

Crossdresser from the Victorian Era.



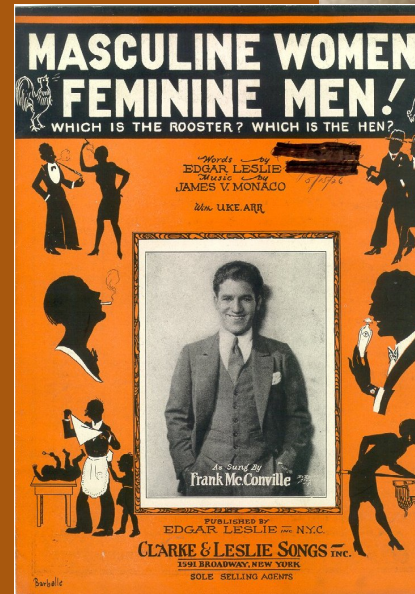
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# Transgender Policing & Pushing the Boundaries 1850s – 2010s

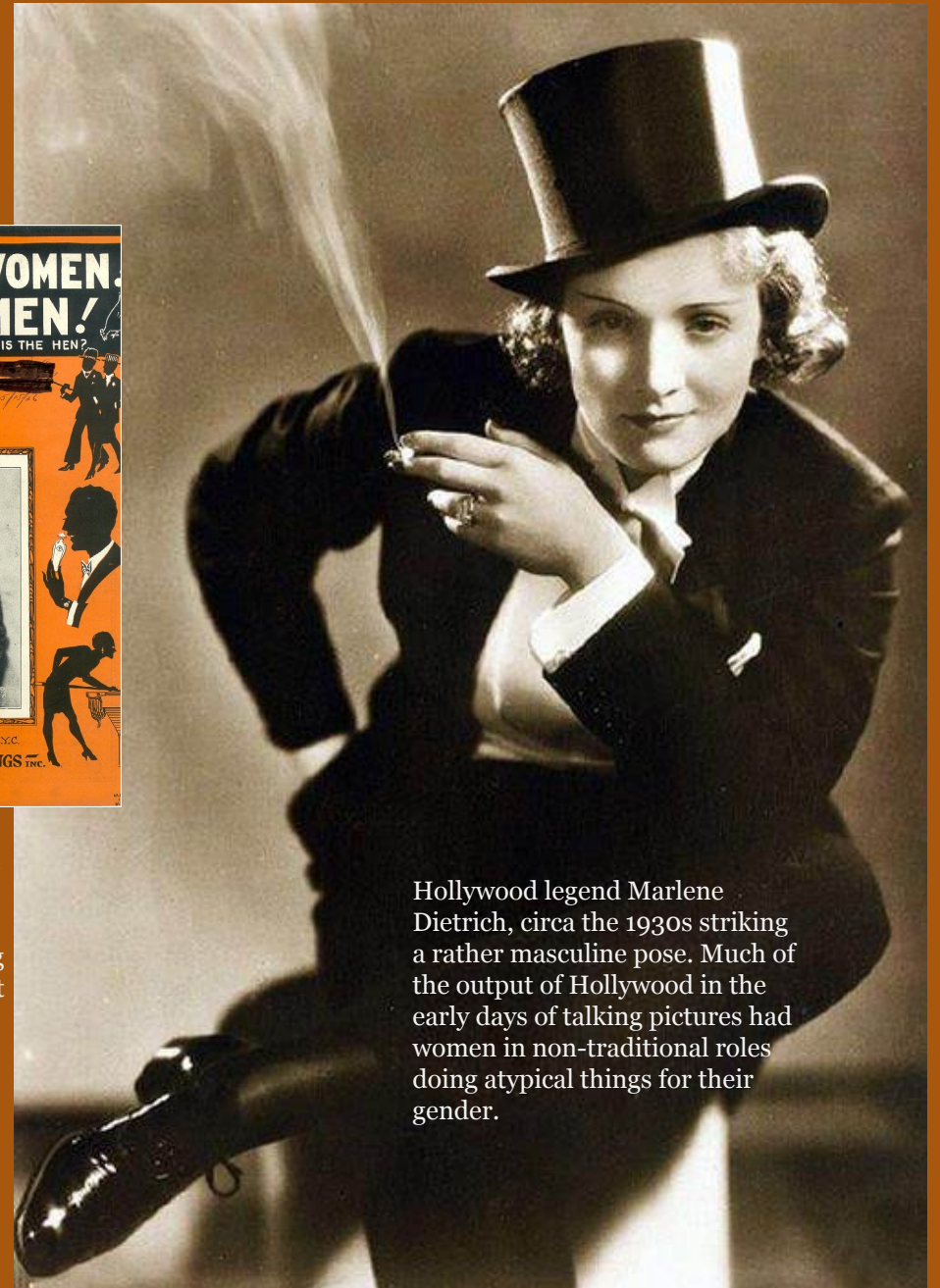
We begin in the 1850s and end in the present, and gender proves to be an ever evolving subject of politics, linguistics, sociology, psychology, and the arts. Pushing the boundaries of gender is as old as humankind. Here in the modern era it is a fiercely contested cultural space, subject to many pressures and counter-pressures in seeking to define and control the debate about what constitutes gender. On the following pages we will look at the imagery and ideas of gender from the 1850s to today and discover both transformation and entrenched policing of it.

