme level of heaven, Jesus didn't

need sex to feel complete. He already possessed within himself all the divine qualities the male typically seeks in a female. Jesus was already whole, and didn't feel the need for a woman to complement, through sexual desire, his socially ascribed male attributes.

### Another example

A final proof is John 20:17. In that passage, following Jesus' death and resurrection, Jesus told Mary Magdalene *not to touch* him because he had not yet ascended to his Father. This means he had not yet reached the highest level/degree of divinity, which is God-the-Father in heaven. Her touching him at this point would impede his ascension to God-the-Father, the Highest level of Holiness-Divinity and heaven.

However, he still had not ascended to God-the-Father in verse 27 of that same chapter 20 of John, when Jesus *told* the male Thomas to touch him by thrusting his hand into the wound in Jesus' side. Males apparently could touch Jesus before his ascension to God-the-Father, the highest holiness/divinity, because males do not prevent the ascension to or attainment of the supreme level of divinity/holiness/heaven as women can.



## PART THREE

### Disciple whom Jesus loved

Now that scripture rules out the notion of Jesus having sex with Mary (or any female) the question remains: Why did Leonardo da Vinci paint John's features so feminine and womanly? What reason did



da Vinci have for painting John with such womanly features?

The Bible does not describe John's facial features. However, there are a series of verses concerning John in relation to Jesus. Upon examination, many of these stand out as being distinctly different from Jesus' relationships with his other disciples, including his chief disciple Simon Peter.

Now, in the Bible there is only one disciple who is repeatedly singled out and repeatedly referred to as "that disciple whom Jesus loved." John as the gospel writer humbly identifies this as himself. And he is present at the Last Supper.

At one point during the Last Supper, in John 13:23, John the disciple whom Jesus loved was leaning against Jesus' chest. Much as a woman would lean against a man. Because John acts in some feminine ways, does Dan Brown impose the mainstream gender stereotype and concludes this must be Mary Magdalene? Did da Vinci really portray Mary Magdalene in his famous portrait?



### **In contrast to Peter**

There are other examples of John's apparent femininity cited in the gospels. These often contrast with the masculine bravado of Peter. It is interesting that Peter, who was Jesus' chief disciple upon whom Jesus said he would establish his church (Matthew 16:18), did not himself ask Jesus at the Last Supper who would betray him (John 13:24). Instead, Peter directed "that disciple whom Jesus loved" to ask Jesus who would betray him. It's as if Peter knew John was a more intimate confidant at Jesus' side than Peter himself. Interesting.

At the cross it was John who Jesus entrusted with the welfare of his bereaved mother, not Peter or Mary Magdalene. The gospels acknowledge that Mary Magdalene was at the crucifixion, but there is no account of Jesus ever speaking to Mary Magdalene while on the cross. If she was his wife, and the sanctity of marriage was held in such high esteem in this Jewish culture, wouldn't the gospel writers have made mention of it as a worthy example for the rest of us to follow?

This is the same John that Peter was always hanging around. When Mary Magdalene told them that Jesus' crucified body was missing, in John 20:2-8, Peter was with John. I find it revealing that in verses 2, 3, 4, and 8, John is repeatedly referred to as that "other" disciple, as if he was in some way an *outsider* among the disciples, despite being in Jesus' inner circle. Sound familiar?

Though John outran Peter to the opened tomb, he let Peter enter first as if it was his right. Why?

Later, in John 21:7, we again find Peter with "that disciple whom Jesus loved." When John tells Peter that Jesus is coming that way, Peter did something that strikes me as quite strange. He put his fisher's coat on because he had been naked, and then jumped into the sea. Why? Was Peter doing (or trying to do) something that he didn't want Jesus to see?

### **Disciple whom Jesus loved must be John**

I understand that *The da Vinci Code* basically agrees with these dynamics, but alleges that the one whom Jesus really loved was somehow Mary Magdalene. When you think about it, this does make some sense, in a biased conventional point of view.

If you cannot accept femininity expressed by a male because you are so attached to this polarized world and its passing ways, then it must be easy to conclude only a woman could be the “disciple whom Jesus loved.” But an abundance of scripture – that doesn’t cater to worldly gender constructs – informs us that “the disciple whom Jesus loved” is none other than John, the humble writer of these intimate words.

One thing is certain. John – or whoever wrote the Gospel of John – wanted all of us to know that he was “the disciple whom Jesus loved” and that Peter was always around him. The writer also

wanted us to know that when Peter was naked with him that Peter jumped into the sea when warned Jesus was approaching. Seems Peter didn’t care if the other disciples knew he was naked with that

disciple whom Jesus loved. It was the presence of “the Lord” that prompted his covering up. *Very interesting.*

Again, in John 21:20-22, it seems that John, the “disciple whom Jesus loved,” was singled out as being different from the rest. In verse 22, Jesus asked Peter what business was it of his if Jesus willed that John (“whom he loved”) remained alive until Jesus’ return. Many passages like this seem to paint John as being different, and yet setting him apart and *above* all the other followers of Jesus. For example, note how in John 21:21 that Peter finds John following some steps behind Jesus, as if to keep his “proper” place.

### **Da Vinci’s John**

So why did Leonardo da Vinci paint John as very feminine looking, if that was

not Mary Magdalene or any other female at the Last Supper table? Was there any legitimate reason for da Vinci to portray John in this way? Was da Vinci really the recipient of some mystic knowledge about this Gospel scene?

It makes sense to me that codes were passed down to reveal a mystery about an original follower of Jesus. I agree such secrets are not readily received by profane, biased or ignorant folk. Most people still cannot accept the truth, even if they can conceive of the possibility.

A possibility to consider is why John was portrayed in such a feminine manner, not only in da Vinci’s painting but also in

the gospel descriptions themselves. Perhaps the “disciple whom Jesus loved” was not merely an effeminate person but was actually *transgendered*. This could help explain why among all the disciples it was a

transgendered John that Jesus loved best, and felt most intimate with, reflecting Jesus own innate integration of gender energies in the manifested Elohim.

### **Primordial gender of humanity**

Look back at Adam’s nature, passed down to us all. Genesis clearly defines Adam as being initially created as two (male-female) *in one*, which is three when including the fully gendered integrated image of God – the Holy Trinity manifested materially, before God separated Adam into an individual male and female.

It is this primordial full-gendered existence that is more pure and above the felt need for sex. It is the gender-polarized souls that struggle the most with issues of sex and gender, as they constantly look

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outside of themselves for the *complementary opposite* they feel missing in themselves.

When humanity was created through Adam there was *never* an *absolute* separation between the genders, which is why *all* human beings have both a male and female psyche polarity. All human beings possess genes from both their mother (female) and father (male). Males, of course, possess both X and Y chromosomes, which is another reason why male transgenderism is so understandable, and more prevalent than today's society realizes.

