

Leslie Sherlock  
Trinity College, Dublin

---

**Scott Turner Schofield, 2008. *Two Truths and a Lie*.  
Homofactus Press, 128 pp.  
ISBN: 978-0-9785973-2-0**

---

*Keywords: transgender, gender, feminism, queer theory, memoir, performance art*

Having attended several trans cultural performances,<sup>1</sup> I was particularly struck by the depth, awareness, artistry and timeliness of Scott Turner Schofield's 'Underground Transit' show at my university last year. Schofield, according to his website, is a 'man who was a woman, a lesbian turned straight guy who is usually taken for a gay teenager' ([www.undergroundtransit.com](http://www.undergroundtransit.com)). He is an author and performance artist from the Deep South, USA who critiques culture through autobiography, advocating for social and political change through his award winning<sup>2</sup> solo work. Schofield stands out among trans performance artists in that he successfully enlightens as well as truly entertains. I hoped to find Schofield's written memoir as refreshing, entertaining and educational as his performance.

The highly acclaimed<sup>3</sup> *Two Truths*

*and a Lie* tells the author's personal tales of gender transgression and transition through three performance scripts with a monologue conclusion and a foreword by feminist scholar and queer theorist Judith (Jack) Halberstam. This is the author's first book, having previously contributed to edited collections.<sup>4</sup> *Two Truths and a Lie* provides a genuine alternative to mainstream trans memoir narratives, not only for its unique format but also for the educational information provided, the breadth of experiences detailed and the particularly young age at which the author's transition narrative takes place.

Schofield acknowledges that he is not the first to find performance a useful medium for communicating the complexities of gender, sexuality and trans embodiment. He cites pioneers of modern trans/gender

education,<sup>5</sup> as well as feminist and queer theoretical conceptions of gender as performance,<sup>6</sup> that have paved the way for, and directly influenced, his work. He has taken the concept, established by Kate Bornstein in her 1994 book *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us*, of interspersing performance scripts with trans/gender<sup>7</sup> theory one step further, this time making the theory more explicit within the performance, removing the necessity for commentary and explanations that Bornstein's groundbreaking work required fourteen years previously. Judith Butler's ideas of gender performativity (1990) is taken literally by Schofield, as he exposes the theatrical nature of gender not only for trans people, but for homecoming queens, debutantes and everyone else.

Moving away from the trans memoir tradition of 'suffering' and 'trapped in the wrong body' tales,<sup>8</sup> Schofield candidly and creatively breaks the mould for transgender narratives. He avoids making universalising generalisations about 'the trans experience, instead expressing, 'I wanted to tell a story I was not hearing about the transgender experience I found myself living' (103). While not to discount the suffering and 'wrong body' moments many trans people, including perhaps Schofield, indeed experience, refreshingly the word 'suffer' does not appear once, the book embraces rather than shies away from

queerness, and the author makes a point to assert, 'I was not born in the wrong body' (70). Although transphobic injustice persists, times are definitely changing. Many of Schofield's memoir-writing predecessors 'came out' later in life and had few trans role models. Like some of his young trans peers, Schofield 'came out' and began transitioning during his early twenties. Schofield literally pioneers the new generation of trans memoirs with anecdotes from his near election as homecoming queen, his mother's attempts to be supportive while fearing he was on drugs, and his attendance at three debutante balls – a queer coming of age story for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The three plays are introduced and interspersed with dedications, histories of performances and – in keeping with trans memoir tradition – photographs. The book begins with 'Underground Transit', a poetic literary beauty which is as delightful on the page as in live performance. Set as a New York City subway journey, this piece is a wild ride through multiple genders in one life. Stories conveyed through anecdotes and flashbacks animate fears and emotions, experiences of discrimination and misogyny, as well as comedic quips from Schofield's real life gender journey. Alliteration, imagery and metaphor convey stories that, as the author notes, simply could not have been made up. This starting piece introduces readers to a variety of identities and an unexpected theme

of the book – embracing one’s queerness. Schofield reveals having ‘come out’ as feminist, lesbian, trans and nearly as debutante, but does not make apologies for any of them. He thinks, ‘it’s some kind of defensive convention. We’re taught never ever to mention anything a little queer’ (11).

In ‘Debutante Balls’, we are whisked away to the Deep South, complete with glasses of sweet tea. This second play is a meditation on ‘coming out’, as well as sexuality, ethnicity, class and gender all through the comedic adventures of coming of age, debutante style. The author compares ‘coming out’ queer to ‘coming out’ debutante, and educates us on gender performativity with the refrain, ‘You gotta know how to make an entrance, how to be gracious and take it in stride, if you want to survive’ (36). The piece’s wildly entertaining theoretical musings are as accessible as they come. He also problematises ‘normal’, and includes everyone by speculating, ‘But what if normal people would come out, too? There’d be a place for nose pickers to go, a support group for the chronically tardy...’ (54). While similarly rhythmic and lyrical, story lines in this slower piece intrigue and then digress, interspersed with music, dancing and blaring sirens which are easily envisaged by the reader.

