

1977



FANTASIA

FAIR

SYMPOSIUM

"Masculinity - Femininity -
Androgyny * * "

INTRODUCTION

When we first came to Provincetown in 1975 there were lots of questions about who we were and what we were doing here. A lot of questions were asked and few answers came forth because we were unprepared for the honest intellectual curiosity that we had fomented about males who crossdress, who are not necessarily gay.

We decided in Fantasia Fair 1976 to correct that situation by inviting the public to a symposium on the "paraculture." By "paraculture" we mean people--mainly males--who are crossdressers, who are interested in gender role, gender identification, sexual preference and androgyny.

Last year we discussed the issue of "normality" vs. "abnormality" and the use and misuse of the terminology male/female, masculine/feminine, sex and gender. We tried to give the audience some idea of the scope of crossdressing behavior in the United States. The symposium was well received. The potluck supper was excellently prepared. The published transcript contains information we think will help people better understand the people who make up the paraculture.

This year we would like to move on to consider androgyny, masculinity and femininity. Our first speaker comes from California. Her name is Virginia Prince. For almost twenty years she has worked to bring understanding, solace and a measure of happiness to many of us who live with guilt and recrimination for behavior we really don't understand within ourselves. She is the first person to have examined the issues we are talking about tonight. She has lectured all over the world, both to professionals and to members of the paraculture on gender and sexual identity. She has written extensively and in depth about crossdressing and the relationships between general and sexual preferences. She is also a dynamic example of the success that a person can attain in an alternative lifestyle.

Without further ado, I present Virginia Prince.

VIRGINIA PRINCE

I have talked at lots of places, but this is the first time in a church.

There'll be a collection later.

Androgyny is a word which has just come into some importance in recent years. It has been known for a long time, but nobody gave it much thought. And those people who began to give it thought and began to write articles about it frequently are very confused about what it means. The words androgyny, bisexual and hermaphrodite are frequently mixed up, talked about as though they were the same thing, and the confusion is only more confounded.

I developed a way of helping people to understand the difference between these concepts. Most people think that they have people pretty well pegged if they can pick out where they are on the anatomical scale between male and female, and also on the psychological scale of sexual object choice. Most people have no difficulty picking out where they are on the anatomical scale. However there are areas in between "all male" and "all female". Some females who ought to have breasts because they are female are very flat-chested. Some males who ought not to have them do have them, even without the help of outside hormones. Some females who should not be growing beards, moustaches and bodily hair, do. Some males who should, don't. So people fall somewhere between total masculine maleness and total feminine femaleness on the scale of anatomy and physiology.

When Dr. Kinsey examined how people behaved and what they do sexually, he was faced with the problem of what is a homosexual and what isn't. He couldn't find a simple, flat out statement that this is and this is not. He finally concocted his six-point scale which ran from people who were compulsorily heterosexual to those who were compulsorily homosexual. And I use the word compulsion to mean that that's the only kind of experiences they had. He found that there were lots of more or less heterosexual people who once in awhile had a homosexual experience, and some people who had quite a few homosexual experiences. There were also people who were mostly homosexual who once in awhile would make it with someone of the opposite sex, and some who made it more often. Pretty soon he came to the point in the middle where roughly half the time they made it one way and half the time another. So he constructed his six-point scale of sex object choice.

There is a third scale which usually isn't thought about, and this is the scale of lifestyle or gender. The first of these scales--a sexual scale--is an anatomical one, and its midpoint is hermaphroditism, an individual who shows the bodily characteristics of both males and females. The second one is a psychological scale, going from always having sexual relations with the same sex to always having sexual relations with the opposite sex, and the midpoint of that is bisexual.

So now what about the third one, where you can go from what we call masculine lifestyle to a feminine lifestyle, with various points along the way. What's the middle of that? Androgyny. So you see that androgyny is a sociological affair. It has to do with the way

you dress and act and the way you present yourself to other people and how they react to you. It has nothing to do with sexuality or sexual object choice. It is true that people who tend to be to some degree bisexual begin to discover a certain amount of androgyny in themselves. If they are males who sometimes take the passive, receptive role in sex, which is the classical biological female position, they begin to get in touch with some of their "feminine" qualities and feelings. Conversely, a female, who is theoretically the passive-receptive person, who does some aggressive active sexual activity begins to get in touch with some of her masculinity. The sexually passive male and the aggressive female are not androgynous as such, but they are beginning to get in touch with that part of themselves which has been kept under cover.

To summarize, I hope I've made it clear that hermaphroditism is anatomical. Bisexual has to do with sexual object choice, and androgyny is a social phenomenon somewhere between masculinity and femininity.

How do we get to be masculine or feminine? Most people presume that you are born with the potential and more or less the necessity of growing up to be a man or a woman. When all of you were born, none of you were born boys or girls. I hope that doesn't shock you. None of you were born boys or girls--you were either born little males or little females, but a very few moments after the doctor held you up and spanked your bottom so you'd say "ouch" in baby talk, and looked at your genitals and decided that you were a male or a female and told your mother this, the whole process began.

It has been found by psychological research that mothers treat newborn female babies differently than newborn male babies. So that early, right off, the first time she picks up the child she begins to give messages to the child that are messages that tend to separate the males from the females.

Visualize that at the moment of birth, little males and little females have identically the same potential for human expression. I am not talking about those things having to do with sex because obviously males and females are not the same. I'm not talking about those things which may be hereditary. Somebody may have some kind of hereditary disease that the other one doesn't have. Leave that out. I am not talking about pathological conditions. I am talking about the potential for being a human being. Everybody has the same potential at birth for being a human being in the sense of being a non-chimpanzee.