It is also understandable why Jesus so loved the transgendered John who was obviously so similar in nature to God the Creator – in Whom resides both male and female qualities combined into a fully integrated Oneness. The ancient sages and mystery schools called this the Cosmic Androgyne. Jesus obviously recognized the transgendered John as more potentially God-natured than the other disciples.

*Ed. - I look forward to seeing plenty of feedback to this evocative piece. As you respond to these themes please keep in mind it was originally drafted as a letter. To edit it for continuity your editor introduced an inevitable degree of hir own voice. I trust I stayed true to its message.*

Though *all* human beings are in varying aspects and degrees both feminine and masculine, with the potential to encounter the divine Elohim in the full spectrum of their own buried gendered traits.

**Back to you**

Again I say check all of the verses I've cited herein in the original authorized King James Version, because so many of the so-called "new" and "modern" translations have drastically changed so many words solely to fit the views of biased schools of thought.

Soul, you say you are "not quite a girl, nor quite a man," as if you are somehow *less* than both. However, the proof is that you either are, or have the natural potential to be, "more" than the sum of "girl" and "man." You have within you the gifted soul that is a closer reflection to the Elohim, God the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who has all gender energies within. As Jesus most definitely knew...

**You...have the natural potential to be, "more" than the sum of "girl" and "man."**

**Spiritual Protection**  
**Donna**

**In this hostile and alien environment that we find ourselves in,** many times we find ourselves alone and under assault. I speak of physical as well as spiritual abuse. The only friend or ally, the only safe haven, will be

your spirit and your relationship with your Creator.

To survive and to grow as a person you must come to know your *self* and love your *self*. This is true for everyone. This is especially true for

transgendered folk.

We face some unique problems as transgendered and are often singled out for extra abuse by our captors and fellow prisoners. Along the way of my gender journey amidst incarceration I

have found a few things that keep me spiritually strong and help me stay alive.

1. I pray, give thanks, and ask for divine guidance and protection from my Deity (the Goddess) every day;
2. I do not seek any gain at the expense of others. Meaning I don't lie, cheat, steal, or hurt others to get what I want or need;
3. I don't drink or use mind-altering drugs;
4. I don't gossip or talk about others behind their back. I mind and take care of my own business;
5. I am celibate;
6. I study and try to practice the spiritual aspects and rituals of my chosen gender to

the best of my abilities. Keeping in mind my surroundings;

7. I try to help people who truly need it, but I do not allow myself to be used by those who will not help themselves or keep repeating the same mistakes over and over again.
8. I refuse to surrender my body or my spirit to those who would use and abuse me. I try to maintain a decent reputation and am prepared to defend myself if assaulted.
9. I don't run up debts I cannot pay or allow myself to be obligated to anyone for anything, I don't make promises I cannot keep, and keep the promises I make; and

10. I forgive others and myself for our faults and mistakes, I don't hold grudges or seek to revenge or retaliate for past wrongs suffered.

Some of these may seem more practical than spiritual. In order for us to grow and survive as spiritual persons I think that we must also exist in the *real* world. To find peace, balance, and harmony within, we must also find it without.

Knowing that many people will never accept you for who you are, and knowing nothing you do will please everyone, go forth and be the best you can be. Face each day as it comes to you. And keep some hope for tomorrow.

*Blessed be.*



*Feedback***SOUNDING OFF!****Steph and Tsunami**

In my last typed Pre-Issue I, Steph, shared my desire to establish a positive tone for this new zine. I encouraged us to steer clear of any derisive rhetoric, and would likely curtail any prior to publication. The rhetoric I used to convey this concern triggered a counter concern in Tsunami (Caryl). To her it sounded like I could be leaning too heavily towards censorship.

In the months that followed we exchanged an encouraging dialogue about this. While trying to clarify what I meant in my FEEDBACK section (reproduced below), I tried to better understand where she was coming from. Perhaps my eagerness to keep our pages visitor-friendly might get in the way of some members' need to stay authentic and candidly honest. This isn't "my" zine, it is yours, and I want to enforce your best interests over mine. But I need you to share them.

Below are reproduced excerpts of Tsunami and my exchange, to invite you to weigh in. What do you think? This is submitted here to invite you into this dialogue. Since "freedom of expression" is vital to our trans religious liberties this FEEDBACK section is a good place for you to help us build *our* own community values. And isn't that what this zine is truly about?

**FEEDBACK**

Thank you, Donna (*actually it was Sarah j. Babcock; sorry for the confusion - Ed*), for your compliments about my writing. With the editing talents for which the Creator has blessed me I hope to help everyone's writing shine a little brighter, without affecting anyone's message.

I will also be careful about publishing any offensive rhetoric or tone. Donna, I was uncomfortable with the heavy tone of your reaction to Johnny Gann's criticism to your support list. I didn't get to see his criticism first hand, and perhaps it would have also struck me as put-offish. As we open ourselves to a broader audience I will likely edit any remarks that I or Amanda see as giving new readers a poor impression of ourselves. Since first one's are so enduring, let's make a good one!

With all that you have endured, Donna (*note correction above - Ed*), I give you my heartfelt understanding. My prayers go out to you to carry on and continue to fuel up on our support.

If any of you insist your message go through as is, then perhaps I could forward a copy to whom such comments are meant. And leave the pages of the 'zine more serene. Not that I would hide any dirty laundry that needs to air. But to ensure we are a place where any dirty laundry comes clean in the end.

As we respond to one another's contributions in the FEEDBACK section, it is my hope to avoid any abrasive rhetoric. The Style Sheet for new contributors will include this warning: Any rhetoric that can be perceived as offensively abrasive will not be published. If dissatisfaction or other negative expression is vital to your point then sandwich anything of a negative tone between more positive and affirming rhetoric. I have just applied this positive-negative-positive format in my response above to Donna.

Pre-Is

Seven-28-Zero/Five

Dearest Stephanie,

I am opposed to any form of  
censorship (though I support constructive

editing). I *hope* you never have to suppress someone's letters to TRD 'cause someone else "might" get offended. I have been oppressed and discriminated against in one form or another all of my life... I can't support suppressing anyone's free speech/expression. Maybe *that* should be the title of another section in the 'zine, "Sounding Off." And if anything, print the letters that sound off as is, with *names* redacted, like a lot of other 'zines do. "Usually" someone can tell when something is directed at them, even if it's said indirectly.

**I have been oppressed and discriminated against in one form or another all of my life... I can't support suppressing anyone's free speech/expression.**

In solidarity,  
Tsunami

20050822

Dear Tsunami,

I share your concerns about "free speech" and "censorship." However, from a slightly different angle. To me, free speech is liberating speech, unfettered expression that increases awareness and invites communication. Eloquent vitriol that cajoles others to pounce on the person of one's angst, to the point that person's point of view gets ignored, is in my view something that falls below the ideals of free speech. What if one soul's free speech is another's source of oppression?

