Gender Transgression in Books for Children, Teens, and Caring Adults: A Bibliography by Nancy Silverrod, San Francisco Public Library

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One way for young people to develop self-esteem is to find representations of self in books. The titles listed below feature characters that range from exploring traditional gender roles, to choosing to live for parts, or all of their lives as the opposite gender, to those who are specifically transgender in the way that we understand that concept today.

Munro Leaf's well-loved story, *The Story of Ferdinand*, published in 1936 may very well be the first children's book which really shows a character transgressing gender norms, and it sets the pattern for most of the other gender-transgressive books to follow: a "child" doesn't conform to gender stereotypes, a parent worries, and in the case of picture books, the "problem" is resolved with love and acceptance of difference in one way or another. Charlotte Zolotow's 1972 book, *William's Doll*, about a young boy who wants a baby doll to care for, to the dismay of his father and brother; and *Oliver Button is a Sissy* by Tomie de Paola, published in 1979, followed. Ferdinand showed his "masculinity," "puffing and snorting, butting and pawing" when he was stung by a bee; William's problem is resolved by his grandmother, who, assuming, a male heterosexual future for him, explains to the boy's father that he needs a doll in order to learn how to be a father; and Oliver is allowed to take tap dancing lessons when his father reluctantly decides it is a "form of exercise."

It's not until 2002 with the publication of Harvey Fierstein's, *The Sissy Duckling* that a children's picture book truly celebrates a child who delights in everything not intended for his gender.

Each of these titles, not only mirrors a child's experience of gender-variance, but also that of a worried parent, who in some way or another is able to become more accepting.

The first well-written and illustrated picture book featuring a gender-variant or transgender child, **10,000 Dresses** by Marcus Ewert was published in 2008 by Seven Stories Press.

CHILDREN'S FICTION:

Boenke, Mary. *Carly, She's Still My Daddy.* Transgender Network of PFLAG, http://pflag.org/TNET_Store.788.0.html. Also distributed by Two Lives Publishing (www.twolives.com). This pamphlet explores the transition of Carl to Carly, from a child's point of view, explaining the differences between various gender-queer experiences. Age 4 and up.

Block, Francesca Lia. "Dragons in Manhattan" in *Girl Goddess #9: Nine Stories*. New York: HarperCollins, 1996. Tuck, who lives with her lesbian mothers, discovers a surprising secret when she goes in search of her biological father. Age 11 and up.

Burningham, John. *Avocado Baby.* New York: Crowell, 1982. A genderless baby grows very strong eating avocados and defends its family. Age 3-5.

Cole, Babette. *Princess Smartypants*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1987, 1986. Princess Smartypants prefers to stay a "Ms." and easily dispatches all but one of her annoying suitors. Ridding herself of the final one presents a bit more of a challenge. Age 3-7.

DePaola, Tomie. *Oliver Button is a Sissy.* San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979. Young Oliver isn't interested in sports and other "boy" things, preferring to dance. Despite teasing him, his father allows him to take dancing lessons "for the exercise," and Oliver impresses everyone at a talent show. Age 4-7.

Ewert, Marcus. 10, 000 Dresses. Illustrated by Rex Ray. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008. This first picture book about a gender variant child is successful on many levels. It accurately portrays a family resistant to a child's gender variant interests and feelings, it provides that child with outside support through an accepting friendship, and it is simply told with illustrations that are child-friendly and colorful. The only other thing we could ask for is a family who comes around by the end of the story. Age 3-9.

Fierstein, Harvey. *The Sissy Duckling.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002. Elmer the duckling is not like the other boy ducklings, and suffers the derision of his schoolmates and his father, but he proves that a "sissy" can be a real hero. Age 4-7.

Funke, Cornelia. *The Princess Knight.* New York: Chicken House/Scholastic, 2004, 2003. Despite the taunting of her brothers, Princess Violetta becomes a talented knight, and when her father proposes to give her hand in marriage to the knight who wins a tournament, Violetta uses her brains as well as her brawn to outwit him. Age 4-7.