But beginning with the first pick-up we begin to be divided. We talk about "growing up" and we don't stop to think that growing up is a process of dividing up. Because they are members of society, and know what society expects of adult men and women, our parents begin to push us in different directions so that we will grow up to be the kind of adults that we should be according to the anatomy between our legs. Little boys are taught to be little boys and little girls are taught to be little girls. It doesn't come naturally, it comes socially. It comes from your parents and your playmates, your peers, your teachers, the boy's scoutmaster and all the rest of them. But this process is one of dividing up all your total potentials. Because while little boys are learning to be little boys, they are also learning something else. They are learning not to be little girls.

Now every man, gay, straight, long or short, black or white, I don't care where, has a girl within. The expression "girl within" was coined many years ago by Susannah in New

York to refer to the "girl within" the man who is a crossdresser. But it dawned on me quite a number of years ago that every male has a girl within. He has to have a girl within. How else does he know what not to do? How does he realize that little boys walk home from school carrying their books underneath their arm, and girls walk home carrying their books against their bodies. The first time he walks home from school that way he is going to get a little rundown from all the other kids that that's a sissy thing to do, and he learns not to do that, not to pay that price. Every male person in this audience, gay or straight, has gone through the process of finding out what the culture considers to be properly masculine. And he has had to pay a price every time he showed any kind of behavior pattern which was socially considered feminine.

So all the things that you should not do, should not feel, should not express, should not play with, should not dress like, are coded negatively in your inner records. If you take all those things and put them together, they don't spell MOTHER like the song says. They spell GIRL. This is the collection of all negative things--D-O-N'-T--and that DON'T is GIRL.

Every man has a conception of what a girl is in order to know what not to do. The same thing occurs for females, but not nearly so intensely, because in our culture it is certainly nowhere near as socially difficult a thing to do for a female to be tomboyish as it is for a boy to be a sissy. So girls have always had more leniency in being able to do masculine things than boys have to do feminine things, but we go through this whole process so that when we get to be adults we will be in the eyes of our parents, adequate men and adequate women who think like, act like, dress like, do like, and conform like they are supposed to, and in this process we have taken half of our total human potential and buried it.

Most people are half people. The males know all about being masculine and very little about being feminine. The females know all about being feminine and very little about being masculine. We start out with all the potentials the moment we are born and then take off on two different trajectories leading eventually to John Wayne and Raquel Welch. The females don't understand males. The males don't understand females, which is one of the big reasons we have so many divorces.

Now it so happens that some people, some way, for some reason are introduced to their girls within by any of a variety of conditions which I won't bother to enumerate. When we discover that we really do have a girl within, it is not easy to deal with her. I want to point out to you that any male's greatest enemy is not somebody like Hitler, or the police, or Muhammed Ali--his greatest enemy is his own internal femininity.

Theodore Roszak, who among others wrote a book called Masculine/Feminine, said in an article, "The woman most in need of liberation is that woman locked in the dungeons of every man's head."

Those of us who crossdress have discovered our own inner self. She was an enemy. So we feel very guilty. We shouldn't be parlaying with the enemy. We shouldn't have anything to do with her. We should put her down, and we try to put her down. We feel terribly guilty every time we get dressed. And we tear off the clothes and say we will never do this again. I used to do that. I would get all dressed up and enjoy the situation, and then I would get a turn of guilt and I would tear the clothes off and say, "Gee, I'm a boy. I shouldn't be doing this, I'll never do this again." And you know something? I never did do it again--not till next time. And the next time always came. It always

comes because this inner girl is part of you. She is not a disease, she is not a tumor, she is not something that grows on you. She is you.

People who don't understand crossdressing frequently say, "Well, look, you've got all of the pains and the problems and the social disapproval and the hurts of one kind or another that come with being a crossdresser--why in hell don't you stop doing it?"

Well, you can't stop doing it because it isn't something like a bad habit that you can quit doing. You like it because you have discovered part of your own self, and in discovering your own self, you want more of your own self. And so you go back again and again in spite of the occasional purges, in spite of the pain, in spite of the disapproval of parents and everyone else.

It is very, very difficult to stop being a crossdresser once you have met your own inner self. So when we begin to crossdress and meet this girl within, we like her, we live with her, and we are now becoming androgynous.

It is a very interesting thing that all of the books about androgyny in recent years have been written by women. The principle research done by Sandra Bem at Stanford is an example. Women are trying to escape from the limitations that have been placed on women for thousands of years into a world in which they can express some of those qualities they have seen men express. For women moving from femininity towards masculinity androgyny is the proper word to use. But for men moving from masculinity towards femininity, it has occurred to me that the proper word would be the reverse-- gynander. This is a word you don't see around. I think one has to write a book about it just so that people will recognize the fact that this is really what we are.

Androgyny, gynandry, either way, is a word applying to a social phenomenon. It does not have anything to do with sex. Some of the people who write about this don't recognize this. There is a recent book by June Singer entitled Androgyny, A New Approach to Sexuality. This is ridiculous. Dealing with your masculinity or your femininity literally has nothing to do with what is between your legs or how you use it. And yet, people are so stuck in the rut of thinking that sex and gender are the same thing that they cannot recognize that there is another area of human existence which is far more important, and that is the area of gender. If you took all the time spent by the sexiest person you can imagine and added up all the time spent in actual sexual activity, it wouldn't take up one percent of their total living time. But, except when you are asleep, 99 percent of the time you are certainly involved with gender. Everything that you do and say and wear is gender.