I too "have been oppressed and discriminated against in one form or another all of my life." Often in the name of free speech and democracy. When my grade school peers cast aspersions on me and I objected, they quipped: "It's a free country and I can say what I want!" It was that kind of pop liberalism that turned me into a staunch conservative in the late 70s and early 80s. Now as a

transpolitical transspirit I no longer rely much on such political constructs. I don't think in such terms anymore.

I could go on and on about this, but I want to keep this down to a page. Perhaps this would be a good subject to dialogue openly in the pages of T-S, and perhaps have a section called "Sounding Off" for those who feel they must vent. When done responsibly, where the writer

truly owns her own feelings, and encourages the recipients to respond in kind, then this could be a vibrant section for some lively discussions. But if it merely

spews a violent attitude, well, I see violence (including abusive verbalizations) and the ideals of free speech as being mutually exclusive. I cannot in good faith be a part of any organization that indulges malicious statements in the name of free speech and then calls the prudence of not being complicit to it as the political aspersions of censorship. My spiritual integrity is worth more than that. And I trust the synergy of our various spiritual heritages will assure our publication will not slide into some "flaming" rag.

If Sarah j. Babcock has a personal issue with Johnny then I encourage them to dialogue and get it out in the open between the two of them. Using a public forum to settle scores is hardly productive. And what does that say about the gatekeepers who willingly passed the spiteful messages along? This is the kind of issue I was aiming at in my previous TRD contribution. I want to continue to encourage us all to keep the channels of communication open, and remain alert to anything that could dampen our attentive dialoguing.

In gender loving care,  
Steph

Eight-30-Zero/Five

Dear Steph,

Of course, I would never support "hate" messages, or hate mail. But other than that I remain opposed to the oppression of free speech in any form. (E.g., who gives a fuck about burning a flag, it's a piece of cloth.)

*Liberating to some individuals may be offensive*

*to others...* But not necessarily hateful.

Sarah pushed the envelope in her response to Johnny, and in their case it was obviously personal. But Johnny chose the forum, drew first blood, and she responded. Possibly they had no means (except via Amanda) to "dialogue."

That raises a whole new point. Is the TRD a "public" forum, or are we a private group? Amanda could have just exchanged their letters between them, and none of us be the wiser.

I look at it like this: TG/TS offends some; I am offended by skinheads, etc. If I say those offended by TG/TS can't speak as they want, then in turn I'm saying I have to bite my

**I think a caution warning along with a "sounding off" section is the way to go.**

tongue. What's next? Cuba? I can't speak out against my government? If I can't handle the way someone may "verbally" express their discontent with me, what have I become?

Much less to police someone else's speech. I think a caution warning along

with a "sounding off" section is the way to go. As I re-read Sarah's response, I don't

see maliciousness. Now Johnny clearly had intent at certain points. It still rings better than "pretend." I've seen oppression administered under the guise of many things. Indeed, even whole nations oppressed for what they say is the good and integrity of others...but it's always for themselves.

Of course, the small antics of Sarah and Johnny are far from sending us into a "flaming" rag, but I share in the idea that we don't want the TRD to become that.

Love,  
Tsunami

Now it's your turn to "sound off." Now it's your turn to speak your *trans* mind.

### Body Language

*insightful humor by Zoe Kala*





Starting a web log (blog) is one way to elicit **feedback** to these spiritual insights of ours. Amanda started a blog at [www.eblogger.com](http://www.eblogger.com), calling it *cross-stitches*. You can read her first entry below. (At press time the only other entry is the image painted by Alana that graces the cover.)

She then invited Steph to check it out. Steph did, and left her feedback to it, a “comment.” She then started her own blog, as a way to share her insights about “transspirituality.” That entry follows.

## cross-stitches

stitch n. 1. a single complete movement of a threaded needle in sewing or surgical suturing. 4. a sudden sharp pain, especially in the side. 6. the least part.

### Introduction

this site is meant to serve as a locus for discussion and reflection about issues pertaining to gender and religion. i want to focus on these issues from a number of perspectives, asking how religions have historically imagined gender and the body, how people marginalized in contemporary traditions because of their genders are working to creatively reconstruct these traditions, and how the religious regulation of gender variance is--and has been--intertwined with other forms of oppression. i plan to use this site primarily as a resource for the distribution of information, as i will be writing book reviews, posting links to related websites, posting my own research and writings, and simply serving as a node in a much larger web of communication on these topics.

if you are interested in this project, i'd love to hear from you!

about me: i am a young genderqueer religiously confused soul, working hard to



get through a masters program at the university of chicago's divinity school. i am also in the process of getting a new 'zine off the ground that will bring together the writings of

trans people--including a number of incarcerated trans women--on issues of religion and gender. when this collaborative project gets going, i hope to link this blog up with an online version of the 'zine.

well, thats all for now ~  
when i figure out how to post essays online, i will post a draft of an essay-in-progress that deals with the relationship between religion and gender variance in ancient rome.

posted by seabrook @ [10:44 AM 2](#)  
[comments](#)

# transspirituality

Transcending at a spiritual level the many temporal conventions of cultural existence; remaining spiritually connected to the deeper substance of life by transcending beyond the many potentially limiting social structures of human culture.

## Introduction

I am a *transspirit*.

"You are a *what?*"

Yes, I am a **transspirit**.

"And what the heck is a 'transspirit'?"

A "transspirit" is a person who is compelled to transcend temporal forms (like cultural norms) in an innate drive to reach higher levels of human potential. My transspirituality has several dimensions, each a general category of human existence where I transcend culturally relative distinctions. Among the most prominent are: ethnic affiliation, political affiliation, religious affiliation, and gender identity.

1. **ethnic affiliation** - I am Native American and Caucasian. I have often been asked how much Native American am I, and I frequently answer, "All of me is Native American, as all of me is Caucasian." Blood quantum is for qualifying for federal recognition, and my sense of ethnicity transcends far beyond such temporal standards. As a transspirit I have naturally learned to blend these two ostensibly distinct backgrounds into a newfound wholeness. I am not two halves competing for the same limited space, no. I am a profound whole with a greater depth of appreciation for all ethnic backgrounds. Because this is where my spirit exists.