Geeslin, Campbell. *Elena's Serenade*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2004. Elena disguises herself as a boy and learns to be a glassblower like her father, finally earning his respect for her artistry. Age 3-7.

Gruska, Denise. *The Only Boy in Ballet Class.* Gibbs Smith, 2007. People don't understand how wonderful dancing makes Tucker feel, and he is teased and taunted, until his dance skills lead to a stunning move on the football field. Similar titles include *Oliver Button is a Sissy* by Tomie DePaola, and Max by Rachel Isadora. Age 5-8.

Howe, James. *Pinky and Rex and the Bully*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1996. When the neighborhood bully gets on his case about liking the color pink, and having a female best friend, Pinky begins to doubt himself. With the support of a neighbor, he decides to be true to himself and stand up to the bully. Age 4-8.

Isaacs, Anne. **Swamp Angel**. New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1994. Angelica Longrider, aka Swamp Angel is as big a hero as Paul Bunyan, taking on grizzly bears and even tornados. Age 4-7.

Isadora, Rachel. *Max.* New York: Macmillan; London: Collier Macmillan, c1976. Max warms up for his weekly baseball game by attending ballet class. Age 4-7.

Jimenez, Karleen Pendleton. *Are You a Boy or a Girl?* Toronto: Green Dragon Press, 2000. A young athlete follows her interests, even when others question whether they are suitable for girls. Age 4-8. Available from Two Lives Publishing: www.twolives.com.

Leaf, Munro. *The Story of Ferdinand.* New York: Viking Press, 1936. To his mother's concern, Ferdinand the bull doesn't like to romp around and butt heads with the other young bulls, but prefers to sit and smell the flowers. Age 4-7.

Newman, Leslea. *A Fire Engine for Ruthie*. New York: Clarion Books, 2004. Nana has dolls and dress-up clothes for Ruthie to play with, but Ruthie would rather have a fire engine. Age 2-5.

Parr, Todd. *It's Okay to Be Different*. Little, Brown, 2001. While not specifically addressing gender issues, the book enumerates many ways in which it's okay to be different. Age 3-7.

Pierce, Tamora. *Alanna: The First Adventure*. New York: Athenuem, 1983. In the first of the "Song of the Lioness" series, young Alanna disguises herself as a boy and sets off to become a knight. Age 9-up. (See many other titles by this author).

Zolotow, Charlotte. *William's Doll.* New York: Harper & Row, 1972. Young William wants a doll, but his father refuses, and his brother and the neighbor boy tease him. Finally his grandmother convinces his father that having a doll will help teach William how to be a good father. Age 3-6.

CHILDREN'S NON-FICTION:

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Anderson, Hans Christian. *The Ugly Duckling.* Adapted and Illustrated by Jerry Pinkney. New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1999. Even the ugly duckling's mother knew there was something different about him.¹

DePaola, Tomie "26 Fairmount Avenue" (series), G.P. Putnam. Gay author, DePaola, recounts his childhood exploits, including dressing up as Snow White for Halloween, using his mother's lipstick to dress up as his favorite actress, Mae West, and so forth. Age 5-8.

Green, Michelle Y. A Strong Right Arm: The Story of Mamie "Peanut" Johnson. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 2002. Mamie overcomes sexism and racism to play pro-ball in the Negro Leagues. Age 8-12.

¹ Thanks to Sharon Garcia, President of TransYouth Family Allies for suggesting the addition of this title.

Hughes, Susan. *No Girls Allowed: Tales of Daring Women Dressed as Men for Love, Freedom and Adventure*. Toronto, ONT; Tonawanda, NY: Kids Can Press, 2008. Biographies of women who chose to live their lives as men for a variety of reasons, presented in graphic format. The only disappointment is that the illustrations are too similar from story to story. Age 8-12.

Kay, Verla. *Rough, Tough Charley.* Tricycle Press, 2007. Charley Pankhurst drove stagecoach for Wells Fargo, voted in California years before women got the vote, and died with his secret identity intact.