Androgyny is really the sum of masculinity and femininity. If you are masculine, you know all about that half. If you are feminine you know all about that half. But when you put the two halves of the apple together you get a whole apple. That is androgyny, or gynandry. I hope you will all think about that and strive for it.

For those of you who are not crossdressers, I want to point out that crossdressing is a means. It is a route. It is not an event. It is not a goal. It is a way of letting the girl within have a piece of the total elapsed time you spend on this earth. People who do not crossdress can become androgynous too. When we recognize **that we can all use our total human potential without having it split down the middle as we grow older, the world will be a much better place. The world needs the best that can be given by everybody that's in it.**

can become androgynous too. Don't think it is denied you just because you're not into the dressing thing. I hope you will become androgynous too. Be a whole person. Be as much as God gave you the opportunity to be.

Thank you.

MASCULINITY-FEMININITY: A Search For Tomorrow Today

Nancy Ledins, Ph.D.

Allow me three notes of introductory scene-setting:

- (1) Richard Burton, in Camelot, bewilderingly asks the question: how to handle a woman? His answer: simply love her.
- (2) St. Augustine erringly announces that a woman is the devil's gateway.
- (3) John Money, in Sexual Signatures, states that, "the challenge is to reaffirm the genital and reproductive differences between sexes as the foundation of the gender stereotypes, to decode into the human stereotypes the sex distinctions of the past that have become straitjackets, and to keep the rest of the gender stereotypes flexible enough to meet present and future change."¹

These three, disparate, short collections are noted to set the stage for our discussion of masculinity-femininity. All too often in the past -- and even into the present, we blur our necessary distinctions by equating female with feminine and male with masculine. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The genetic coding which establishes each of us as a male or female, also, ipso facto, establishes some basic rules: a male impregnates, a female gestates and lactates. Even the last-named item is now suspect due to recent research which shows that men can lactate if given the opportunity to breast-feed. Thus may be demolished another barrier of difference, even as a sexual signature!

Beyond that, an extremely powerful gender coding begins to take place in all our lives. We are acculturated and bombarded with signals from our earliest moments that men are supposed to be thus-and-so, and women are expected to react thus-and-so. As we are all aware, this can reach atrocious and laughable limits: women are not supposed to balance a checkbook, as if some "gender gene" made it impossible for us to add and subtract. Men are supposed to be gruff and bombastic -- as if another "gender gene" built into them the reflex response to be so. Wrong. Acculturation is the name of the game. From earliest childhood, the gender stereotypes are both subtly and directly impressed on us.

To repeat for emphasis: masculinity and femininity is NOT another way of seeing male and female. Until this notion is corrected, there will be as much "anita-bryant" confusion as ever in our society. Sexual preference is entirely different from gender preference. Male-female has to do, among other things, with sexual preference; masculinity-femininity concerns itself with gender identity and gender role.²

Think back to your own childhood. Surrounding you on all sides were the stereotypes, enhanced at times by rewards and punishments. Boys are taught, in very subtle ways, to compete unto death; to be manly and not cry; to

be circumspect in showing affection openly; to tool up for the breadwinner status. Girls, on the other hand, are acculturated to think that crying, weakness, coyness and fragility are to be equated with feminine skills and wiles.³ The upshot, many times, is that both sides become locked into untenable positions.

A soft voice in a man is equated with effeminacy; an attempt to relax is seen as traitorous to manliness. For a woman, seeking a career in the marketplace is second only to being a race-car driver -- neither are things a woman should do.

John Money again notes that gender identity is, "the glue that holds society together."⁴ Or, in the words of Andrew Kopkind, writing about Renee Richards: "The outrage over Richards' entrance into the women's rankings seems to have less to do with any possible defilement of the flower of feminine athletics than with the threat to the process of categorization she poses."⁵ Or, as he states in another portion of the same article: "Just as her (Richards) existence as a changeling raises prickly questions of identity, of masculinity and femininity, of body and soul -- so sensational because they are confounding and, in a sense, threatening."⁶

Having said that masculinity and femininity apply to gender and not to sexuality, let us explore the differences as they apply to the transvestite, the transgenderist, and the transsexual. This is critical because, if not understood, they raise some serious misunderstandings and possible hostilities between the various groups.

The classical transvestite is basically heterosexual and has no wish, nor will tolerate, being considered a female -- either in fantasy or in reality. Sexuality preference is established and agreed-upon.⁷ The same would be true of the homosexually-oriented transvestite. Sexual preference is established. Also, the gender identity of the classical transvestite is clearly defined: I am a man; I am masculine; but I love to wear clothes associated with females (or women). This does not answer the question of why a man would wish to wear the clothes of a woman; why a man would wish to appear as a woman. That is not our purpose here. In fact, we covered that issue at last year's symposium in a talk on "Deviancy and Abnormality."⁸

Our task here is to clearly state that one of the benchmarks of distinction between a transvestite and any other member of the paraculture is that the transvestite is not basically confused about sexuality and gender identity. In short, masculinity-femininity imagery is intact and follows the societal norm for such stereotyping as noted by Money.⁹

Until some few years ago, the immediate shift in thinking went to a discussion of the transsexual after exploring transvestism. This not only created some confusion but actually misplaced and misrepresented a large class of people who are sexually oriented and comfortable in that role, but some who are confused and, at times, disoriented, from a gender perspective. Coming to grips with that issue led to the development of a working definition of a second grouping which we have now come to call transgenderists. That is, people who cross over from one gender role and identity to another. Such a person -- and please remember again that we are not talking about sexual preference -- is indeed a crossdresser BUT the crossdressing carries a far different signification than it does for the classic transves-

tite. This is not just a semantic difference or one dreamt up for the occasion.