2. **political affiliation** - there have been times in my life I affiliated with conservatism, namely evangelical conservatism. There have also been times in my life when I affiliated with liberalism. Even times when seeing myself as an ideal impartial moderate, claiming an apolitical ideal. This last one served as a precursor to my "trans-political" existence, where my spirit naturally transcends any distinction between conservatism and liberalism. I now see both as expressions of collective needs, and I continue to empathize with both while also rising above the fray of their heated disagreements. Because this is where my spirit exists.
3. **religious affiliation** - I was raised Episcopalian but never required to attend church regularly. By age nine I was a liberal agnostic. By age 15 I was an evangelical conservative. By age 30 I was reverting to a kind of "intellectual agnosticism" to question everything I had learned thus about God. Since then I have both served as a lay leader in a church body, while soon after practicing a form of Native American religion (Sun Bear wheel mostly). I have attended Muslim seminars, even acknowledging Mohammed as the prophet of Allah. I am open to all forms of spiritual expression, as my transspirituality helps me realize how the deeper roots of spiritual existence is independent to

any form of spiritual expression we attach to them. My spirituality doesn't rest on any reference points I or anyone may give. Because this is where my spirit exists.

4. **gender identity** - I am male bodied, but my soul refuses to conform to social expectations of masculinity. My spirit compels me to embrace the full spectrum of human potential that is often tied up in a rigid distinction between femininity and masculinity. My spirit resists this cultural tendency to limit a dynamic aspect of my sublime existence. The more I neglect to realize this innate gender balance the more my soul yearns to express that gender mode it finds missing. When I am too masculine my soul breaks free its bound up energy through expressing more of my femininity. From a cultural reference point this gets easily labeled as crossdressing; but this is from a perspective from a soul that exists neatly bound to the gender binarism. My spirit transcends gender, which for me is the very definition of "transgender." I am "transgendered" because I am a transspirit. Because this is where my spirit exists.

There are more aspects to my trans-spirituality, but this covers the basics. There are more aspects to transspirituality than I experience. For example, bisexuality expresses a transspiritual transcendence of sexual orientation. I am not suggesting that all bisexuality stems from such a transspiritual existence, nor would I try to prove it doesn't. Likewise, I cannot speak for the gender experience of other transgenders or the ethnic experience for other biracial souls. I can only speak for myself and invite others to perhaps encounter some aspect of themselves that may find deeper meaning and more satisfying expression through these descriptions of transspirituality.

What I offered here (more or less) is merely a working definition. It doesn't really do it justice, but will do for now. To give this concept depth I am inviting you to dialogue with me. Does any of this speak to your unique and profound experience of life? If so, **please leave a comment**. And I would like to respond to your comments in upcoming entries. And look for yours in your blogs.

*posted by steph @ [11:00 PM 1 Comment](#)*

## **YOUR FEEDBACK HERE...**

**Steph**

When I suggested this format, of having a Fresh Idea section followed by a Feedback section, I had no idea that this was basically the same format as a blog site. After each blog "thread" is a "comment" link to leave feedback. Hmm. As I started blogging I pondered how I could include my T\* kin behind bars in on this experience. That's when it dawned on me that this is pretty much what this zine is about. The free exchange of ideas that integrates spirituality into the transgender experience, encouraging one another to give their feedback to what has been shared here.

I trust many of you will write in to respond to something of interest here. Maybe you question something I decided to put in here. Perhaps you would like to challenge Carl's assertions. Or ask me about transspirituality. Do you have any reaction to Amanda's piece about Cybele? Here is where such responses will go.

I'm still playing around with the idea of some kind of proxy blog. Eventually I would like to post on the Internet the content we put here. Your *feedback* to this idea is encouraged. What do you think? Yeah, we really want to know!

# ***T\*Sp Online Digest***

Steph

**This feature is meant to be a kind of zine inside a zine.** Each quarter we will try to highlight the “trans spirituality” that is online. And there is plenty.

## **By the numbers**

Using Yahoo and Google I searched the Web for “transgender spirituality” and “trans spirituality.” Hundreds of thousands of hits show some reference to these words on the Web. For example, on one day I entered “trans spirituality” into Yahoo’s search field and received about 600,000 hits. Then I entered the same into Google, and received around 729,000 hits.

When I googled Groups I found some 3,050 groups making some reference to “trans spirituality.” Granted, some of these have little to do with what we are talking about. A site about spirituality may use the word “trans” as in *transpersonal*, which is a branch of thought in psychology and not much to do with our focus. Perhaps that is why I only received 411,000 hits when I googled “transgender spirituality” later, and only 357,000 in Yahoo. So I know there are many sites that cover what we are about.

## **Are we alone?**

With so much effort already given to “transgender spirituality” I initially wondered if we were being needlessly redundant. Perhaps there was some existent platform we could join, that could save us the cost of duplicated resources.

To be sure, I ran a search on “transgender prisoner spirituality.” The 1,430 hits Yahoo have me was initially encouraging. But soon I realized none of these had this term together in the same line.

That’s when it occurred to me how unique, how special, of a mission we have. Speaking from experience, I *know* how incarceration can test one’s spirituality like few ever have their spirituality challenged. Put the transgender experience atop of that and we truly have a unique voice, a profound message worthy to be heard.

Our long-term goal is to add our voice to this online chorus of transgender related spirituality. Offered here, in this section, are some of those voices out there we hope to some day join. See anything that perks your interest? We could do a follow up on it. For example, we could share more about where some of these links take us, according to which items receive the most requests from our readers. Especially from those who cannot check these links for themselves.

### First sample

This old chat room exchange refers to *trans spirituality* and even touches on issues familiar to some of us. I appreciate how it closes on a lighter side. (The highlights were done by the search engine.)

Sweets;

I hardly have the answers on healthy self-identity. My specialty currently is the psychology of murder. I was trained as an analyst originally on a Freudian-Kleinian model (and once had the pleasure of dinner with Otto Kernberg). I've moved away from the conflict based models as of late; one thing that transition has taught me is that the dyadic models of conflict based anxiety are too simplistic. there are no truly dyadic forces in nature.

Nature, and humans as part of the creation of the divine spirit, are multiply determined (See Robert Waelder "Multiple Determination of Psychic Function). Gender is a fluid thing, the Roman Catholic Church states that their conception of God is both father and mother to the church. Wicca looks at a dyadic model with so many crossovers as to truly be fluid. (Horned God as the child and lover of the Goddess, consumed by Her in some legends only to be re-born, therefore part of the femal, emerging from the female, rejoining the female...) Freud himself postulates a complex model of the mind with conscience acting in conjunction with impulse/instinct and reality to produce behavior. The processing of data takes place in a spectrum of states of awareness varying from unconscious and preconscious states, to full consciousness, with the pre-conscious acting as a censor mechanism upon some degrees of awareness.

Take the idea a step further; look at Waelder's concept of reality acting and being acted upon, a constant and changing feedback from within and without as the degree of stimulus from the unconscious and reality are altered by ONGOING behaviors and ideas:

As far as the effects on **trans**-states; this implies that the various forces that have produced the internalized gender role that exists in the unconscious mind gradually increase in the degree of turmoil within and emerge through the preconscious originally in dream states and then finally as perceived discomfort and what Allison calls "dysphoric imperative."