Susan Stryker (2008)

Policing gender via use of the law is nothing new, in fact it pre-dates the Civil War. Given the current debates that exist in this cultural about the role and legal protections that exist for transgender people some context is in order to better grasp the role of gender over time from a socio-political viewpoint told through the lens of history. “Starting in the 1850s, a number of U.S. cities began passing municipal ordinances that made it illegal for a man or woman to appear in public “in a dress not belonging to his or her sex.’ The wave of local legislation in the 1850s represented a new development specific to gender presentation.”

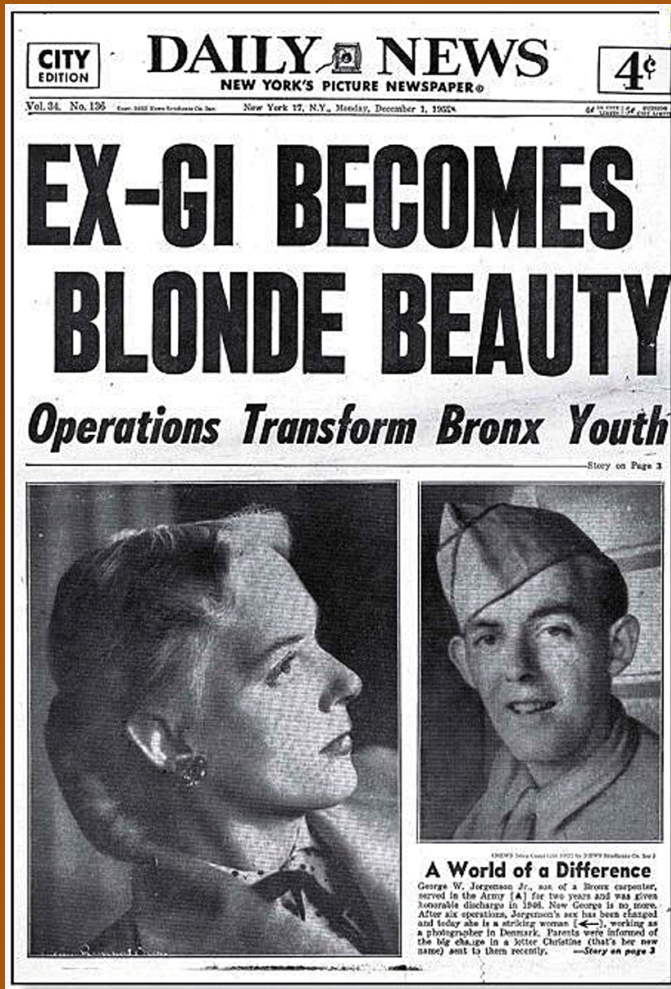


Sheet music was in the pre-radio days one of the most powerful ways of spreading culture in America. Part of the song goes: “Things aren't what they used to be. You'll See. You say 'Hello' to Uncle Joe. Then look again and you'll find it's your Auntie Flo.” Masculine Women. Feminine Men! (1925) Words by Edgar Leslie ; music by James V. Monaco.