A penetrating look at the spectrum of crossdressing reveals some people who not only dress in clothes which we associate with the opposite sex but with the opposite gender. That is, the purpose of such dressing -- for the transgenderist -- is to use the clothing as an essential accoutrement to a deeply held wish to be, at the times of gender change-over, as complete a woman (gender) as possible. Thus, such people are intent on achieving, not only a passable image, but to take on as many, if not all, the gender stereotypes commonly associated with being a woman: gait, deportment, comportment, voice, carriage, gestures, movements, etc. In such a situation, the transgenderist firmly attempts to be, not a man but a woman, not masculine but feminine. The classic transvestite does not really pursue such a goal -- it is enough to be dressed. The transgenderist finds that it is not enough to be dressed but to be accepted as a woman (feminine) as completely as possible.

A transvestite, for example, may be surfacely undetected from the transgenderist -- and barring the female impersonator who creates feminine imagery for a different reason -- the transvestite may hold a drink like a dock worker and think nothing of it; may shout across the room like an auctioneer and think nothing of it. The transgenderist finds that almost reprehensible because something cries within that person to speak as a woman, act like a woman would, move like a woman, gesture like a woman -- in short, to take on and incorporate as many qualities of gender role as possible.

Of the two, the transgenderist is in the most threatening position of all, because sooner or later, that person must come to grips with masculinity-femininity. The transvestite need not; the transsexual, as we shall discuss shortly, already has decided. The transgenderist treads on emotionally thin ice because the movement back and forth in gender roles can be enervating and potentially devastating. Detoxification from one role into another and back again can be painful. Coming to grips with that factor alone can be the difference between gender euphoria or gender dysphoria.¹⁰ I point this out because the key issue at stake for the transgenderist is not a dress or a bra or a girdle but the emotional gender cross-over. The challenge is to make our gender stereotypes flexible so that a gender euphoria can be accomplished with necessary breathing space.¹¹

As noted in the previous paragraph, the transsexual is both sexually and gender-oriented adequately -- although in pain in earlier years before resolution is made to the dysphoria. The transsexual, from earliest years, insists that he or she is both sexually a member of the preferred sex and a member of the preferred gender.¹² Thus, a male-to-female transsexual says: I am female and I am a woman. I am not a male or a man others may think I am or look like. I must correct this tragic mistake.¹³

An interesting side-note is in order. It can begin to clarify the consternation both of society and the transsexual as to why, in an era when ERA and women's liberation are being explored, the transsexual basically says: "I must play catch-up. I do not need liberation from stereotypes. I need the gender glue of the past to help me along. I want to have all the things traditionally associated with the feminine role. I want to

cry at movies and wear dangly earrings and slosh on Jean Natte and wear skirts."¹⁴ As Kopkind notes about Renee Richards: "Some day, ten years from now, she may be content to settle into the gender stereotypes of women at that time, but right now she needs to play catch-up for all the years she missed at enacting the role of woman as she saw it swirling around her while she agonized at being considered a man."¹⁵

This may be unfortunate -- but it is psychologically and emotionally very healthy. A Renee Richards must grow through feminine "puberty" as it were. She has to live out what most women of forty-two have already gone through and wish to be liberated from. Perhaps she will appear unusual for a while wearing her dangly earrings while playing tennis. Actually, she is probably about 18-20 years old emotionally as a woman. Thus, she must develop her gender role more adequately as time goes on. For the present she adheres to an inflexibility of gender role and identity in order to acclimate herself to the hoped-for freedom of finally achieving a longed-for gender in keeping with her image of herself.

The past few paragraphs were not meant as an apologia for Renee Richards or for one "ism" over another. It was meant to clearly distinguish the benchmarks of masculinity-femininity which are gender identities. In fact, this is the crucial point in understanding the differences even here at Fantasia Fair. It does not take very long to realize that this microcosm of crossdressers fits the tripartate mock-up presented above very well. This presentation is not meant to disparage one or the other point on the continuum or to say that one is superior or inferior to the other. What is critical to remember is that femininity-masculinity is far different than male or female. The genetic coding may be clear-cut but the gender-coding can be altered.¹⁶

Part of the current sexual revolution involves a gender revolution -- and if one is not aware of that, tragic mistakes can result. From earliest times we have made these errors. Our task, it seems to me, is to pursue these distinctions so that people who are so involved can ferret out their thoughts better. Hopefully, people who are not involved can achieve a better sense of understanding of the issues. For those not involved in this strange behavior and mode, it may well be that sexuality and gender identity are intact in all areas of social and physical intercourse. We salute you! For those of us involved in any complications regarding sexuality and/or gender identity, may our transitions be emotionally healthy.

I must conclude by going back to my three opening quotations. Richard Burton, both in real life and in Camelot, gave both good and bad advice. How to handle a woman? We would hope that men would simply love us. If he means female, then only the transsexual will really feel comfortable with that answer (as well as the hetero-sexually oriented female.)

Unfortunate St. Augustine hopefully would have new insights today. Neither the female nor the woman is the gateway to perdition. As a gender-oriented woman at this time, I suspect all transgenderists feel Augustine needs help. The transsexuals among us would feel the same. The transvestite, perhaps, may find Augustine's issue to be a correct one.