In this multiply determined model therefore, both nature, nurture, as well as societal models produce our internalized gender, and therefore our conflict with societal conceptions is at multiple levels.

Caillean McMahon (notice how I managed to keep this on topic?\_

Dolf Boek wrote:

Theoni does cut to the center of the cosmology of trolling;) Score one for the catwomyn. hugs

My Legal Writing prof would have shuddered at Dolf's prose; he was Norman Mailer's copyeditor for some time.

At any rate; except as far as an association could possibly be made between astrological events in ancient times and the rise and fall historically of the reverence of the **trans**-people as the incarnation of the shifting gendered nature of the divine(greater than a dyad, a being all encompassing) I am not certain that this threat belongs here any more than one of our threads on galvanic vs thermolytic electro belongs on the biblical groups.

**DOLF BOEK RESPONDS:**

Aren't you the forensic physciatrist who claims to have all the answers on healthy self-identity yet can only give superficial pretension to being educated!

On 12 Aug 2001 10:48:59 -0700, The ANTI-DIANE wrote:

Dear Religious Believers,

I know you mean well, but will you \*please\* stop cross-posting to alt.support.srs and soc.support.transgendered?

**HOW DO ANTI SEMITIC XTIAN BLOOD LIBELLERS EVER MEAN WELL?**

In the meantime, The Anti-Diane went on to say:

I found God when I got in recovery from my drug and alcohol addiction, and my life is one of spiritual growth, so I am not offended by spiritual matters.

The moment I stopped junk (no rehab, no NA) and dry (no rehab, no AA) was the moment I realized the dynamics of Evil. That Good was obfuscation. I saw all the way through. NOne so blind as those who will not see, you see? But do you? Faith, The Anal Frontier. However, \*these\* two newsgroups are not the appropriate place for a theological discussion.

If it relates to **TRANS spirituality**, or the experience of **spirituality** as a **trans** person, the a Theonillogical discussion can be fun.

If you must replace to his thread, please, please, please remove alt.support.srs and soc.support.transgendered from the recipient list.

Uh-uh.

Or if you'd prefer to save my soul via email, please feel free to do so.

Or if you'd prefer, I could filet your soul. For God is a fisher of monkey men, and I'm a dockside wholesaler.

## Second sample

One of the first things I found online was this “call for papers” on transgender spirituality. Of course, I missed the deadline by exactly six months.

I’m not dismayed. If this anthology goes well on the first edition I’ll be looking to contribute something for the second. Maybe include this zine in some way or form. Or someday *we* will solicit a “call for papers” and be the forum for such a volume.

I googled “call for papers transgender spirituality” and received 376,000 hits. I found this reproduced at IFGE’s site. Perhaps repeated elsewhere as well.

### Call for Papers:

## Transgender Spirituality ~ Personal Journeys

**Deadline for submissions is March 21, 2005**

A new anthology about our Spirituality is soon to be published. We are looking for submissions from people who identify as either Transgender, Transsexual, Intersex, Gender Queer, FTM, MTF, Butch, Femme, Cross-Dressers, Drag Kings, Drag Queens, Androgynous or beyond the traditional identifications as listed.

1. Name you wish to use in book \_\_\_\_\_

This information will be kept confidential:

Legal Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_



2. Include a short biography (no more than 200 words) that lets us know how you identify in the Transgender Community.

3. For purposes of this book, we are also including some astrological information for each section that will not be linked to your essay.

Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_

Birth Time \_\_\_\_\_ AM or PM (circle one)

City, State, Country \_\_\_\_\_

4. The submission regards your spirituality and not so much your birth religion or the church you may currently attend. Feel free to respond in any way you would like to be heard on this topic.

Your essay or poem can be any length that gets your point across clearly about your spirituality. Some questions to help you think about how you may wish to formulate your essay or poem include:

Define your spiritual nature, experiences and practices.

Do you connect with your God/Goddess/Supreme Being/Spirit regularly?

Have the mainstream churches provided you with the spiritual connection you need or seek?

### **Editors:**

**Bellezza Squillace**, MsW, Ordained Minister, Feminist Astrologer  
**Marisa Folse**, member of The Lost Boys Drag King troupe, MsW,  
Ordained Minister (May 2005)

For more information, contact the editors:

<http://www.the12thhouse.com>

## Third sample

This site, like so many others on the Web, includes many links to other useful sites. It was mainly this site I had in mind when welcoming you to request a follow-up. Write to me and let me know which link I should open (and hope is not broken by then). Then I will have *samples* according to the readers' preferences, instead of my biases.

# ***The Transgender/Shaman Link***

This page last updated 6-16-04

If you are interested in this topic and have links to suggest please e-mail [trانشaman](mailto:trانشaman)

**TranSpirits** - The Transpirits mailing list is for people dealing with gender identity issues, & who have found these issues moving them into a spiritual journey that rejects gender roles.

**Transgender Spirituality** - Some book reviews.

**Intersex and Transgender Spirituality** - A huge page of links to sites on intersex and transgender spirituality.

**Maetrem of Cybele, Magna Mater** - Dedicated to the revival of aspects of the ancient Goddess traditions that included Her Gallae and Mellissae priestesses

**The Spirit of Transgender** - By Holly Boswell

**Trans Spirituality Resource List** - Another page of links to sites on transgender spirituality - including a transgender Jewish resource list

**Birth Rites** - A Story.

**Bums in Brigantia**: Sacred Gender-Variance in Ancient Germanic & Celtic Cultures

**Gnostic Transsexuality** - The Wisdom of Direct Knowledge - A Rebirth of the Way to Gnostic Transsexuality

[Transsexual Priestesses](#) - We Are an Old People, We Are a New People - Part Two, Transsexual Priestesses, Sexuality and the Goddess

[Hermaphroditities](#) - The Transgender Spirituality Workbook

[What are Two-Spirits/Berdaches?](#) - In recent years, calls have been made to replace berdache with “two-spirit.” In 1993, a group of anthropologists and natives issued guidelines that formalized these preferences. “Berdache,” they argued, is a term “that has its origins in Western thought and languages.”

[Gender and Spirit](#) - Written by an intersex

[“Two Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality”](#) - a book by Sue-Ellen Jacobs

[“The Transgender Debate”](#) - a book by Stephen Whittle

[Reclaiming the Two Spirit Traditions](#) - Stories, poems, and information on two-spirit cultures around the world.

[Queer Muslims Home Page](#) - A list of resources for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered Muslims

[Androgyne Online](#) - Links for information on androgyne, transgenderism, two-spirit and more.

[Androgyne: The Union of Opposites Within](#) - A page of links to many topics related to transgender and spirituality.