In the final performance piece, a collection of short vignettes comprise ‘Becoming a Man in 127

EASY Steps’. Complex stage settings backdrop this ‘choose your own adventure’ collection of snippets from Schofield’s life which fill in the gaps of the first two pieces with powerful moments of his gendered journey. Armed only with his experience, he tackles contentious issues and educates on various viewpoints and realities. Private moments are revealed through voicemail recordings, letters, stories and intimate encounters; some hilarious, others raw with reality. Blunt and unapologetic, Schofield securely positions himself as a comedian while somberly conveying poignant moments of difficulty. He makes a point to disclaim:

‘I haven’t told you everything at all. I haven’t told you about how I became deeply depressed at age eleven... tried to kill myself twice in high school and once since then... Of course it isn’t easy’ (95).

Schofield’s writing reflects his acting and linguistic skills in providing clear mental images, tear jerking moments and belly laughs.

In Schofield’s monologue conclusion, ‘Are we There Yet?’, he expresses his motivation to put his story, and through it complex concepts like sex, gender and sexuality, out there in a way which would educate his own ‘middle-American family’, as well as everyone else (105). He affirms the book as an extensive collection of his truths,

complemented with a couple of little white lies (but I am not spoiling it!). Did Schofield accomplish what he set out to? I think so. He self-reflexively details how 'post-transition' live performances have opened him up to being misunderstood (including being read as a pre-transition trans woman). I doubt these misunderstandings are limited to the live performances, though. Not unlike the shortcomings he experiences in live performances, some allusions and nuances of his written work will be lost on more general readers and, a typical conundrum of queer work, his resistance to static identity categories can unavoidably result in confusion for those new to concepts of gender and sexual fluidity. Written descriptions of complex stage settings, intimate revelations, dance sequences and musical performances also lack something that I imagine only the live performances adequately convey.

Potential confusion barely detracts from all that the work does accomplish, however, and Schofield's book has indisputably done something to open the minds of the 'perfect audiences' he seeks, 'visible queers alongside sorority girls, jocks, worried administrators, and eager professors' (110). The three performance pieces work well as a book, coming to life through vivid descriptions. The experience feels like a roller-coaster ride, and once picked up, the book is impossible to put down. Having seen one of the

plays live, and now having read the entire collection, I wonder if maybe the written version is preferable for just one, important reason. As a reader, one can relish the work's true poetic beauty and structure, savouring the author's artful use of metaphor and rhythm, while Schofield's live act simply whizzes by.

### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Including trans performances at: Transfabulous, London 2008; Transgender Film Festival, Amsterdam, 2009; ILGA Europe Trans Rights Pre-Conference, Malta, 2009; Transgender Studies and Theories Conference, Linköping, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> According to his website, Schofield has received several awards, including: 'Fruitie' for Off-Broadway Performance; 2007 Princess Grace Foundation Fellowship in Acting; and Creation Fund Commission from the National Performance Network for 'Becoming a Man in 127 EASY Steps' (Schofield 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Schofield's book was listed as a finalist for two Lambda Literary Awards in 2008, and was included on the American Library Association's Rainbow List in 2009 (Schofield 2010).

<sup>4</sup> *Becoming: Young Ideas on Gender, Identity and Sexuality* (Anderson-Minshall and de Vries 2004) and *Self Organising Men* (Sennett 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Such as Kate Bornstein, Judith (Jack) Halberstam, and S. Bear Bergman.

<sup>6</sup> See also Butler, Judith (1990).

<sup>7</sup> Trans/gender is written in this way to acknowledge that trans theory and gender theory are not disconnected and separate

disciplines or ideas. The term 'trans/gender' is intended to encompass ideas incorporated by both 'trans' and 'gender' theories.

<sup>8</sup> A long established tradition that continues today. See: Morris, 1974; Martino, 1977; Hoyman 1999; Ames, 2005; Cromwell, 2010.

### References:

- Ames, J. (ed). 2005. *Sexual Metamorphosis: An Anthology of Transsexual Memoirs*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Anderson-Minshall, D. and G de Vries (ed) 2004. *Becoming: Young Ideas on Gender, Identity and Sexuality*. United States of America: Xlibris Corporation.
- Bornstein, K. 1994. *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Cromwell, S. 2010. *Wrong Body, Wrong Life: Living with Gender Identity Disorder in Ireland*. Cork, MetaCom.
- Hoyman, R. D. 1999. *Rhonda, the Woman in Me: A Journey Through Gender Transition*. Timonium: Pearce.
- Martino, M. 1977. *Emergence: A Transsexual Autobiography*. New York: Crown.
- Morris, J. 1974. *Conundrum*. London, Penguin.
- Schofield, S.T. with foreword by Halberstam, Judith (Jack). 2008. *Two Truths and a Lie*. United States of America: Homofactus Press.
- Schofield, Scott Turner. Bio. <http://www.undergroundtransit.com/Bio.html> (accessed September 19, 2010).
- Sennett, J. (ed). 2006. *Self Organising Men*. United States of America: Homofactus Press.