

Multinoun Nation

by S. L. Hager

I just want people to be happy. One reason why I'm happy is because in my household, all things are possible. Want to be a trans cat osexual? Go ahead! I'm purrfectly happy to meow you by name, but I draw the line at the litter box-- beyond which I will not step--- especially if you haven't covered your poopile. I want people to be what they want to be and whenever they want to be it, which is to say that I believe it's good to be more than one person, place or thing. And since this is South Africa, allow me to say that I believe in a multinoun nation.

But with all of the colloquial gorging on words that have been born out of the need to define and understand the trans-community, comes a bit of socio- fullness bordering on psycho- flatulence. Methinks there are some out there who are bloated to the point of bursting and I wonder: Will there ever be a slenderizing of speech, leading to a digestion of dialogue?

I try to keep abreast (and I do keep a few breasts around for those who feel better wearing a bra, but need to be filled out a bit.) of the trends in terminology, but it has gotten to the point where all the labels, names and neologisms have cross-pollinated and now I'm wary of introducing anyone these days, for fear of offending and confusing people.

Let's have a look at a tiny few examples:

FTM. MTF. Crossdresser. Drag King. Drag Queen. En Femme. Gender. Gender Expression. Gender Identity. Gender Identity Disorder (GID.) Gender Reassignment Surgery (GRS). Hir. Intersex. Gender Variant. Gender Non-Conforming. Gender queer. Gender fuck. Intersex. Sie or Ze. Trannyfag. Transitioning. Transdyke. Transphobia. Transsexual. Two Spirit.

I like the word Hir, a nongendered him/her, but it makes me think of the word hirsute, meaning hairy—however, it is still more economical to introduce one's college roommate as Hir, rather than her/him. Saying things like "it's not mine, it's hershis…” makes one sound a bit confused, don't you think? Sie or Ze are nice ways of describing a nongendered her/him, but there will be those who will complain that they sound too German. I liked the idea (awhile back) of the term Te, but I think the scientific community couldn't manage such a streamlining of thought, so it was rejected. It wouldn't have worked out anyhow, for in this community, we would think of the word Te (T) for testosterone.

Okay, what about the acronyms? Allow me to model a few: "Mom, this is my date, J.R., an FTM. She was an SWF with PMS who had GID, but she had a GRS and now he's FTM, AKA a former SWF with preoperative GID, postoperatively GC (gender-cured.)"

I know we need to explain each other and ourselves. We have a need to enlighten and define so that we can communicate with and understand each other, and so we can be seen for who we are--- it's sort of like wearing a bra that lifts and separates so that the breasts are clearly delineated-- but where do we get to draw the line? For some of my more resistant friends and acquaintances, they have an almost bulimic obsession for labels. I've even been driven to develop a name for the transgendered person who loves me. He is my AAT, which is a shortened acronym for the acronym:

G.B.H.W.L.S.L.P.B.S.M.F.F.P.S.M.A.A.T.N.P.N.—

girlfriend-boyfriend-husband-wife-lover-spouse-lifepartner-brother-sister-mother-father-friend-partner-soulmate-and-all-things-not-previously-noted. Although he is a he and I know he's a he, as does he, polite conversation with the genderly retarded or with those who are aware that he was born with female genitalia has me searching for a low calorie identifier that they can socially swallow and psychologically digest. Otherwise, they become overfilled and frustrated, but the aggravation isn't theirs alone.

Once I really stepped in the S.H.I.T. (she/he/it/they), when I addressed who I thought was a woman, as Madame. They had dropped their change purse, and I had to get their attention to return it to them before they went off in an elevator. (Now, was I just talking about one person, or more than one?) Whoever—stepped off the elevator, snatched their purse and told me that they were not a Madame, they were an Intersexed, Cross dressing, Pretransitional, Pan gendered, Neogyneparachristian, Post tonsillectomized, Lacto ovo, Agoraphobic Hemophiliac (I.C.P.P.N.P.L.A.H.). Or something like that. I stopped listening because I was busy thinking: "Well you S.H.I.T-- as in POO ON YOU for being mean to me when all I was trying to do was help!"

It's hard not to get angry. There are people who call themselves my friends who give me nothing but hassle because they can't understand why my AAT wants "to act like a man". When I tell them that my AAT has been a man since birth, they fall into polite insincerity with an expression of imbecility. And then there are those of you who just want to be left alone so that you can be a man or a woman. A plain, ordinary M or F. I am legally and biologically classified as an F. Although I am really a NEITHER, some say a GV (gender variant), I am content with a one word or one letter identifier. But if I were a transsexual, maybe I would want the right to NOT be called an MTF or a Transsexual, or a transwoman, for example, and instead just be called a woman (Gal, femme, dame, lass, etc). I won't diverge here except to say that it seems like Transpeople will only be granted the right to be called what they wish to be called, such as man or woman, when the mainstream community stops being threatened by what they call fraud. FRAUD?!!!! Doesn't that sound like someone making their problems, yours?

So, what to do? If life were a cocktail party, we could take all the genderfied words and their meanings and put them into a blender (a gender blender); genderize until of a uniform consistency, pour into macho Romanesque chalices, and add little pink parasols. But it looks like diet drinks for dialogue are going to end up sitting around melting and getting sticky enough to trap flies along the rims. Maybe we are at a point in our evolution where we still need lots and lots of words and labels, and since science does need its nomenclature, I guess maybe we had better have on hand lots of syntax snacks. Perhaps, in the big scheme of things (I hate that cliché), it doesn't really matter what we call each other and ourselves, as long as we are happy with what we are called. As for me and my household, I'll refer to you in any way you wish, all you have to do is make your wishes known. I'm not a skinny gal, so a few hundred more high calorie words won't make me break out in saddlebag hips, but if all you want to be is a woman, be a woman. Thinking about becoming a pine tree for the day? Just let me know, and I'll think of you that way, too. After all, I believe in a multinoun nation.

Thank you Brett Beemyn, GLBT Student Services, Ohio State University, for the use of your list of terms.