We would, finally, applaud John Money's caution: not to get caught in

straitjackets but to leave the gender issue of masculinity-femininity flexible enough to meet present and future change.¹⁷ To set the stage for our discussion of androgyny, as well as to tie this symposium in with last year's discussion, I would re-quote Ariadne Kane's concluding remarks a year ago: "I believe that, ultimately, if we are to survive as a group, we have to look away from sexual polarization and the prison of gender to a world where individual roles and modes of behavior can be freely chosen."¹⁸

I cannot plead the case in a better way. Thank you.

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Footnotes:

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3. Money, J., op. cit.
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7. Zavitzianos, G., "Moneovestism: Perverse form of behavior involving wearing clothes of same sex," International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 1972, Vol. 53, 471-477 (quoting Fenchel's position)
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ARIADNE KANE

I thought rather than give my own views related to the subject tonight, since they have been so adequately stated by our two previous speakers, I'd like to read two passages. One, from a book by Betty and Theodore Roszak called Masculine/Feminine which, I think, is a good example of the kinds of things that Virginia and Nan have been exploring with us this evening. The other, are some selected quotes from an article about a woman who has been concerned with trying to explore and perhaps academically justify the concept of androgyny and how it could be measured and what kind of a utopia an androgynous society might yield.

A quote from the first one. It is found in the forward to this book. I think it says a lot of things in a way that has not been expressed before. (Used with permission). "He's playing masculine. She's playing feminine. He's playing masculine because she's playing feminine. She's playing feminine because he's playing masculine. He's playing that kind of man that she thinks the kind of woman she is playing ought to admire. She's playing that kind of woman that he thinks the kind of man he is playing ought to desire. If he were not playing masculine he might well be more feminine than she is, except when she is playing very feminine. If she were not playing feminine she might well be more masculine than he is except when he is playing very masculine. So he plays harder and she plays softer. He wants to make sure that she could never be more masculine than he. She wants to make sure that he could never be more feminine than she. He, therefore, seeks to destroy the femininity in himself. She, therefore, seeks to destroy the masculinity in herself. She's supposed to admire him for the masculinity in him that she fears in herself. He's supposed to desire her for the femininity in her that he despises in himself. He desires her for femininity which is his femininity, but which can never lay claim to. She admires him for his masculinity which is her masculinity but which she can never lay claim to. Since he may only love his own femininity in her, he envies her femininity. Since she may only love her own masculinity in him, she envies him his masculinity. The envy poisons their love. He, coveting an unattainable femininity, decides to punish her. She, coveting his unattainable masculinity, decides to punish him. He denigrates her femininity which he is supposed to desire and which he really envies. And he becomes more aggressively masculine. She feigns disgust at his masculinity which she is supposed to admire and which she really envies and becomes more fastidiously feminine.

He is becoming less and less what he wants to be. She is becoming less and less what she wants to be. But now he is more manly than ever and she is more womanly than ever. Her femininity, growing more dependently supine, becomes contemptible. His masculinity, growing more oppressively domineering, becomes intolerable. At last she loathes what she has helped his masculinity to become. At last he loathes what he has helped her femininity to become. So far it has all been very symmetrical. But we have left one thing out. The world belongs to what his masculinity has become. The word for what his masculinity has become is power. The reward for what her femininity has become is the only security which his power can bestow upon her. If he were to yield to what her femininity has become he would be yielding to contemptible incompetence. If she were to acquire what his masculinity has become, she would participate in intolerable coerciveness. She is stifling under the triviality of her femininity. The world is groaning beneath the terrors of his masculinity. He's playing masculine, she's playing feminine. How do we call off the game?"

The second thing I'd like to share with you is an article that appeared in a recent issue of a psychological magazine called Human Behavior. It is a frank discussion with two harbingers of the movement toward redefining and establishing some basis for the concept of androgyny and trying to put it on a footing so that power structure people, particularly in the helping professions, can feel more comfortable. They frankly admit that it is a stepping stone toward doing away with the terms of androgyny and gynandry. But, since this culture is basically a term- and category-oriented culture, we will have to live with those terms until we can find better means of communication.

The first thing has to do with the studies done by Sandra and Darryl Bem. And the question they ask is, "Is there any basis for saying that human beings are basically androgynous? i.e. that they have essentially characteristics that are masculine and feminine within the same biological organism." What are they? How well defined are they? And, can we measure them in any sense?

The first thing they came up with is the following. "I think it is important to realize that social scientists, like everyone else, have made very strongly rooted assumptions that it doesn't even occur to them to question. It is just like we've now come to be aware that Freud was a product of his culture. Many of his theories about women were much like any other person's living at that time. Sometimes social scientists learn to question assumptions in some little area and manage to make innovations here and there, but in general, they have the same mind sets and the same blind spots that everyone else does. Having established a series of tests that certain kinds of individuals do exhibit androgynous characteristics, and it is unmistakable that they are not just masculine or feminine, they are, in fact, very human."

Sandra Bem then goes on to say that behavior really has no gender but that man or particular cultures find it convenient to gender-label things so that they can slot, not only people but everything within the culture in ways which make it easy and convenient to act. For example, if you know that somebody is a rapist and you can actually identify the characteristics of a rapist, then you should be able to take an action against that person if you need to. And, by the same token, if you know a person is, in fact, a crossdresser, you know what kinds of cues to be looking for and, therefore, you can take appropriate actions. If you use gender as a basis for all these kinds of things, you are running into the difficulties of really making some gross errors based on false assumptions.