Hollywood legend Marlene Dietrich, circa the 1930s striking a rather masculine pose. Much of the output of Hollywood in the early days of talking pictures had women in non-traditional roles doing atypical things for their gender.

# Changing Your Gender Goes Mainstream Mid-Twentieth Century



Christine Jorgensen became the first American to receive gender reconstructive surgery from the U.S. in December 1952. News of her successful surgery wasn't limited to the United States it made international headlines. When thinking about gender socialization and how to achieve greater gender equality it's important to realize how new some of these concepts are and how little evolution has actually occurred.

Her return home in 1955 was one of the biggest stories of the year. This "in a year when hydrogen bombs were being tested in the Pacific, war was raging in Korea, England crowned the still reigning Queen, and Jonas Salk invented the polio vaccine."

Susan Stryker (2008)



"Her story highlighted issues that pervaded post-World War II American culture: the limits of individualism, the promise and pitfalls of science, the appropriate behavior of women and men, and the boundaries of acceptable sexual expression."

Joanne Meyerowitz (2002)



Hollywood got around to making a movie of her story in 1970. "While the overall premise of the film is accurate, many of the details are fictionalized for the continuity of the film."

Wikipedia



Both the reality and the story of Christine Jorgensen was like an atom bomb dropped on the conservative notions of gender and sexuality that existed during the 1950s. The fact that she once was a GI, and all the masculine symbolism that evokes, was a story too delicious to pass up on. It was not only novel, her story was revolutionary.

# Gender & Transfeminist Politics in the Modern Era



The theme of transgender people as deceivers is a common one in media depictions. In the 1990 film *The Crying Game*, the whole movie, while good cinema, hinges on the surprising twist at the end where a major character is revealed as transgender, the cinematic result of which is to leave the audience, and the protagonist, feeling deceived.

Challenging long held notions about gender socialization, medicalization, and pathologization, the rallying cry of a new generation of gender outlaws in the 1990s brought trans politics to the forefront of national debates about culture and what it means to be non-binary. A conversation that is ongoing, evolving, and heating up in light of the election of Donald Trump and Mike Pence as President and Vice President, and the gender policies they espouse.

“I keep trying to integrate my life. I keep trying to make all the pieces one piece. As a result, my identity becomes my body, which becomes my fashion, which becomes my writing style. Then I perform what I have written in an effort to integrate my life, and that becomes my identity, after a fashion.”

Kate Bornstein (1994)



A symbol used to represent transfeminism



“Do we need recourse to a happier state before the law in order to maintain that contemporary gender relations and the punitive production of gender identities are oppressive?”  
Judith Butler (1990)



“Gender means class. By calling gender a system of classification, we can dismantle the system and examine its components.”

Kate Bornstein (1994)

# Gender Transgression & Variety

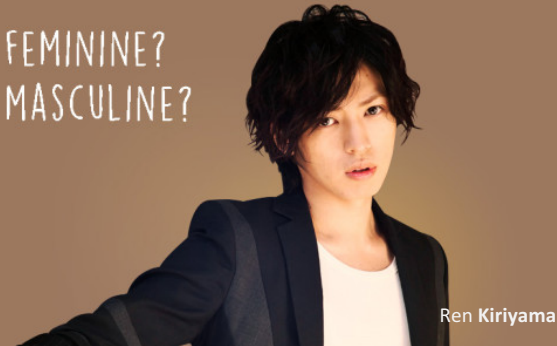


Unknown

The faces of non-binary people offer a glimpse into the variety of gender expression that exist under the sun through portraits of multiple well know transgender people, a Japanese actor, a musical icon and an unknown gender-fluid people.

“While in theory gender beyond the binaries may be recognized, nonetheless, in mainstream society, living openly beyond the two-sexes/two-genders systems would still not appear to constitute a socially viable option.” Sara Davidmann (2010)

FEMININE?  
MASCULINE?



