



Pornographic Film and Video: Transsexual

by Geoffrey W. Bateman

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Even though most of the pornography that features transsexuals is neither made by nor for them and can be considered exploitative, in recent years trans porn activists have begun to produce pornography for transsexual and other queer audiences.

Most pornography is produced by and consumed by heterosexual men. In 1998 *Adult Video News* conducted a survey of adult video stores and found that a little over 90% of adult video consumers were heterosexual men, 20% of whom rented or bought pornographic videos with their female partners.

But as queer theorists and film critics have shown, it is unwise to assume that the type of sexuality depicted in pornography is a direct or necessary reflection of the consumer's identity or sexual practices. In *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible,"* Linda Williams cautions students of pornography that in the past decade as the categories of pornography have proliferated, "it becomes difficult to describe the pleasures of sexual performances in any predictable binary terms."

For instance, straight men often enjoy viewing scenes that feature lesbian sex. Significantly, and perhaps more surprisingly, they are also the primary consumers of transsexual pornography.

The emergence of transsexuals in mainstream pornography undoubtedly has less to do with transsexuals' interest in seeing themselves as objects of desire and more to do with the fetishistic role such images play in the sexual imagination of heterosexual men.

The appeal of pornography that features "trannies," "chicks with dicks," or "she-males" lies in its blurring of conventional sexual boundaries and in the fantasies it offers viewers.

Transsexual pornography often features scenes in which male-to-female transsexuals penetrate the male performers. Such scenes allow straight male viewers to fantasize about their own penetration, while maintaining a semblance of heterosexual norms.

Bend Over Boyfriend, a popular video among heterosexual couples, also plays to this fantasy by showing these couples how the woman can use a strap-on dildo to penetrate her male partner.

Transsexual pornography also allows ostensibly straight men to explore bisexual fantasies without having to identify fully as desiring other men. As a quotation on the box of the latest *Dicks on Chicks* release suggests, "When you get the taste for meat but don't wanna cross the line, you take the middle ground and fuck with the Dicks on Chicks nasty crew."

Viewing scenes that feature men performing oral sex on male-to-female transsexuals who have penises permit men who identify as heterosexuals to satisfy their curiosity about bisexuality.

Transsexual Porn Produced by the Mainstream Pornography Industry

Transsexual pornographic films emerged in the 1970s, but did not become readily accessible and visible until the early and mid-1980s.

She-Male Encounters, Collections 1 and 2 (Caballero Productions, 1980) are early examples of transsexual pornography that was produced by the more mainstream heterosexual pornography industry. Titles by Bizarre Video Productions such as *Transsexual's Revenge*, *TV's Plaything*, and *TVs by Choice* were produced in the 1980s and are still available today.

As specialized pornography became more popular with mainstream heterosexual porn consumers in the late 1990s, a mini-explosion of transsexual pornography occurred.

In works such as *Trannie Love* (1995) and *The Princess with a Penis* (1996) from He-She Studios, transsexual porn also acquired a campy sense of humor. More recent series such as the *Rouge Adventures* and *Big Ass She-Male Adventures* have proven very successful and have won numerous adult video awards. Clearly, transsexual porn made for heterosexual men remains a viable market.

Trans Porn for Trans

In spite of the fact that the overwhelming number of transsexual pornographic video is geared to straight men, however, a small number of trans activists have in recent years begun to produce trans porn for trans and other queer audiences.

The best known of these videos is probably *Alley of the Tranny Boys* (1998). Directed by Christopher Lee, it was the first transsexual pornographic video featuring female-to-male (FTM) trans performers. Lee has gone on to make *Sex Flesh in Blood* (1999). Both works gleefully subvert the genre that most exploits transsexuals.

Lee prides himself on showing sexual acts in his pornography that have rarely been eroticized. In *Alley*, he uses the aesthetics from 1970s gay male porn to promote a hardcore FTM sexuality, and transmen fuck and suck each other and biologically-born men as well, thus challenging stereotypical assumptions about what FTMs can do in bed and in public sex environments.

Lee's production staff for *Sex Flesh in Blood* was composed entirely of people of color. The video draws upon gothic images and mixes up trans erotics with suggestions of raunchy sex and even necrophilia.

Rather than portraying images of tranny passivity and submissiveness in the presence of biologically-born, heterosexual men, Lee forces queer audiences to see transsexuals as sexual subjects with their own desires and the power to pursue them.

Other trans porn makers have employed similar strategies and have begun to change the way porn represents transsexuals. For example, *Dysfunctional* (Mirha-Soleil Ross, 1997) challenges assumptions that trannies should not enjoy their unaltered genitals, while *Look of Love* (Charles Lofton, 1996) remixes she-male porn in such an alluring way that it forces anyone watching to rethink what turns him or her on.

Pansexual Porn (Del LaGrace Volcano, 1998) not only challenges heterosexual audiences, but also gay ones by showing FTMs with camcorders having sex with men in public sex environments.

Collectively, these directors refuse to cater to sexual orientations and gender identities that fit into binary systems. Their pornography unsettles their audiences in order to suggest a new more fluid and freer sexual construct.

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About the Author

Geoffrey W. Bateman is the Assistant Director for the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military, a research center based at the University of California, Santa Barbara, that promotes the study of gays and lesbians in the military. He is co-editor of *Don't Ask, Don't Tell: Debating the Gay Ban in the Military*, as well as author of a study on gay personnel and multinational units. He earned his M.A. in English literature at the University of California, Santa Barbara, in eighteenth-century British literature and theories of genders and sexuality, but now lives in Denver, Colorado, where he is co-parenting two sons with his partner and a lesbian couple.