[The Indonesian Hermaphrodite](#) - Intersexuality in the South Pacific and around the world.

[Ardhanarishwara - the god who is half woman](#) - often referred to as a hermaphrodite or androgynous deity, is one of the principal forms of Shiva.

[Norse Two-Spirit mysteries](#)

## Fourth sample

Apparently there is this annual gathering for discussing transgender spirituality. I'll be looking for this again in the summer of 2006.

### *Together in faith*

August 5th - 7th, 2005

A National Multiracial, Multigenerational Conference for People of all Religions and Spiritualities Creating Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender-Affirming Communities.

<http://www.togetherinfaith.com>

### **CRUCIBLE**

The Transgender Spirituality Gathering

What is Crucible?

Crucible is an annual transgender spirituality campout, where we explore the concept and practice of transgender as a spiritual path. Every year the transgender tribes come together on sacred ground in central Massachusetts; be with us as we delve into the Mysteries. Crucible is open to anyone who identifies anywhere on the transgender continuum--MTF, FTM, TG, TS, TV, CD, genderqueer, anything we left out--and their SOFFAs--and who is interested in trans-positive spirituality. Be prepared to respect the identity and beliefs of everyone; there will be no "gender policing". If you claim an identity, we take you at your word, and we ask that you do the same for all other participants.

What should I bring?

This is a camping event. Bring your tent, bedding, food, flashlight, bug repellent, sensible clothing, and ritual gear. There is a latrine and a primitive field kitchen.

Your Coordinators:

Raven Kaldera G/ Brenda Burke E

## Postscript

If you know of any such site you think I should check or some phrase I could put into a search engine, I will use your input in determining next issue's material for this section. And do let me know if you think this was a good idea.

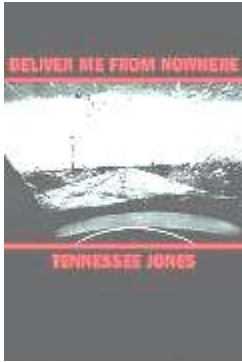
The more material I receive for publication the less room I will have for this feature. So as more contributions come in I may likely pare this down to size. And seek that one gem that outshines the other *samples*. That one voice that leads the choir.

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## ***Deliver Me From Nowhere, Tennessee Jones*** Book Review by Mandy Armstrong



For my first book review, I decided to discuss one of my favorite pieces of contemporary fiction: *Deliver Me From Nowhere*, by Tennessee Jones. Written in a biting style that is reminiscent of Flannery O'Connor's work, *DMFN* offers a viscerally wrenching reflection on issues of class oppression, gender violence, and religious belief in present-day rural America.

The book is inspired by Bruce Springsteen's haunting 1982 acoustic album entitled *Nebraska*, with each chapter of *DMFN* taking its title and dominant themes from one of the album's tracks. So if you like Springsteen, you will adore this book. But even if you don't know all of The Boss's works by heart, you will find much in Tennessee's book to love.

From the starkly beautiful account of a transman's melancholic relationship with horses, his father, and the very act of writing down the story of his life in *My Father's House*; to the rich retelling of a young boy's struggles with faith in *Reason to Believe*; this book burns unforgettable images of grace and desolation into our minds, and helps to remind us of the scars that have been etched into our own resilient souls.

Jones's *Deliver Me From Nowhere* is a gripping and disturbing book that pins the reader to the wall with its simple yet uncanny prose. I highly recommend it.

Tennessee Jones, *Deliver Me From Nowhere* (Soft Skull Press, 2003). Copies may be purchased for \$12.00 plus shipping and handling through: Soft Skull Press, 55 Washington Street, Suite 804, Brooklyn, NY 11201 (Ed: available for less elsewhere.)

## When in Rome: *Rethinking the Figure of the Galloi/ai* Mandy Armstrong

*Ed: This article is a user-friendly summary of Mandy's undergraduate thesis. Want to see more? Your feedback is not only welcomed it is encouraged.*

In publications that attempt to address issues of religion in ways that are relevant and interesting for queer or trans people, it is very common to find essays about the ancient cult of the goddess Cybele—a Cult in which castrated and otherwise feminized male-assigned individuals (known as *Galloi*, or *Gallai*<sup>1</sup>) played an important and highly visible role. You may have read one of these essays at one time or another. Or you may have heard stories from another trans or queer person about this ancient group of gender variant priests. I, for one, was first informed about the Galloi/ai a couple of years ago by a transwoman named **Mikki**. She told me about the ancient Galloi/ai during the course of the “Trans-Religious Dialogue”—the same dialogue that led to the publication of this magazine. Ever since, I have tried to learn whatever I could about this group of gender variant priests. I even went so far as to write my undergraduate thesis about them.

When I started my research on the Galloi/ai, I thought that the most interesting issue relating to this group was surely going to be the issue of gender. What I found, however, was that issues relating to ethnicity and



*Statue of Cybele in Madrid, Spain (Wikipedia)*

slavery were at least as relevant and interesting as issues of gender when it came to making sense of the ancient Galloi/ai. For instance, during the course of my research I discovered that some of the individuals who later became Cybele’s priests may actually have been captured by slave-traders and castrated against their will. In the ancient world, slaveowners paid more money for eunuchs than they did for uncastrated men, not because eunuchs were better workers, but because they were seen as especially sexually desirable. As a result, slavetraders had an incentive to castrate young boys whom they captured. Thus, while most of the Galloi/ai probably castrated themselves, a number of Cybele’s priests likely were originally castrated as young boys by slave traders against their will.

Another interesting and troubling fact about the Galloi/ai is that Roman citizens were not legally permitted to castrate themselves in order to become priests of Cybele. Throughout much of the Imperial period, Roman law stated that Anatolians (people who were born in the land that is now known as Turkey) were the only group allowed to castrate themselves and become Galloi/ai. According to the perspective of many Greek and Roman elites, the “madness” that

**Thus, in ancient Greece and Rome, gender variance was thought of in what we might now call racial terms.**

caused men to want to castrate themselves was something that generally only infected Anatolians. Thus, in ancient Greece and Rome, gender variance was thought of in what we might now call racial terms: Greek and Roman men were seen as essentially masculine<sup>2</sup>, while Anatolian men were seen as effeminate and prone to self-castration. Of course, if all Roman males had truly been masculine, Roman elites would not have needed to make laws barring Roman men from castrating themselves....

Because the ancient Galloi/ai were viewed as ethnic outsiders in Rome, and because many of them were freed slaves, I think that we should be very careful when comparing ourselves to this ancient group. The conditions that they faced in the ancient world were not the same as the conditions that we face in the modern world, at least those of us who are racially privileged,

who are able to make basic choices about our gender identities, and who are free from forced labor. I can only speak for myself when I say that the Galloi/ai were up against forms of oppression that I have not personally tasted. Now, I don't presume to know your situation when it comes to these issues: maybe you face conditions that are more similar to the conditions

faced by the Galloi/ai. I only want to suggest that each one of us must carefully and

critically make sense of the ways in which we are different from, and similar to, the ancient Galloi/ai. Only then will our identification with this ancient group take account of the difference that history makes.

