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Anne A. Lawrence

Men Trapped in Men's Bodies

Narratives of Autogynephilic Transsexualism

Foreword by Ray Blanchard

 Springer

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Foreword

One day, around 1987 or 1988, I spent the afternoon in a reference room of the Robarts Library of the University of Toronto. I was trying to find a word—or failing that, to invent one—to denote a phenomenon I had gradually apprehended during clinical interviews with many biologically male patients interested in sex reassignment surgery. That phenomenon was the tendency of certain males to become erotically aroused by the thought or image of themselves as females. The word I finally invented, after fruitless searching through various kinds of dictionaries, was *autogynephilia*. I could scarcely have imagined, on that long-ago day in that quiet room, that I would be writing the Foreword to a complete book on the subject 25 years later.

My early writings on autogynephilia were published in specialty journals with limited circulations. They were intended for a small readership of clinicians who specialized in the assessment and management of gender dysphoric patients. The general availability of the Internet in the home and workplace was still several years away, and access to print journals for people unconnected to major universities was difficult. I therefore had no expectation that the readership of my autogynephilia papers would ever extend beyond the small group I had originally envisioned.

One person who did manage to find and read them was the author of the present volume, Dr. Anne A. Lawrence. She was open to my ideas, which—although actually rooted in eight decades of prior clinical thinking—were bitterly opposed as heretical innovations by the increasingly politicized transgender community and the clinicians who served it. My ideas included the notions that gender identity and sexuality are not separate and unrelated phenomena but rather two sides of the same coin; that there are two major, etiologically and phenomenologically different types of male-to-female transsexualism; and that neither of these types is *sui generis*—rather, one is related to ordinary homosexuality and the other is related to autogynephilia. The contemporary dogma in the transgender and allied health communities was that male-to-female transsexualism is caused by a feminine gender identity—a proposition that is obviously and utterly circular without some auxiliary hypothesis such as neuroanatomic intersexuality. On this orthodox view, gender identity is about one's sex but not about sexuality, and to connect it with an erotic preference like homosexuality or autogynephilia is conceptually (and politically) incorrect. Dr. Lawrence did not merely accept

my ideas; she pushed them towards their logical conclusion and, in a 1998 essay published on her Web site, startled even me with the audacious title of her essay, “Men Trapped in Men’s Bodies: An Introduction to the Concept of Autogynephilia.” And so it was that the word *autogynephilia* began its slow escape from the library.

Challenging the emotionally invested beliefs of any group often has its price, and Dr. Lawrence began receiving hate mail shortly after her views became known. Worse consequences than hate mail awaited J. Michael Bailey, who published a book dealing in large part with autogynephilia in 2003. This book, *The Man Who Would Be Queen*, so enraged some male-to-female transsexuals that a small group of them made a coordinated and sustained effort to get Dr. Bailey fired from his university faculty and ruined professionally. The events of this extraordinary campaign have been documented in a long and meticulously documented essay by medical historian and bioethicist Alice Domurat Dreger.

In light of this history, it is remarkable that Dr. Lawrence has written a book that describes autogynephilic transsexuals in a way that differs in important regards from the way many in this group wish to see themselves or wish to be seen by others. Her motives for completing this project are twofold. First, she is convinced that psychologists, psychiatrists, and other helping professionals can provide better care to autogynephilic gender dysphoric men if they understand the nature and significance of autogynephilia. Second, she believes that there exist many isolated and confused autogynephiles who would be comforted and reassured by the knowledge that there are others in the world like them and that, in the long term, autogynephilic transsexuals would lead mentally healthier lives if they had a self-understanding based on objective reality.

The book with which Dr. Lawrence’s volume is most readily compared is Magnus Hirschfeld’s 1910 classic work, *Die Transvestiten*. Both books include multiple autobiographies written by persons who might nowadays be grouped under the umbrella term “transgendered,” both also include direct clinical observations of transgendered persons by the authors, and both contain substantial sections of theoretical interpretation and conjecture. If I were forced to recommend to someone that he or she read only one of these two books, I would—despite my deep admiration for the great Magnus Hirschfeld—recommend Dr. Lawrence’s volume. *Men Trapped in Men’s Bodies* is more focused, organized, and clear. It is simply a more efficient and accessible introduction, for modern readers, to the phenomenon of autogynephilic transsexualism. It does not, and does not attempt to, provide an account of homosexual transsexualism in natal males or females—a topic that would properly require a volume of its own.

Some days of one’s work life one remembers with a shudder of horror, others with pleasurable memories of satisfaction at a job finally completed. Today, as I sign the Foreword to this excellent book by my friend and colleague Anne Lawrence, is like the long-ago day when I shut the last of the dictionaries and decided simply to invent the word I needed—*autogynephilia*.

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Three other colleagues, J. Michael Bailey, Robinn J. Cruz, and Paul L. Vasey, were also kind enough to read portions of the manuscript, share their observations, and propose various improvements. Their analyses, whether congratulatory or skeptical, helped me to proceed with a healthy mixture of caution and enthusiasm.

Although he provided no direct input to the book, Kenneth J. Zucker helped create the conditions that made it possible. He edited and published my earliest academic articles in *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, helped me to believe that I had something valuable to say, and taught me how to say it with greater clarity, precision, and economy.

More than anyone else, Ray Blanchard is responsible for this book's existence. He introduced the concept of autogynephilia and conducted the seminal research from which all further investigations of the topic would proceed. He graciously read and reread my early chapter drafts, gently pointing out areas where changes were needed and praising my more successful efforts. After nearly two decades of reading Dr. Blanchard's elegant prose in his numerous academic publications, I have inevitably absorbed some elements of his style and made them my own; if any parts of my writing ever verge on eloquence, I largely have him to thank.

Anne A. Lawrence

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