

The Trans Feminine Trace in the Lesbian S&M Sex Wars

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I became aware of the links between sadomasochism and fascism in 1981 when I visited Amsterdam from my home in London to attend the women's festival. An important, if not the main, theme of the festival was sadomasochism. Women at the Amsterdam festival demonstrated S/M scenarios, e.g. a male-to constructed female transsexual whipping a woman, both dressed in fetishistic 'feminine' clothing and black leather.

- *Sadomasochism: The Erotic Cult of Fascism*

Trace #1: Pleasures of Sex

I had repressed the memory of the intense pleasure I had with my best friend (female) in third grade when we played tie-up sex games.

The two of us used to act out stories in *True Confessions*--they always left out the best part.

So we took to writing our own scenarios. Usually they involved man and woman. Sometimes the cast was men and woman and occasionally monster and woman. I wasn't that advanced. Basically the rules were this: one of us got to be the woman and the other got to write the script.

Of course, both of us always wanted to be the woman.

-Drivenwoman, *Coming Out On SM*

Trace #2: The Sexual Chain

More specifically, I want to speculate about the implications of the recent population explosion of groups expressing a political stake in sexuality. From the right have come Anita Bryant, assorted religious fanatics, Ku Klux Klansfolk, Nazis, and a large collection of right wing politicians, organizers, and fundraisers. From the opposite direction, there are a number of voices claiming legitimacy for various stigmatized sexual behaviors, including prostitution, pederasty, transvesticism, transsexuality, sado-masochism, pornography, and the kind of public cruising engaged in by some male homosexuals. This combination of extremists and exotics has created a political situation as difficult as it is fascinating. It has, among other things, placed the most despised sexual minorities in an uncomfortably strategic position. It calls into question the attitude that women, lesbians, and gay men have a monopoly on sexual oppression. It challenges us to develop a politics of sex more adequate to the complexities of sex.

-Gayle Rubin, *Sexual Politics, the New Right, and the Sexual Fringe*

Trace #3: We Have Always Been Outcasts
(and Possibly Bisexual)

Trace #4: We're a Problem, Again

The old-fashioned demand that men be allowed into lesbian spaces has evolved into the present-day demand that lesbian identity itself include anything that anybody wants it to include. Hence the latest: **transsexuals are back**, in this round as “transgender,” and they even have their own transgender nation. This development was foreseen in the discourse surrounding transsexuals and lesbian identity in the seventies, back in the time when lesbian-feminists were closer to winning the argument that no. Doctors—and all the King’s horses and all the King’s men—could not turn men into women.

-Kathy Miriam, *From Rage to All the Rage: Lesbian-Feminism, Sadomasochism, and the Politics of Memory*

The Right to Sex?

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