<sup>1</sup> Ed.: *oi* at the end of a noun signified masculine plural in the ancient Greek language, while *ai* signified feminine plural; singular would be Gallos (masculine) or Galla (feminine). Like contemporary writers, ancient accounts couldn't agree which was the right “gender” (pronoun) to apply.

<sup>2</sup> Ed.: Latin and Greek nouns and adjectives classify everything according to gender: masculine, feminine or neuter. According to the “Sapir-Whorf hypothesis” this cognitive organization of language will influence these cultures to instantly categorize everything in terms of gender assumptions. And to think how these ancient cultures served as the foundation to our contemporary Western culture.

(Ed.: I took a class in ancient Greek 21 years ago. It's good to see it finally come in handy. ☺)





## At Last *We* Meet Zoe Kala

Steph and Amanda's rendezvous for Halloween weekend didn't pan out. But the second time was a charm. They met in Madison, WI on Thursday, November 10, 2005, about 11:00 a.m. Both were conservatively dressed



and didn't attract much undue attention. The day began serenely.

Steph brought his first rough draft printout of this zine and gave it to Amanda. Amanda brought the Resource Booklet she assembled last year. Now Steph finally has his own copy.

Ideas were exchanged and a blessed synergy developed instantly. As they sat on a bench in the UW-Madison's *Memorial Union* discussing ideas, each now had a face to put on what had only been the written word. Later they sat in a crowded campus cafeteria, comparing notes and resolving to share tasks to wrap up any loose ends.

Of course, it wasn't all work-work-work. As they opened up their hearts to each other they encountered that soulful depth that makes us such an underappreciated people. Steph was able to express some feelings that had been locked up for years, and was moved to tears.

"I exist there," she recounted in tears, recalling the moment his daughter embraced his spirit with unconditional love. But now mourns the distance with her, cast over the years and miles forced apart. Amanda now expressed that unconditional love, *carpa diem!*

Ahh, how love transcends every hindrance, every limiting barrier! Even these misconceptions about why we transcend the gender divide. Isn't this what we are about, as we lift up our beloved *trans-religious dialogue* into a platform that broadcasts the love our unbounded souls have to offer? Despite how bounded our bodies may be for a while.

They could have dragged on their dialogue for hours, but they both had a ride to catch to get back home. They wrapped up about 5:30 p.m. and posed for shots in front of the campus LGBT room. Both shared some parting words as they headed outside, hugged each good-bye, knowing something wonderful was just beginning.



*Ed: "Who is Zoe Kala?" you're probably wondering. She is merely a figment of Steph's beloved imagination. She expresses her carefree side and relieves her from repeating her byline so often. And she has a nice sense of humor, don't you think?*



## History of the TRD

### Mandy Armstrong

In the winter of 2003, I developed an idea for a resource booklet composed entirely of writings and artwork by incarcerated trans people. Due to the generosity of the editors of the *GIC TIP Journal*, I was able to insert a letter in their newsletter in which I asked individuals to contribute writing, artwork, and editorial oversight to this booklet.

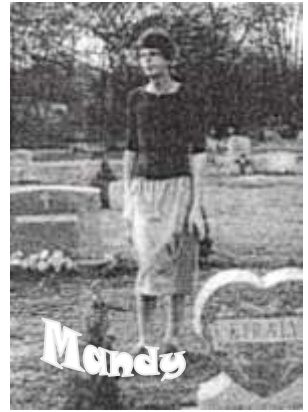
People living in facilities from all across the country responded to this letter with great enthusiasm. They contributed poetry, resource lists, legal information, advice for activists on the outside, artwork, religious reflections, along with personal narratives of struggle and accomplishment.

In the summer of 2004, I organized these contributions into a booklet, published the booklet, and distributed hundreds of copies of this publication to individuals both inside and outside of American prisons. Even as I write today, our resource booklet is touring the country as part of the International Bookmobile/Mobilivre project.

At the same time as this resource booklet was nearing its completion, during the summer of 2004, a group of ten contributors to the booklet and I began to engage in an open-ended dialogue about religion. The *trans-religious dialogue* was born. As a way to initiate this dialogue, we all submitted extensive "Opening Statements."

These detailed our own particular religious experiences and beliefs around our experience of gender, and invited responses from our dialogue partners.

After receiving each other's opening statements, we were free to respond to each other in whatever ways we chose. Over the course of the next year, we engaged in spirited discussion with one another about a great variety of topics relating to gender and religion. During the course of these discussions, **Steph** introduced her idea for a more reliable quarterly publication that would serve as a new venue for the dialogue that we had initiated, opening up our discussions to other interested individuals. (*Ed: I recall it was Valjean Royal who first suggested this.*) As we begin this new phase of our dialogue, let us remember our history and commit ourselves to remain true to the historical mission of the dialogue.



# SUBSCRIPTIONS

In a perfect world we would offer a free subscription to everyone who asked for one. Of course, here in the real world we still need to pay for the resources it takes to create and mail each issue.

As I naturally transcend the gender binarism I discovered a way to transcend these two modalities. We are offering **TRANS SPIRITUALITY** for a cover price *and* for free. We do this by offering two kinds of subscriptions: Primary Subscriptions for those who can pay for their subscription, and a Secondary Subscription for those who must be dependent upon a charitable subscription.

*“If you can receive a subscription for free then who in their right mind would bother to pay for one?”* Good question. Paid subscriptions (i.e., Primary) will receive priority treatment. Most notably the first issues off the press will go to those who have committed the highest investment. Then the next batch of issues will go to those who have committed the next level of resources, and so forth.

Those demonstrating the least amount of personal investment, consequently, will receive whatever issues are still available for shipment, whenever they are available for shipment. By the way, the **Founding Corp** have demonstrated the highest degree of personal investment by starting the **trans-religious dialogue** - upon which this zine is based. Therefore they do not need to “pay” for a subscription, they are entitled to a perpetual subscription.