Further, Ms. Bem goes on to talk about some other terms which I think have relevance to the discussion tonight. I'd like to open those up and then stop and ask for questions. She says the concept which we have to operationalize is called gender polarity. The second is called gender salience and the third is called generic heterosexuality. Gender polarity says that you do basically believe that sexes are alike and different in some ways. And, if you believe they are different, do you mean men are more aggressive and women are more nurturing, or do you mean something more metaphysical than that and not really definable. This is the sort of lesson which she suspects gets set down in early childhood.

She then talks about the concept of gender salience, ascribing it as follows. She says that when you look at or respond to people in terms of how salient their gender is, you are asking the following kind of question. Emily is her daughter and her daughter is asking mother whether she can go out and play with the boys. And if Emily gets the message that she can go out and play with the boys, she has already set herself up as saying that her daughter must be somehow different than boys. Therefore, it is sort of a fun thing to do, i.e. play with boys. If, on the other hand, the mother says that it is alright for Emily to play with the other children at a certain stage, Emily begins to understand that it's children, not just boys and girls or boys or girls that she must play with, but that they are children. And gradually, we find that children harbor more or less the same kinds of things until adults begin to infuse their own prejudices and points of view on them.

The third area that she talks about has to do with generic heterosexuality. This concept, according to Ms. Bem, asks: how much are you defining the other sex in sexual terms? Is that the core of what they are to you? The generically heterosexual male is the one who walks through life constantly coding women as to their sexual attractiveness. On the woman's side of it, is the woman who is always scaling men as to how interesting they are in regards to sexual attractiveness. This short description can give you some idea of how we use our bodies and to some extent, determine the salience of a person's heterosexuality.

QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE:

Q: How many people are transvestites within the United States? Second, is there a greater interest or lesser interest in this kind of activity or behavior today than there was in previous times?

A: (Virginia) It is impossible to know how many transvestites there are in the country because there is no way of counting them. You can't go around and say, 'are you a transvestite?' However, it is interesting to note that as long as fifteen years ago Sexology magazine which is now called Together wrote a little article in which they indicated that they had more questions about the subject of crossdressing than any other subject which was addressed to them. And, in a little heading at the top of their question-and-answer section, they estimated that at least 10% of the male population were crossdressers.

The term "transvestite" originally meant a heterosexual crossdresser. Now it is used for anybody who crossdresses regardless of why they do, including bank robbers, policemen who go out into the park dressed looking for rapists, and so forth. The other comment to make is that the guesstimates of how many homosexuals there are in the country run between about 4% by Kinsey and about 20% by Jess Stearn, but homosexual behavior is by definition a sexual behavior. It is a sexually variant pattern from the biological. There is no reason to presume, since we've already established clearly for you, I hope, that sex and gender are two different things, that there shouldn't be just as many variants on the gender side as there are on the sexual side. So, since we cannot

pick out how many there are on either side we have to just go along with some figure such as Sexology suggested.

I think that the second part of your question would have to be one's personal opinion. In one sense you might say that the increasing opportunity for men who are not crossdressers to wear their hair long, to wear jewelry, to wear brighter colors, to carry shoulder bags, and so forth, is part of a change. Things which used to be considered to be feminine, might supposedly take some of the heat off and, therefore, since they had that freedom there wouldn't be so many crossdressers. That would be an off-the-cuff way of looking at it. Personally, I don't think that is so because the crossdresser is trying to get in touch with and live comfortably with his own feminine inside. There was a time when you couldn't get crossdressers, me included, into slacks or pants. I remember the first time somebody tried to sell me a pair of ladies' slacks. I would have no part of it. I could wear the pants all day, every week, and why in the world should I wear pants now? But eventually I began to recognize that it isn't the cloth or the cut, but the fact that these were women's clothes. They were representative of women and I could wear those and feel just as feminine as if I were wearing a dress. But, since the purpose of crossdressing is to take a kind of intangible, vaporous concept of my own inner girl and make her real, the putting on of that which is feminine gives her reality, and consequently if men can now wear long hair and necklaces, they are still men's clothing in the same sense that pants are perfectly effective feminine clothing. So I don't think that there would be any lessening due to the fact that men now have somewhat more freedom. If anything, I would think there would be more today and probably more and more as we get less and less masculine and feminine and more and more androgynous.

Q: Is transvestism a result of fantasies of utopia or a portion of your humanity and with a great deal of lessening of that oppression, or would it be more likely to have less meaning to express your girl-self today?

A: (Virginia) If that is addressed to me and I gather that it was, you can't say that crossdressing is the result of suppression so to speak, as though that were a cause and effect kind of thing. All men suppress their femininity. The only difference between ordinary non-crossdressing men and the crossdressing kind, is that the crossdressing kind have discovered it. Some event like going to a New Year's Eve party dressed as a girl or taking a part in a school play at school in which you take a girl's part or even just plain curiosity when you walk down the hall when the folks are gone and there's your mother's slip on the bed and you wonder, "gee, what would it feel like to wear that." It takes any simple little thing that gives you an opportunity to begin to feel, "gee, this is what girls wear. I feel like a girl." So, it is not that the suppression causes the transvestism, it's like putting the lid on the pressure cooker. The pressure is there and when you find a way of taking away that little weight on the top, the steam comes out. And that's what the transvestite is doing. He's just found a way of letting some of the pressure off.

Q: Aren't you taking a position that is really foreign to our thinking, and, to some extent, wishful thinking?

