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## Review of *Men as Women, Women as Men: Changing Gender in Native American Cultures* by Sabine Lang

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**Men as Women, Women as Men: Changing Gender in Native American Cultures.** Sabine Lang. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998. xvii+398 pp. Maps, tables, figures, notes, references, index. \$19.95 paper (ISBN 0-292-74701-2).

Some prefer to read books by going directly to the crux, bypassing any Preface or Introduction. To do so with this book would create confusion, as Lang uses terms idiosyncratically. She defines her terms well, however, presents justifications for employing them, and provides an overview of the study and how she came to write it in both its English and German editions. All this is vital information for those approaching the text.

It has become standard among scholars writing in English to refer to people of mixed, blended, or other genders using first the term for the person's biological sex and then the term for gender enactment: a biological man, for example, who enacts a feminine role has been termed a man-woman. Lang reverses these terms, giving primacy to the role enactment, which she considers to be the most important personal identification, and then the biological sex, which she argues is less relevant. Her argument is well-crafted and makes sense, but may cause readers some initial confusion. It is my only caveat in an otherwise splendid piece of work.

Using scholarly, archival, and her own fieldwork sources, Lang provides a compendium of issues relating to gender identification among American Indian people. She discusses thoroughly the various terms that have been and are being used, their political significance, their social impact, their scholarly meanings, and their redefinitions among contemporary First Nations people. These discussions and examples alone are worth her having written the book and our reading it.

Never losing sight of the cultural components, Lang first presents an extensive critical review of anthropological literature relating to sex, gender, attitudes, and misunderstandings in chapters 2 and 3. Part Two (chapters 5 through 13) concerns gender and biological males; Part Three (chapters 14 through 17)—focuses on gender and biological females. The disproportion between the number of chapters devoted to males and females directly reflects the amount of research that has so far been conducted. Throughout the chapters, whatever their focus, Lang incorporates truly staggering amounts of data, often in tabular and cartographical formats. Part Four, "The Cultural Context of Gender Role Change" (chapters 18 through 21), considers homosexuality and oral literature as well as contemporary treatment of mixed gender American Indians.

Throughout the volume the distillation of scholarly and field sources is impressive. Lang addresses how one is admitted to the community of mixed gender people, prejudices and social sanctions invoked, degrees of permissible freedom from established norms among many different groups of Native people, occupations of mixed gender people, cross-dressing, status relationships, and, in Part One, our conjoint heritage of attitudes and opinions that came to us largely through missionaries, traders, physicians, and (more's the pity) ethnologists. I cannot think of an aspect of Native American gender or sexuality I would have liked to see addressed that is not already here. In sum, Lang's work is a tour de force that will be the standard in Native American gender studies for a long time to come. **Claire R. Farrer**, *Department of Anthropology, California State University-Chico*.