Moss, Marissa. *Mighty Jackie: The Strikeout Queen.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004. Non-fiction account of teenaged Jackie Mitchell who pitched against baseball greats Lou Gehrig and Babe Ruth. Age 4-8.

CHILDREN'S / FAMILY INTEREST VIDEOS:

No Dumb Questions: a Documentary Film. by Melissa Regan. New Day Films. www.newday.com. Uncle Bill is becoming a woman, and his three nieces are helped by their parents to understand and accept the transformation into Aunt Barbara. All ages.

Oliver Button is a Star. Produced by Dan Hunt. Directed by John Scagliotti. [United States]: Oliver Button Project, c2001. Features a retelling of the book, with interviews of first graders and celebrities about sex roles and following one's dreams.

TEEN FICTION:

In teen fiction, with the exception of the graphic novel series, *Ranma* ½ by Rumiko Takahashi in which the protagonist is turned into a girl every time he comes into contact with cold water, it wasn't until the mid-to-late 1990s that there were two short stories specifically which featured actual transgender characters: Francesca Lia Block's "Dragons in Manhattan," in her 1996 collection *Girl Goddess #9: Nine Stories*, (HarperCollins) and "The Secret of Life According to Aunt Gladys," by Bruce Coville, in *Dirty Laundry: Stories About Family Secrets*, edited by Lisa Rowe Fraustino, (New York: Viking, 1998).

2002 brought the publication of *What Happened to Lani Garver* by Carol Plum-Ucci, featuring a teen who refuses to be defined by gender. Julie Anne Peters novel, *Luna* (Little, Brown, 2004), features the first unapologetically MTF character in a book for young adults, and in *Parrotfish* by Ellen Wittlinger (Simon & Schuster, 2007), we finally have a purely positive book featuring an FTM teenager.

Blacker, Terence. *Boy2Girl.* New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2005. On a dare from his cousin, Sam agrees to attend the first week of his new school dressed as a girl and comes to find that there are things he likes about being Samantha. In the end, he gives up the ruse, but interesting questions about gender and gender identity have been raised for all. For younger teens.

Block, Francesca Lia. "Dragons in Manhattan" in *Girl Goddess #9: Nine Stories*. New York: HarperCollins, 1996. Tuck, lives with her lesbian mothers, and discovers a surprising secret when she goes in search of her biological father.

Bujold, Lois McMaster. *Memory*. Riverdale, NY: Baen, 1996. Part of the Miles Vorkosigan intergalactic saga, this book includes a sympathetic male-to-female transsexual character.

Coville, Bruce. "The Secret of Life According to Aunt Gladys" in *Dirty Laundry: Stories About Family Secrets*, edited by Lisa Rowe Fraustino. New York: Viking, 1998. Randy discovers he has an Uncle George whom the family "doesn't talk about," and when George arrives for an unexpected visit, Randy discovers why.

Dunnion, Kristyn. *Mosh Pit.* Calgary, Alberta, Canada: Red Deer Press, 2005. In this often depressing story of teens living on the edge, one of protagonist Simone's more supportive friends is Carlotta, a transgender teen helping to raise her siblings and nephew.

Durrant, Lynda. *My Last Skirt: The Story of Jennie Hodgers, Union Soldier.* Clarion, 2006. Based on a true story, Jennie began cross-dressing as a young child to earn a living, and continued doing so until being discovered in old age. Age 12 and up.

Gardner, James Alan. *Commitment Hour.* New York: Avon Eos, 1998. In Tober Cove, children change gender every year, but at twenty must choose one gender or another, or be banned from the community. Unfortunately while individuals may choose their gender, they are not free to choose to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Gentle, Mary. *Ilario: The Lion's Eye, A Story of the First History.* New York: Eos, [2007], c2006. Set in an alternate medieval world, the intersexed slave, Ilario flees existence as a King's toy when his/her mother tries to kill her/him. Hoping to pursue an education in painting, Ilario becomes unexpectedly and dangerously pregnant following a brief encounter, is again enslaved, and flees just one step ahead of his/her assassins. Book two, *Ilario: The Stone Golem* continues the story. For older teens.