Subscriptions will start out with the following ratings (pending feedback and other considerations, some not knowable till after this venture gets going, and others I just didn’t think of at press time):

- **Perpetual** - Founding Corp (See page 2)
- **Primary** - paid subscription
  - **P1 Premium subscription:** 3-year sub to a benefactor of zine (anyone contributing \$100+ to zine in a year); also gets a say in the processing of each publication
  - **P2 Extended subscription:** 2-year sub for \$35.00
  - **P3 Standard subscription:** 1 year for \$20.00 (students \$15)
  - **P4 Purchased single issue:** \$6.00
- **Secondary** - charitable subscription
  - **S1** Postage paid by subscriber for a year (TBD)
  - **S2** Postage paid by subscriber for that issue (TBD)
  - **S3 Opening Statement** contributed, as a contribution to Fresh Ideas (Note: contribution of useable material qualifies and does not necessarily need to be published to secure this S3 subscription; we may not always have the room to use it)

- o **S4** Letter of Intent submitted that expresses interest in transgender spirituality (but “opting out” of Fresh Ideas or other segments by requesting not to be published)

These subscription and cover prices are tentative. They may change, up or down, depending upon more thorough marketing research and cost analysis. But I aim to hold these numbers for at least a year, if they prove to be realistic.

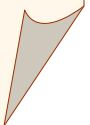
Besides the **Founding Corp**, who will each receive a perpetual Primary subscription, there is also the **Inaugural Corp** - anyone who is on the mailing list to receive this inaugural issue. These are typically those who have been involved with Amanda’s *Resource Booklet* project, but did not participate in the **Trans-Religious Dialogue**. Each member of the **Inaugural Corp** will receive a one-year secondary subscription - unless they can find some way to pay for a subscription. This subscription is renewable by submitting some kind of material to let us know you are still out there appreciating the zine (Fresh Idea, Feedback, letter to editor, or even a Letter of Intent stating desire to receive zine for another year without commitment to write for publication).

We encourage you, **Inaugural Corp** members, to spread the word to anyone you know who can afford to have a *paid* subscription. The more of these we sell the further we will receive the funding needed to continue to provide this zine to you.

This could go without saying, but please let us know of any address corrections (not only your own but others you know who moved and wish to continue receiving this zine). If we opt to ship by 3<sup>rd</sup> class mail the post office will not forward it. Of course, also let us know of any special shipping and/or labeling arrangements we need to be made aware of. We will try to accommodate everyone’s special “geographical” needs the best we can.

Like so many others aspects of this zine, we will be tweaking the details in the weeks and months ahead. We preemptively apologize if we need to make a change that adversely affects you. We trust we will have your eventual understanding. We are launching this zine with limited resources and you can trust we are doing the best we can to provide you with a professional looking publication to address this important need. As spirituality typically goes, we cast our cares upon the Sacred Source, and toss our doubts to the wind. Thanks for being a part of this grand venture.

If you have any questions about these differing subscriptions then please write to JDP Subscriptions, PMB 151, 5315 N. Clark St., Chicago IL 60640-2113. If you have an inspiring idea on ways to improve upon this then write to Jen Durr Press, N9494 Haltur Ln, Eagle WI 53119.



# MY BACK PAGES

20051122

Dear T\*kin,

As I start my third month enjoying life anew, there's so much I've yet to do. I have yet to get fully organized. As I write this I am not sure where I put all the survey responses. But I trust I can recall the majority preference expressed in them all. Which are similar to the ones I found.

TRANS RELIGIOUS BEALOGER Survey

Please answer the following questions so we can get an idea of what sort of an attitude for the TRS is the future. Place a check mark next to item that is closest to your preference. Then please send this back as soon as possible. Thank you.

1. Keep the TRS as it is, or change over to a site?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Keep as is	<input type="checkbox"/> Change into a site
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
2. Name of this publication?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Trans Religious Bealoger	<input type="checkbox"/> Trans Spirituality
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
3. Classified?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> To help	<input type="checkbox"/> Stand
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
4. Secularist?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Whenever	<input type="checkbox"/> Sincerely
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
5. Advertisements?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> No ads	<input type="checkbox"/> Some ads
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
6. Tone?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Strictly subjective	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly objective
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	

I thank those who responded and gave me some idea of what is expected among you. If you still wish to give your input simply write and ask for a survey form. I will be glad to send you one and receive more input. In the months to come I will likely issue another survey to gauge the collective

will of the readership. Much of what I do I can figure out on my own and from Amanda's input. Yet there are times, like a major change, I'd prefer to solicit your input before creating what could be a distressing change for many.

While this is still young and new I know it will be easier to accommodate the inevitable changes we will go through in the first several issues. I will be going over the tentative writers guidelines I drafted some months ago, and check if they need revising. The 2-1-06 deadline still stands for material to go into the spring issue.

I will be working with Amanda on soliciting ads to help us cover our mounting costs. This page is meant to accommodate ads. Ad rates per page are tentative, but my early estimate was to charge \$100 a page for one issue, \$300 for the year. Half page half of that: \$50/\$150. Quarter page likewise: \$25/\$75. Eighth page, well, you get the idea. Classified ads charged by the word, still to be considered.



We hope to supplement this revenue by seeking grant support. We are looking to set this up as a nonprofit org, so contributions can be tax deductible.

Once sufficient revenue pours in I would like to go to a larger page format. Let me know if you think some type size is too small to read. My eyes are getting old, so I know how difficult it can be to decipher the small print. But for this inaugural issue I felt I had to go with small print to fit it all into 36 pages. Much more than that and the shipping cost becomes cost prohibitive. It's just another area to find balance that is good for everyone.

At last, this zine is finally coming together into a nice fit. Like my new boots I picked up over the Halloween/Samhain weekend. Yeah, that's me over there trying them on.

Try on this zine for size and let me now how well it fits. Where necessary I can make alterations, hemming up where needed and ripping out excess material.

And while you're at it, please, have a happy holiday season, in spirit, no matter where you are. Because no matter what your geography, remember, somebody somewhere loves you! And isn't this reason enough in this season of love to *live true*?

In gender loving care,

*Steph*

...your beloved editor & trans kin friend now free!



# TRANS SPIRITUALITY

## Final Last Word

Seasons  
Greeting

4U

I wish I could remember everything. But I'm afraid there is something I inevitably missed. For that I give my preemptive apologies. If you find something askew then please let me know.

Also, mark your letters to let me know if they are publishable. Anything sent to "Dear Editor" I will assume is good to print, unless otherwise stated. Anything sent to me personally, as in merely "Dear Steph," I will assume is to be kept private, unless otherwise stated.

With this publication being so new now is the time to make suggestions. Let this be your own forum, your own platform for the dynamic exchange of great ideas of *trans spirituality*. Ah, give us something our souls can really feed upon!

This inaugural issue is yours. Not mine alone. We are in this together. I am here to serve you. Pleeeeease, let me know what you expect to find in these pages in the future. Wish I could read minds, but that just isn't one of the amazing gifts the Creator granted me.

This inaugural issue has my byline plastered all over it. But my hope is to start receiving enough good content that I can drop back and save my best writing for my online ventures. So, my T\* kin, *write on!* And send me your best writing. Or your best effort, and I will try to make it work for you.