

4# THERE WAS MUCH MORE LIKE THIS, AND JUDY WAS QUICK OFF THE MARK WITH A REPLY IN THE NEXT WEEK'S EDITION (5.4.84)

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The Transsexual Reality
I fully realise that the article 'Yesterday's Men' (TO 710) has some relationship to transsexuality in general — about the same relationship as pornographic literature has to the *Times*.
I am writing briefly so as to let you know the disgust that all transsexuals will feel at seeing this article and how much harm it does by presenting all transsexuals in the role of whore and exhibitionist. You will note that there is no attempt to explain that the article represents the exhibitionist fringe of society and that 99 per cent of transsexuals live in the world as normal working women (or men) from all sections of the social strata.
Judy Cousins, President, Self-Help for Transsexuals, South Ascot, Berks.

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[THERE WERE ALSO MORE LETTERS IN THE FOLLOWING WEEK'S EDITION (12.4.84)!

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Not So Wild
I write as someone who knows the Parisian transsexual scene from the inside, having visited that city twice recently and lived *en femme* there among transsexuals, to condemn Jonathan Meades's article 'Yesterday's Men' (TO 710).
The majority of transsexuals I met in Paris were warm, confident, and generous human beings. Far from being in the ghetto that Meades describes, they lived fully in the ordinary life of Paris. Their jobs covered the whole of the spectrum: one worked in a bank, another in hotel management, another on a fashion magazine; they had the same successes and the same problems with running their lives, with money, with relationships, that the rest of the population both here and in Paris has. They looked after me as a visitor from London, with dignity, warmth, and friendliness.
Meades looked for, and found, only the lowest and ugliest stratum of the Parisian transsexual world. That means that his article is heavily unbalanced — it's as though he were to write about marriage and cover nothing except wife-beating, or about the gay world and cover nothing except venereal disease. Significantly, he tells how he chose to grope through Casablanca dustbins looking for unspeakable things. What did he find? Nothing. Come on, *Time Out* — how about an article on transsexuality from a competent and sympathetic journalist, this time?
Suzanne (address withheld)

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Victims
I hope that your readers do not imagine that the whole of 'transsexualism' is as Jonathan Meades's article portrays it.
Much of it involves people much less 'well-endowed' than his exotic creatures, trying to live desperately conventional lives in a society which may not physically maltreat but definitely does not absorb. The gruesome tale of Petite Yvonne ought not to be allowed to make people complacent or insensitive to the mental and emotional cruelty which can be inflicted without a bruise being discernible.
The fact is — and articles like Mr Meades's linking us with Boy George et al obscure this — that transsexuals are not simply role-playing, even at a subtle level; they are genuinely the victims of a single dislocated reality. They don't think of 'changing sex' as one would think of changing jobs or life-styles. They try to make sense of one single centre of consciousness which has been placed in an intolerable position.

I wish that 'ordinary' people could understand just a little of the *real* horror of the transsexual's situation and not rest complacently in the contemplation of the *grand*

guignol so vividly portrayed in Mr Meades's article and its accompanying photographs. The trouble is that people have talked so much (and to my mind so glibly) about the social roots of gender roles to the point where the real agony of the transsexual becomes strictly meaningless to them. At best they dismiss it as a projection. They will not accept that the battleground is fundamental reality and meaningfulness. They turn it all into a rather pathetic charade.
Name and address withheld

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Plumbing The Depths
Writing as a keen reader of *Time Out* I am nevertheless deeply offended by your article 'Yesterday's Men' — especially the photographs, which sink *Time Out* to the level of a pornography magazine. Surely this is a cheap means of boosting sales.
Sarah Wollaston, SE1

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