A: (Virginia) Well, that's the other half of your question, in effect. You're talking about the utopia position. It may be sad news to some of the transvestites in the audience. I think that we are an obsolescent species. We are going out of existence. A few generations from now, a few decades from now, there won't be any need for transvestites because people will no longer care. Now, at the present time, unfortunately, the movement has all been from the feminine toward the masculine. The women are now not only wearing masculine-type clothes but doing masculine-type things and pushing the whole thing toward masculinity. As a matter of fact, I'll make a remark I made somewhat facetiously that if you look at some of the young girls around today and the kind of clothes they wear and the things they do, they look more like men to the point that one might prognosticate that sometime in the future, the world will be entirely populated by men, but half of them would have vaginas.

Q: Do you dress this way all the time?

A: (Nan) I do not dress all the time this way. At the present, if I heard the question correctly, I'm in a professional capacity in state government, so I don't think it would be quite acceptable. In short, I would get fired I'm sure.

Q: When do you dress then?

A: (Nan) When I get home, and on weekends, and in the evenings, at Fantasia Fair, when I go to New York to help on a workshop or something of that sort.

A: (Ariadne) I'm a self-employed person, so options are open to me that are not normally open to people who are employed in the society at large. This is not to say that I do most of my work in the role of Ariadne or in this particular mode of dress, but when situations arise that require me to do a workshop or do some other kinds of activities related to the work of the paraculture or the Foundation, professionally I dress accordingly. At other times I have the option of dressing in my "male" clothes. I don't put down male clothes over female clothes. I just have a feeling that I can wear either when I want to and feel comfortable in both modes.

Q: Do you advocate one style of clothes for men and women?

A: (Ariadne) People use the term unisex clothing. Well, that is a misnomer of course, but there are things that are unigender clothes. A lot has to do with textures of fabrics, cuts, what kinds of things do you want your body to express, etc. If it is big breasts, you wear clothes which make you have big breasts. If you want to emphasize your masculinity or how "well hung" you are, you wear clothes according to that. If you want to dress very demurely or very attractively

for a certain kind of function, you would dress according to those modes. This is the way we're trained. The responses we get are so because we're trained to look at clothing and say, 'ah, very sexy broad,' 'ah, well hung,' 'ah, real nebish.'

Q: Aren't there people who just wear what is convenient and comfortable without any hidden or deeper meaning?

A: (Virginia) Yes, there are people who do that. You could look down the street sometime and find two people walking side by side and they are both wearing blue jeans and they're both wearing a faded, blue denim shirt and the tails are out, and they're both wearing flat shoes and neither of them are wearing earrings. They both have long hair and nobody is wearing makeup -- what the hell are they? Well, you can only find out since they are not wearing such tight pants that demonstrate the hungness of the male and they are not wearing a low, dress like I'm wearing so that you can tell from cleavage, but if you do get a lateral view, you usually can see which one is which. So you can still tell. Besides which you can usually tell because the facial features are often sufficiently different.

They don't care. They are simply wearing clothes either to hide their anatomy or to keep warm. And they really don't care. Now this is really a very interesting area for discussion and we probably haven't time to go into it at length, but I've always been interested in what those persons self-concept is when the clothing you wear is a message to somebody. It says something and those people are just kind of hiding in nebulosity, in commonness, in a crowd. They are not saying anything about themselves and I wonder whether they really have a very high opinion of themselves.

Q: But isn't it equally discomfoting to wear clothes not assigned to your sex by society?

A: (Virginia) You can't really put the rest of the world out of the picture and say that I will just do what I please in my own way. Persons usually like to be thought well of by other people. And if they get so lost in the crowd that they don't have any characteristics that stick out (whether a man or a woman), then I don't think they care very much about themselves. And they certainly don't care about telling other people what they are. Now that's not an argument for getting into tight pants on the one hand or the cleavage on the other. I merely think that people ought to say something about themselves if they have anything to say about themselves.

I'd like to go back to the question that the other two answered. What they both said is characteristic of practically all transvestites. It is no longer a characteristic of me. I have lived as Virginia completely full-time for the last ten years. I no longer crossdress. These clothes are not the clothes of the opposite gender according to the definitions in the book. They are my clothes. I not only own them legally but they are the only clothes I've got and I wear them all the time. However, for the non-crossdressers in the audience, I am a very special case so to speak. In other words, there are a very few people like my-

self who live as women full time. Because all the time when I had a job, I did as the other two speakers have said. I went to work as Charles and I dressed only in the evening or on weekends or trips or when I was going to give a lecture or something of that sort because the rest of the world doesn't understand that sort of thing.

A side comment: there is a person in Washington, D.C. who is the curator of physics at the Smithsonian Institute who is a crossdresser and when the federal civil service people finally got around to ruling that you couldn't discriminate according to sex, she just came out of the woodwork and went to court and changed her name to Susan and she goes to work every day as the curator of physics at the Smithsonian Institution as Susan. And the hell with you she said. But all of the squares in the Institution can't deal with something like that and they are desperately trying to figure out some way to get rid of her. Which is why the transvestite doesn't usually stick his neck out that far in crossdressing, and has to live a socially approved life as the gung-ho man in the situation.

There is one heck of a lot of homophobia in this world. The world goes on two false assumptions. Number one, that all homosexuals are effeminate and swishy. Which, obviously, is not the case at all. We've got some people out on Muscle Beach in California that could knock out Mohammed Ali and they are as gay as anything. On the other hand, they take the other assertion that anybody who does anything feminine or has any feminine interests is, ipso facto, gay. Both of these assumptions are dead wrong. But, since our culture has always buried the gay culture due to general ignorance, as soon as somebody finds out that we like to wear dresses or we think pink is prettier than blue, all of a sudden you're a queer and they lay on us all the things they lay on gay people.