Gould, Lois. "X: A Fabulous Child's Story." in *Prejudice: Stories About Hate, Ignorance, Revelation, and Transformation.* Daphne Muse, editor. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 1995. X's parents have decided to raise X without letting anyone know if X is a boy or a girl.

Hartzell, Andy. *Fox Bunny Funny.* Marietta, GA: Top Shelf Productions, 2007. In this graphic novel a young teen-aged fox boy secretly desires to be a bunny. Three episodes depict his cross-dressing experiments, his self-loathing, and his physical transformation to bunnyhood.

Lantz, Francess. "Standing on the Roof Naked" in *On the Fringe*. New York: Dial, 2001. Jeannie is an androgynous teen who wanted to be a boy for most of her childhood. Now in high school, she doesn't know who or what she is—girl, boy, gay, straight?

Matthews, Andrew. *The Flip Side.* London: Mammoth, 2001. New York: Delacorte, 2003. When Robert dons a dress in English class to play the part of Rosalind in *As You Like It*, some new, and somewhat alarming feelings are stirred up.

Meyer, L.A. *Bloody Jack: Being an Account of the Curious Adventures of Mary "Jacky" Faber, Ship's Boy.* San Diego: Harcourt, c2002. Orphaned Jacky Faber, disguises herself as a boy and signs on with the British army in search of pirates. Jacky's adventures continue in *Curse of the Blue Tattoo, Under the Jolly Roger, In the Belly of the Bloodhound, and Missippi Jack.*

Nishimori, Hiroyuki. *Cheeky Angel (series).* San Francisco: VIZ, 2004-. A hard-of-hearing genie turns Megumi into a girl, but Megumi stays true to his male self in this graphic novel series. Also available in Chinese.

Peters, Julie Anne. grl2grl. Little Brown and Co., 2007. Nine stories about teen lesbians and one about a transgender boi.

Peters, Julie Anne. *Luna.* New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2004. Fifteen-year-old Regan's brother Liam has decided to move on from secretly dressing in her clothes to coming out as transgendered.

Plum-Ucci, Carol. *What Happened to Lani Garver.* San Diego: Harcourt, 2002. Lani Garver refuses to be categorized as male or female, even if it means facing bigoted teenage violence.

Rosoff, Meg. *What I Was.* New York: Viking, 2008. The narrator, a one hundred year old man named only H, recalls his first love, a teenaged boy named Finn who fends for himself on an island reachable only by boat, or a sand bar at low tide. When Finn becomes ill, H must take action even if it means betraying Finn's trust. Finn is discovered not to be who or what H has assumed, and his reaching out for help changes the lives of Finn, H, and their respective families, as well as that of a classmate.

Sobol, Rose. *Woman Chief.* New York: Dial Press, 1976. Based on a true story, this is a fictional account of Woman Chief who was recognized as a hunter, warrior, and leader, and who had five wives.

Takahashi, Rumiko. Ranma ½. San Francisco: Viz Communications, c1993-<2001>. Manga in which the main character changes gender every time he comes into contact with water.

Trujillo, Carla. *What Night Brings.* Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 2003. What Marci Cruz prays to God, the Virgin Mary, and Baby Jesus to bring her each night is a change of gender—because she likes girls and the only way to marry one is to be a boy.

Wittlinger, Ellen. *Parrotfish.* Simon & Schuster, 2007. Angela, now Grady, is transitioning from F to M, and this insightful book explores the reactions of family, friends, classmates, and teachers. Age 12 and up.

TEEN NON-FICTION:

Abrahams, George, PhD. **Boy v. Girl? How Gender Shapes Who We Are, What We Want, and How We Get Along.** Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 2002. While not about transgender issues, this book encourages young people to guestion gender role stereotypes through a variety of guestions and exercises. Teen.

