

TERFism as an Obsessive Sadistic Fetish: Part VI of the ‘Sexing the Body is Gender’ Series

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Abstract

The obsessive nature of TERFs who police the trans communities’ selfhoods through cruelty can be viewed as an obsessive sadistic fetish. The TERF movement - in breathtaking acts of Lateral Violence - repeatedly conflate cruelty with empowerment. When harm is inflicted, they conflate the pain they inspire with a strike against the oppression they face. While this anti-trans behavior has yielded no measurable result in [...]

Article



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Before I go further, let me be clear about the terms I'm using:

- Obsessive: Thinking about something or someone too much or in a way that is not normal.
- Sadistic: Enjoyment that someone gets from being violent or cruel or from causing pain.
- Fetish: A strong and unusual need or desire for something

Telling a trans woman that she must reject her own subjective experience of self and instead use only the label system TERFs wish to impose upon her body are the petty actions of a group obsessed with the sadistic release gained through Lateral Violence. TERFs, obsessed with attacking a group in which half the members are victims of rape, try to empower themselves through this imposition. In this way, TERFs are the handmaidens of the very system they claim to oppose.

It is the imposition, the assault of a trans person's selfhood, which provides the TERF with release. In a very real sense, it is a pleasure derived from the resulting perceived pain of another. Moreover, the sadistic pleasure sought by the TERF is always forced and in this way, the name of the power game TERFs play is one of dominance and submission. It is worth noting that this behavior is almost a public display of domination.

[Figure] Cathy Brennan, TERF opinion leader

Note that in the above image, Brennan is engaging in this abusive behavior publicly. What can be said about the personal need that was apparently satisfied in constructing the above paper person, photographing it and sending the images to trans people? Is this really how one goes about dismantling the patriarchy or, was all of this about something else? Are we expected to believe that the smirking Brennan took no pleasure from this public act or is it reasonable to conclude that this public behavior was enjoyable for Brennan?

Sheila Jeffreys recently published an anti-trans book titled, *Gender Hurts*. Jeffreys constructs the thesis of her book around pretending that "transgender" is a verb instead of an adjective and refers to trans people as an "ism," as if trans people were a philosophy or political issue. Jeffreys refers to being trans in the following ways:

- "This book is necessary now because the practice of transgenering adults and children has been normalized in Western cultures but very little critique exists" - page 2
- "Another chapter details a very worrying effect of transgender activism and the lobbying of the medical profession, the transgenering of children." - page 11

Jeffreys weirdly refers to being trans in this way dozens upon dozens... upon dozens of times. Within the fallacious reality, Jeffreys constructs for her readers, people engage in the activity of transgenering and once they have done so, one can speak of this past behavior as having transgenered. On page 10 Jeffreys writes, "Increasingly, women whose husbands have transgenered are speaking out and engaging in resistance." Again, Jeffreys strangely equivocates in this manner dozens upon dozens upon dozens of times throughout her book. One can perhaps imagine a particularly hubris and sadistic homophobe promoting concepts like "Increasingly, women whose husbands have homosexualized are speaking out and engaging in resistance." Any yet, some academics are falling for her fraud. Consider how this academic fell for Jeffreys' hoax hook, line and sinker.

In what context might one use homosexual (homosexualing) in the way Jeffreys used transgender

(transgendering)?

[Figure] Panama City News Herald, 10/31/1993: Fake conversation between President Clinton and a right-wing commenter.

What are we to make of such public behavior? Surely Jeffreys, who represents herself as an expert on trans issues, understands that transgender isn't a verb. One can only conclude that Jeffreys, Ph.D. is either grossly intellectually incompetent, or she knew exactly what she was doing and chose to willfully misrepresent her subject to the public. What are we to make of the hours Jeffreys invested in this intellectual turpitude? What need was satisfied through this public display of anti-trans obloquy? In what other way can one honestly view this obsession if not a form of sadism?

Time and again, for the TERF, the need driving their behavior can't be satisfied privately. For the TERF, their domination of trans people must be carried out in public. Theirs is not a private obsession; a TERF won't achieve satisfaction by simply avoiding trans people. Instead, they are driven to perform public exhibitions of dominance. The needs that are appeased through public displays of dominance over trans people are not very different than the needs that are appeased by this man who engages in a public dominance display. It is the sadistic thrill of harming another in public, getting away with it and having their abuse publicly validated.

