

## Class 11

### JT Leroy

The class discusses the unusual case of [JT Leroy](#).

It's an odd story about misrepresentation of identity. The students in the class thought that a younger generation of media consumers might be more apt to question and doubt Leroy's identity. It was surprising it got as far as it did.

It was extra confusing because what he wrote was not meant as autobiography. It was more a fictionalized memoir. The part that was most deceitful was the story behind the book. How and why did Laura Albert construct Leroy's identity? Was it done to increase revenue? Will we see more of this kind of deception? This story represents different kinds of passing converging; a woman passing as a man who is transitioning from FTM. Leroy insisted it was an art project and a story that had to be told.

### Lockpick Pornography

<http://www.lockpickbook.net/>

The protagonist is very unlikable, but definitely makes people think about gender and sexuality in new ways. This piece can be viewed as humorous, but many in the class had a very negative reaction to it. Does he make the unsympathetic sympathetic? In one scenario he invades women's space through the guise of masculinity; this certainly turns gender on its head.

The second half of the story is certainly problematic, as the author depicts a scene where a high school kid expects to receive oral sex from a woman, and after his eyes are closed, they trick him by having a man do it. This by all intents and purposes depicts a scene of non-consensual sex.

The whole book seeks to "queer the discourse."

### **Continuation of discussion of essays in Nobody Passes.**

#### **"My Kind of Cruising" by Liz Rosenfeld**

Cruising is primarily a gay male activity, in which men show up at a specific place with the sole purpose of having anonymous sex. Bathhouses used to be the primary place where this happened, but cruising happens now in different venues. (i.e. Larry Craig). Rosenfeld records these spaces and then displays them as art. Is this ethical?

#### **"Trans-portation" by Terre Thaemlitz**

Essay is about a transperson who talks to security guards, flight attendants, and asks them if they have ever seen a trans person and records their reactions. Thaemlitz doesn't disclose his/her own trans status. The students remarked that the name Terre is an interesting choice because of its gender-neutral status. This article asks us to question the

relevance of gender. How important is it to our understanding of the world? Terre recorded the interviewees' responses without consent using hidden recording devices and published them (with anonymous identities). Most people interviewed didn't believe they had seen a trans person.

The new body scan machines at airports are extremely problematic for trans people, making it much harder to pass.

### **“Melchizekek’s Three Rings” by Carole McDonnell**

The author is by a black Jamaican-American woman who talks about a literary career to a group of white women. The essay is about the way she and the other women interpret stories very differently. The first example she cited was the movie *King Kong*. McDonnell detected the racial coding used in the movies, which her white friends were blind to and denied.

McDonnell then relates the story of Melchizekek’s Three Rings.

<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0972.html#boccaccio>

The white people in the literary group view this story as a plea for religious tolerance exclusively. The author sees it as a story about discretion and being trapped in a situation. The author continues to ruminate about the nature of privilege and how living in a dominant normative microcosm can change perspective.

### **“Pino’s Father” by Tommi Avicoli Mecca**

This story is about two teenage boys who decided to write a manifesto while at Pino’s house. The protagonist in the story is a rather effeminate boy. Pino’s father comes home and it’s clear he doesn’t like gay or effeminate men. He begins verbally assaulting the boy and then starts brandishing a gun.

### **“The End of Genderqueer” by Rocko Bulldagger**

The author is about an old school butch lesbian who is 32 years old. She is not old by any means, but in the gender queer movement she is a dinosaur. She talks about her respect for people who came before and about the early days of the genderqueer movement in 1999 at conference called True Spirit, where mostly transmen attended.

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ES.269 Passing: Flexibility in Race and Gender  
Spring 2009

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