And so, there is great pain involved and there is a lot of penalty. And you get fired from jobs and divorced by wives and disowned by parents and all kinds of things. So it's very nice that the world is gradually beginning to see that things called masculine in the past can be done by women, and things called feminine in the past can be done by men. Some men will actually fry bacon on the kitchen stove these days! Now, it's great frying steaks out on the barbecue. That's the "man's job" but they won't cook on the kitchen stove!

Q: Why can't girls wear jeans and shirts and flat shoes? Why do clothes have to say male or female? And why do you always drop all the blame on women?

A: (Virginia) I believe that is addressed to me -- since I said some of those things. I will defend myself! I didn't mean that women shouldn't wear blue jeans or shirts or anything of that sort. I was responding to the kind of question that was asked about people who wear clothing that is so un-descriptive that you really can't tell anything about them. I was trying to reply specifically to the specific question asked about people who dress in such a way that you really can't determine whether

they are male or female. I could care less what kind of clothes girls or boys wear. That's their thing. I merely say that there are people whom I have seen around, who really don't seem to care very much about themselves. They don't give any kind of a message about themselves. I can't determine anything about them. They are lost in a kind of hazy cloud. I really kind of feel that there are people in this world who tend to get into a hazy cloud so that they won't have to say anything about themselves. Now that is their right, that's their privilege. I was merely making an observation.

Now, your second point was when I said that women turned from loving to vicious. Well, I don't know where you are in the category of things, but I'm thinking specifically about heterosexual wives of crossdressers. You shouldn't feel put upon because those of us who have had this happen to us and have watched it happen to others, if you're not that way, more power to you. I'm all for a woman who is sufficiently understanding to say, 'hey, I can't deal with your transvestism, but you're still a nice guy and we can't live together, so let's just be calm about the whole thing and cut the blanket down the middle and go our ways.' That's the way it ought to be done. But, unfortunately, it is too often the other way around in which the wife has found out about this and instead of keeping it between the two of them, she gets in the court and tells the attorney, who tells the newspapers, who tell the neighbors, who tell the boss, etc.

Thirdly, I am not putting women down. You are taking this much too personally. You may think of me in a strange way from what I said. I am very much in favor of women's lib. I belong to NOW. I deal with it all the time and I'm all for women. My complaint is that women are making big movements toward the androgynous middle and men are making little bitty movements. It so happens, therefore, that the men are staying where they are. They're still wearing certain kinds of clothes, acting certain ways, feeling certain ways, and women are moving toward this to the point that if something doesn't change eventually, as I say, everyone will look about the same. The other half of this, I thought you would get the implication -- is that I want the men off the damn dime and let them move toward the middle too so that when we end up we will have people who are people and we won't have to worry about whether they are males or females, except when they go to bed. We won't have to worry what your sex is if you're going to fly an airplane or become a brain surgeon or do anything else. Heavens, I'm all on your side when it comes down to women's lib.

Q: Do you feel that society is becoming more accepting of crossdressers?

A: (Virginia) Well, you're asking both a general question and a question specifically about yourself. Now, when you or any other crossdresser does crossdress, you, of necessity, are getting in touch with your own feminine self. You are doing something that your man-self wouldn't do, not only in the act, but you're leaving behind all of the problems and the concepts of masculinity that you were doing all week in your job and in your interaction with people. All of a sudden you are becoming another person. You're building up this part of yourself, not

in competition with, but in parallel to the part of yourself that the world knows. Jane is against John; Jane lives a little bit more and she becomes more and more of a person. Now, as this goes on, you can't help begin to look at the world a little bit from where women look at it because you're getting a little bit into their world. In the ten years I've been a woman I've learned a hell of a lot of things which I just tried to reply to in answering the previous question. I've seen the world entirely different than the way I used to see it. So, you're moving toward androgyny when you do this.

Now, the other question was a general question about the reaction. I'm quite with you. I'm very well aware that not only Anita Bryant, but Phyllis Shafly and the John Birch Society and a whole lot of other things all point to a reaction coming up. In the last issue of my magazine I wrote an editorial saying that all minorities, whether they are sexual, religious, racial, or whatever, everybody is a member of some kind of minority. We had all better get together and do something to stop this reaction or pretty soon all of us are going to be put down. It isn't a case of this minority or that one, we'll just get knocked off one at a time until we get right back to the way it was in grandpa's day. However, we're dealing with this kind of a situation in which you have a pendulum. Now, in Victorian times it was like this and little by little this pendulum has come down. In the last twenty years it kind of swung over here til now we have a very liberal, free-wheeling, open society. And what we are talking about now is that the tendency is there for the pendulum to swing back a little bit. And it will. It always does. But, after it has swung, it will then swing this way and it will swing further. So I see an androgynous situation, the disappearance of gender, as an inevitable thing. It will come. When, I couldn't tell you. It looked like it was moving real fast. Now it has begun to slow down. And it will back up a little bit. It's evident and I found it in a very strange place. I went into Orbach's in L.A. and I found that you can buy satin panties. Now what does that seem to have to do with the situation? For a long time you couldn't buy satin. And, furthermore, you go into the shoe store next door and you find not only high heels but narrow heels. What is the message? The message is from the point of view of the manufacturer that women ought to get back to being women. The dainty, fragile, little things that men enjoy. This is a movement, an anti-women's lib, regressive, kind of thing. It may be great for us. We may think that's fine. Now we can buy pretty heels and satin panties and all that sort of stuff, but socially speaking, it's a regressive movement.

END OF SYMPOSIUM