How many hours have TERFs spent attempting to force the trans community into submission? How many books, websites, meetings, conferences, speeches, presentations, pamphlets, blogs, internet communities and graphics have been created out of a need to force the trans community into submission? Stretching back to 1973, how many hours have been wasted in pursuit of their sadistic fetish?

[Figure] A TERF satisfying her needs in the name of feminism

Had all of that energy been directed toward tangible acts of compassion, how might our world be different?

To bring TERF behavior more into focus, I will compare statements from two sources. Both claim expertise in trans issues and it is from that claimed place of expertise, these two sources are willing to make public assertions about the well-being of trans people. First up is the American Psychiatric Association:

Long-standing medical and psychiatric literature demonstrates clear benefits of medical and surgical interventions to assist gender variant individuals seeking transition. However, transgender and gender variant people are frequently denied medical, surgical, and psychiatric care related to gender transition. Access to medical care (both medical and surgical) positively impacts the mental health of transgender and gender variant individuals.

Being transgender or gender variant implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social or vocational capabilities; however, these individuals often experience discrimination due to a lack of civil rights protections for their gender identity or expression. Transgender and gender variant persons are frequently harassed and discriminated against when seeking housing or applying to jobs or schools, are often victims of violent hate crimes, and face challenges in marriage, adoption and parenting rights.

Discrimination and lack of equal civil rights is damaging to the mental health of transgender and gender variant individuals. For example, gender-based discrimination and victimization were found to be independently associated with attempted suicide in a population of transgender individuals, 32% of whom had histories of trying to kill themselves, and in the largest survey to date of gender variant and transgender people 41% reported attempting suicide.

The APA joins other organizations, including the American Medical Association and the American Psychological Association, in endorsing strong policy statements deploring the discrimination experienced by gender variant and transgender individuals and calling for laws to protect their civil rights.

The American Psychiatric Association:

1. Recognizes that appropriately evaluated transgender and gender variant individuals can benefit greatly from medical and surgical gender transition treatments.
2. Advocates for removal of barriers to care and supports both public and private health insurance coverage for gender transition treatment.
3. Opposes categorical exclusions of coverage for such medically necessary treatment when prescribed by a physician.

The American Psychiatric Association:

1. Supports laws that protect the civil rights of transgender and gender variant individuals.
2. Urges the repeal of laws and policies that discriminate against transgender and gender variant people.
3. Opposes all public and private discrimination against transgender and gender variant individuals in such areas as health care, employment, housing, public accommodation, education, and licensing.
4. Declares that no burden of proof of such judgment, capacity, or reliability shall be placed upon these individuals greater than that imposed on any other persons.

Here is the other (self-appointed) expert on trans people, Sheila Jeffreys:

[Transsexual surgery] could be likened to political psychiatry in the Soviet Union. I suggest that transsexualism should best be seen in this light, as directly political, medical abuse of human rights. The mutilation of healthy bodies and the subjection of such bodies to dangerous and life-threatening continuing treatment violates such people's rights to live with dignity in the body into which they were born, what Janice Raymond refers to as their "native" bodies. It represents an attack on the body to rectify a political condition, "gender" dissatisfaction in a male supremacist society based upon a false and politically constructed notion of gender difference.

The time and energy TERFs pour into hunting, outing and castigating trans people is wasted. It's simply not useful to anyone else but far right-wing anti-gay groups... Which is why we find Tea Party Republicans quoting TERFs and TERFs quoting right-wing anti-gay propaganda mills.

Now one of the things I find puzzling about it is that, when I look at the House of Lords debate on this legislation, those I agree with most are the radical right. Particularly the person I find that I agree with most, in here, and I'm not sure he will be pleased to find this, is Norman Tebbit... Tebbit also says that the savage mutilation of transgenderism, we would say if it was taking place in other cultures apart

from the culture of Britain, was a harmful cultural practice, and how come we're not recognizing that in the British Isles. So he makes all of these arguments from the radical right, which is quite embarrassing to me, but I have to say, so-called progressive and left people are not recognizing the human rights violations of transgenderism or how crazy the legislation is." - Jeffreys

Being a TERF is not about addressing patriarchy in any meaningful sense; it's about being selfishly hyper-focused on obtaining a momentary pleasure from painfully dominating another.

Guide to the Sexing the Body is Gender Series

1. Introduction: 8/11/14
2. Contextualizing the Body: 8/12/14
3. Debunking TERF Essentialism: 8/13/14
4. TERFs Selling Women into Rape Culture: 8/14/14
5. Critical of "Gender Critical": 8/15/14
6. TERFism as an Obsessive Sadistic Fetish: 8/16/14

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