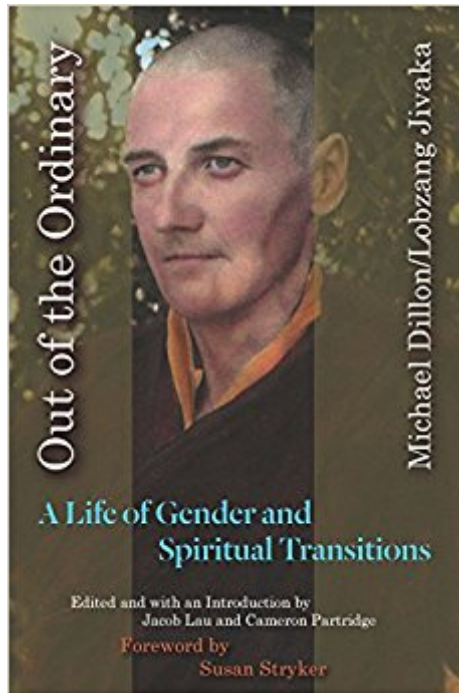




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Out Of The Ordinary: A Life Of Gender And Spiritual Transitions



Synopsis

Now available for the first time—more than 50 years after it was written—is the memoir of Michael Dillon/Lobzang Jivaka (1915–1962), the British doctor and Buddhist monastic novice chiefly known to scholars of sex, gender, and sexuality for his pioneering transition from female to male between 1939 and 1949, and for his groundbreaking 1946 book *Self: A Study in Ethics and Endocrinology*. Here at last is Dillon/Jivaka's extraordinary life story told in his own words. *Out of the Ordinary* captures Dillon/Jivaka's various journeys—to Oxford, into medicine, across the world by ship—within the major narratives of his gender and religious journeys. Moving chronologically, Dillon/Jivaka begins with his childhood in Folkestone, England, where he was raised by his spinster aunts, and tells of his days at Oxford immersed in theology, classics, and rowing. He recounts his hormonal transition while working as an auto mechanic and fire watcher during World War II and his surgical transition under Sir Harold Gillies while Dillon himself attended medical school. He details his worldwide travel as a ship's surgeon in the British Merchant Navy with extensive commentary on his interactions with colonial and postcolonial subjects, followed by his “outing” by the British press while he was serving aboard *The City of Bath*. *Out of the Ordinary* is not only a salient record of an early sex transition but also a unique account of religious conversion in the mid-twentieth century. Dillon/Jivaka chronicles his gradual shift from Anglican Christianity to the esoteric spiritual systems of George Gurdjieff and Peter Ouspensky to Theravada and finally Mahayana Buddhism. He concludes his memoir with the contested circumstances of his Buddhist monastic ordination in India and Tibet. Ultimately, while Dillon/Jivaka died before becoming a monk, his novice ordination was significant: It made him the first white European man to be ordained in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. *Out of the Ordinary* is a landmark publication that sets free a distinct voice from the history of the transgender movement.

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Customer Reviews

“While so much of the history of transsexualism has circulated around and through a few highly publicized lives of trans women, Jacob Lau and Cameron Partridge have made an indelible contribution to the modern histories of gender and sexuality by publishing this autobiography. Their introduction carefully situates the history of one of the earliest female to male transitions and gives us a smart and sympathetic account of the political, social and material complexities of Dillon/Jivaka’s life. This is an astonishing story.” (Jack Halberstam author of *Female Masculinity* and *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*) First and foremost, [Dillon/Jivaka] was a seeker after truth, who traveled wherever his queries led him. His peregrinations from Laura to Michael to Lobzang were all of a piece, as spiritual and metaphysical as they were intellectual and transsexual and medical. (Susan Stryker from the foreword). . . Dillon’s memoir charts his wide-ranging life of education, gender transition, and conversion to Buddhism. . . show(s) continuity of concerns with those of transgender individuals today. (Publishers Weekly) The importance of this work to the history of sexuality and especially to the history of transsexuality cannot be overstated. (Jose Ignacio Cabezon University of California, Santa Barbara) Blocked from publication in the 1960s and then hidden in a warehouse in London, Michael Dillon’s autobiography moldered away for decades in the darkness. Now, for the first time ever, it has burst into print. The book illuminates the life of one of the ground-breaking transgender pioneers of the 20th century. Just important, it is a suspenseful and heart-breaking tale that begins at the English seaside and ends with a mysterious death in the Himalayan mountains. In his gripping autobiography, Dillon finds new answers to enduring questions about gender. At the same time, he never manages to solve the puzzle of his own identity and dies in the pursuit of transcendence. Dillon’s memoir deserves a place alongside the great spiritual narratives, from Augustine to Merton. This edition is beautifully put together, with an introduction and notes supplied by a trio of scholars who have immersed themselves in Dillon’s life history. (Pagan Kennedy author of *The First Man-Made Man*)

Michael Dillon/Lobzang Jivaka (1915–1962) was an English physician, the first female-to-male post-operative transsexual, and a Buddhist monastic novice. Jacob Lau is a University of California President’s Postdoctoral Fellow in Film and Media Studies at the University of California, Irvine. Cameron Partridge is a Lecturer at Harvard Divinity School. Susan Stryker is Associate Professor of Gender and Women’s Studies at the University of Arizona. She has written and edited several books including, most recently, *Transgender History*.

Like the editors, I was introduced to the life of Dr. Dillon by author Pagan Kennedy in 2007. I can still recall the excitement I felt learning about Dr. Dillon’s extraordinary life. That his memoir has finally been published is astounding. Thank you Cameron and Jacob for laboring, nearly a decade, to share with the world Dr. Dillon’s life story in his words and through his lens. His story is a gift to all trans men, and their allies, everywhere.

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