Becoming: Young Ideas on gender, Identity, and Sexuality. Diane Anderson-Minshall and Gina de Vries, editors; foreword by Zoe Trope. Xlibris Corp., c2004.

Bornstein, Kate. *Hello, Cruel World: 101 Alternatives to Suicide for Teens, Freaks, and Other Outlaws.* New York: Seven Stories Press, 2006.

Cortez, Jaime. Sexile/Sexilio. Los Angeles: Institute for Gay Men's Health, c2004. Bi-lingual graphic memoir tells the story of a Cuban exile who first thinks he's gay, then realizes he's really transgendered.

Feinberg, Leslie. *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1996. Feinberg takes a look at transgender issues and persons throughout history.

The Full Spectrum: a New Generation of Writing About Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Other Identities. Edited by David Levithan and Billy Merrell. Knopf, 2006.

Huegel, Kelly. *GLBTQ: The Survival Guide for Queer and Questioning Teens.* Minneapolis, Free Spirit, 2003. Easy to read book about what it means to be GLBTQ in the real world: family, school, relationships, sex and sexual health, etc., with quotes from young people about their own experiences. The chapter on transgender teens is good, with a good list on internet resources, but it's placement near the end of the book makes it seem like somewhat of an afterthought.

Hunter, Nan. *The Rights of Lesbians, Gay Men, Bisexuals, and Transgender People: The Authoritative ACLU Guide to a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender Person's Rights.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004.

Keen, Lisa. *Out Law: What LGBT Youth Should Know about Their Legal Rights.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press, c2007.

Our Place On Campus: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Services and Programs in Higher Education. Edited by Ronni Sanlo, Sue Rankin, and Robert Schoenberg. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2002. Teen/Adult.

Scholinski, Daphne. *The Last Time I Wore a Dress.* New York: Riverhead Books, 1997. Scholinski was institutionalized for three years in the 1980s for her "failure to identify as a sexual female."

Smith, Claiborne. "The Wrong Body." Rush Hour: A Journal of Contemporary Voices, Vol. 3, Face, April 2005, pp. 135-151. Delacorte Press. Brief interviews with several transgendered people, aimed at a teen audience.

Trope, Zoe. *Please Don't Kill the Freshman: a Memoir.* Toronto: HarperCollins Canada, 2003. This fictionalized memoir tells the story of Zoe in her early teens. Her girlfriend's transition to become her boyfriend affects her newfound queer identity. Age 14-up.

TEEN INTEREST VIDEOS:

Boy I Am. Produced by Sam Feder and Judith Hollar. A documentary about three young FTM people undergoing surgery and hormone treatments, and the ways in which young FTMs interact with the lesbian community.

Just Call Me Kade. Documentary about sixteen year old Kade, who, with the support of his parents began the transition from female to male.

TEEN ARTICLES:

Booth, Stephanie. "Their True Selves," Teen People: June/July 2003.

TEEN / FAMILY WEB SITES:

Advocates for Youth: www.advocatesforyouth.org

Discovery Health: http://health.discovery.com/centers/teen/transgender/transgender.html

Gay, Lesbian, Straight, Education Network: www.glsen.org

*Laura's Playground: http://www.lauras-playground.com/teens.htm

National Youth Advocacy Coalition: www.nyacyouth.org/

Out Proud!: www.outproud.org

Safe School Coalition: www.safeschoolscoalition.org

TransProud: www.transproud.org

Youth Guardian Services: www.youth-guard.org

FOR PARENTS & SUPPORTIVE ADULTS OF GENDER-VARIANT AND TRANSGENDER CHILDREN & YOUTH

Beam, Cris. **Transparent: Love, Family, and Living the T with Transgender Teenagers.** Harcourt, 2007. After volunteer teaching transgender and queer teens in a "last hope" school in Los Angeles, Beam finds herself getting further involved with some of them, ultimately unofficially foster-parenting Christina.