Ren Kiriya



Julia Serano

“If one more person tells me that ‘all gender is performance,’ I think I am going to strangle them... It is a crass oversimplification, as ridiculous as saying all gender is genitals, all gender is chromosomes, or all gender is socialization.” Julia Serano (2010)

Ladybeard – Australian Artist



Chelsea Manning



David Bowie

“Bowie’s androgynous alter-egos assisted in creating a judgement-free space in a time where conservative values ruled society. He helped open up the conversation for boundless sexuality and breaking gender conforming norms.”

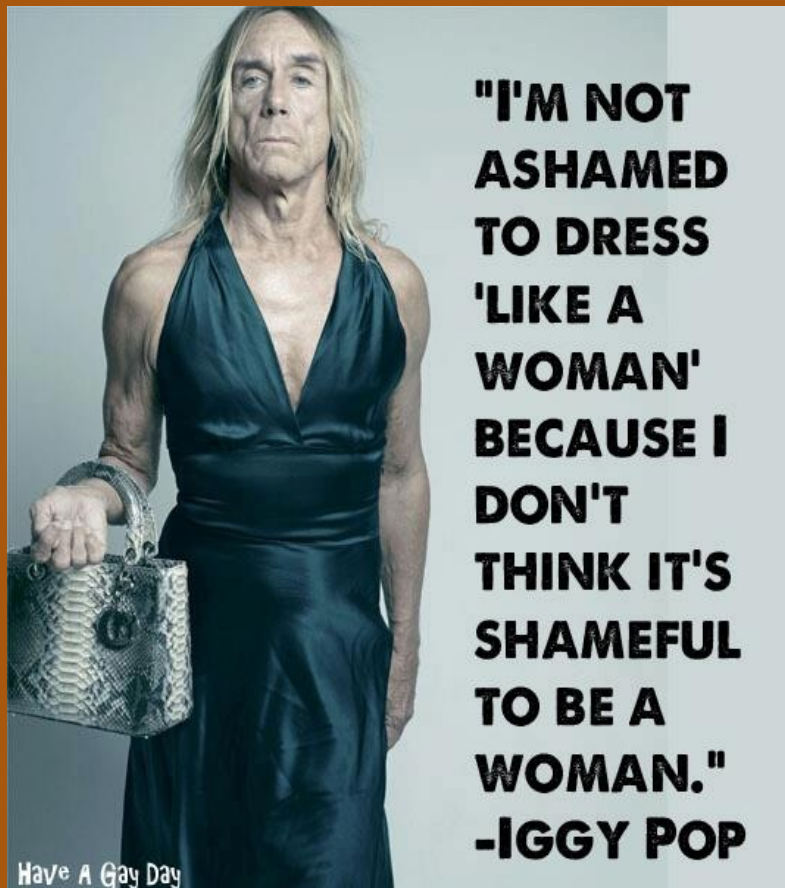
George Gott (2015)

# Combine Good 'ole Fashioned Sexism With Fear of Gender Fluid People &

## You Get Trans-misogyny

“Trans-misogyny is steeped in the assumption that femaleness and femininity are inferior to, and exist primarily for the benefit of, maleness and masculinity. In the media, jokes and demeaning depictions of gender-variant people primarily focus on trans female/feminine spectrum people. Often in these cases, it is their desire to be female and/or feminine that is especially ridiculed. While trans male/masculine individuals are often subjects of derision, their desire to be male and/or masculine is generally not ridiculed—to do so would bring the supposed supremacy of maleness/masculinity into question.” Julia Serano (2007)

Gender socialization doesn't happen in a vacuum. Multiple factors go into shaping personal notions of gender and sexuality. By embracing gender outlaws and the gender and sexuality variety that actually exists in society we come a few more steps closer to a more holistic form of feminism. One that has as its principle operating system the notion that each individual has the right to express themselves however they see fit. Transgressing the boundaries should not be a vector for criminalization, marginalization, or violence.



Engaging the boundaries of the gender binary can be both a liberating and dangerous behavior to undertake. In my experience of life it has made me whole again. (Re)embracing my femininity has given me back the joy and curiosity necessary to unlock my creative intellect and pointed the pathway forward. Meanwhile, I'll keep that canister of pepper spray with me while out.

