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## Bring in the Noise

By Jacob Anderson-Minshall  
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Musician Julia Serano is tired of all the femininity bashing and she wants it to stop. She argues that those who decry the value and authenticity of femininity express unconscious patriarchal perceptions. "An important yet often overlooked aspect of traditional sexism," Serano argues. "[Is] that it targets people not only for their femaleness, but also for their expressions of femininity."

It is not, the trans woman contents, her failure to conform to gender norms that others respond to with ridicule. "Instead, more often than not, they mock my femininity. And the vast majority of anti-trans discrimination that I have personally faced is probably better described as misogyny."

A guitar-playing vocalist for noise-pop band Bitesize—whose second album *Sophomore Slump* garnered frequent college radio rotation—Serano says that her transition didn't significantly alter her music. "I don't think it really affected my songwriting or playing or band dynamic in a significant way," Serano contends. But, she jokes; post-transition she has gotten more complements for her guitar playing skills. "I attribute these comments to people's assumptions that women can't play guitar as well as men can," Serano laughs.

After eight years touring the West Coast and perfecting their two-minute-long jingle-like tunes, Bitesize is currently on an indefinite hiatus. The multi-talented poet, musician, spoken-word performer and essayist, Serano (JuliaSerano.com) hosts San Francisco's genderqueer exhibition series *GenderEnders* (GenderEnders.com) and writes for mainstream publications. "I feel that it would be negligent of me to completely ignore more mainstream people and audiences," Serano explains. "After all, that's where all of the messy, front-line activism needs to happen."

One of the notions Serano hopes to eradicate is the assumption that trans people are all alike. "There needs to be more recognition of the fact that transgender is a conglomerate of many disparate subgroups who each face different obstacles," Serano contends.

A former Camp Trans organizer, the feminist sees a discordant trans community reflected in the divergent positionings around Michigan Women's Music Festival's exclusion of trans women. Each sub-group faces unique issues and discriminations with regards to their gender difference, but one thing they have in common, Serano asserts, is that each is expected to lead the war against the gender binary. "It's somehow our duty to blur boundaries and actively confuse straight society's notions of gender," Serano complains. "[Those] who believe that living outside the gender binary is somehow more enlightened or subversive than identifying within it, can't see that they've just created another binary. I want to see a world where all gender identities, expressions and anatomies are respected and valued."

Serano's feminist arguments will be widely disseminated in 2007's Seal Press collection of her essays, tentatively titled *Who's Deceiving Who?: Transsexual Women, Sexism and the Future of Feminism*. The book explores reoccurring themes within Serano's writing. "The first examines why people on the MTF spectrum, particularly transsexual women, tend to be singled-out to bear the brunt of our culture's fascination with, and demonization of, transgenderism."

The essayist argues while trans people are discriminated against for transgressing binary gender norms that is only part of the story. "Discriminating against someone's femininity is still considered to be fair game," Serano says. "The idea that masculinity is strong, tough, and natural while femininity is weak, vulnerable, and artificial continues to proliferate even among people who believe that women and men are equals."

"I argue that it is negligent for feminists to only focus on those who are female-bodied, or for transgender activists to only talk about binary gender norms, as no form of gender equity can ever truly be achieved until we first work to empower femininity in all of its wondrous forms."

Trans writer Jacob Anderson-Minshall, who co-authors the *Blind Eye* mystery novels premiering in 2007, can be reached at [jake@transnation.org](mailto:jake@transnation.org).

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