Brill, Stephanie and Rachel Pepper. *The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals.* San Francisco, Cleis Press, 2008. Parents, trainers, and activists Brill and Pepper guide parents (and professionals) through the issues of raising a transgender child.

Brown, Mildred L. *True Selves: Understanding Transsexualism—for Family, Friends, Coworkers, and Helping Professionals.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1996, 2003.

Burt, Tracy, et. al. *Making Room in the Circle: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Families in Early Childhood Settings.* Parent Services Project. PSP Inc. 79 Belvedere St. #101, San Rafael, California 94901, Phone: 415.454.1870, Fax: 415.454.1752, www.parentservices.org

Campos, David. *Diverse Sexuality and Schools: A Reference Handbook.* Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, c2003.

Cohen-Kettenis, Peggy Tine. *Transgenderism and Intersexuality in Childhood and Adolescence: Making Choices: Vol. 46.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003. Aimed at the professional community, this volume explores medical, psychological, and legal issues related to transgender and intersexed children and teens.

DeCrescenzo, Teresa and Gerald P. Mallon. *Serving Transgender Youth: The Role of Child Welfare Systems: Proceedings of a Colloquium, September 2000.* Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America, 2002.

Dillon, Florence. *Why Don't You Tell Them I'm a Boy? Raising a Gender-Nonconforming Child.* A mother's experience with raising a transgender (FtM) son. Available online at: http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/whydontyoutellthem.pdf

Fish, Linda Stone and Rebecca G. Harvey. *Nurturing Queer Youth: Family Therapy Transformed.* New York: Norton & Company, 2005. Aimed at the therapeutic professional, this volume will offer insights to families of GLBTQ youth.

Hunter, Nan. *The Rights of Lesbians, Gay Men, Bisexuals, and Transgender People: The Authoritative ACLU Guide to a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender Person's Rights.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004.

Just Evelyn. "Mom, I Need to be a Girl." Imperial Beach, CA: Walter Trook Pub, 1998. Download from http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/Evelyn/Evelyn.html. Available in Arabic, Hebrew, Spanish, French, and Portuguese.

Preventing Prejudice: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Lesson Plans for Elementary Schools. Buena Vista Lesbian and Gay Parents Group, 1999.

Ramsey, Gerald. *Transsexuals: Candid Answers to Private Questions.* Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1996. Although a bit dated, Ramsey addresses many of the concerns and questions of the transgendered person and his or her family and friends.

Sissies and Tomboys: Gender Nonconformity and Homosexual Childhood. Matthew Rottnek, editor. New York: New York University Press, c1999. Questioning the diagnosis of gender identity disorder, this book posits what a gender-queer childhood could be like without the attached stigmas.

Social Services with Transgendered Youth. Gerald P. Mallon, editor. Co-published simultaneously as "Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services," Volume 10, Numbers 3/4, 1999. New York: Harrington Park Press, c1999.

Trans Forming Families: Real Stories About Transgendered Loved Ones. Mary Boenke, editor. Imperial Beach, CA: Walter Trook Pub., 1999. Family members of transgendered individuals talk about their feelings and experiences as they strive to accept the changes in their loved one. Includes a section on raising gender-queer children.

WEB SITES:

Family Acceptance Project: http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/

Human Rights Watch, Hatred in the Hallways: www.hrw.org/reports/2001/uslgbt/

Gender Spectrum Family: www.genderspectrumfamily.org

Gender-Variant Children:

http://www.dcchildrens.com/DepartmentsAndPrograms/default.aspx?type=Program&SubType=ResourcesForFamilies&Id=388&Name=Gender%20and%20Sexuality%20Advocacy%20and%20Education%20Program

Safe Schools Coalition: www.safeschoolscoalition.org/RG-gender-nonconforming-trans-youth.html. This site has lots of good links for families and youth.

Trans Family: www.transfamily.org

TransProud: www.transproud.org

TransYouth Family Allies: http://www.imatyfa.org/

Youth Resource: http://www.youthresource.com/advocacy/index.htm