

Power and Vulnerability; The Third Sex.

Niamh Murphy,

Faculty of Design ,

Department of Fashion and Textiles,

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Niamh Murphy;

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Introduction

In an attempt to understand the subtleties of gender distinction, this study investigates society's attitudes towards gender diversity and the relationship between gender perceptions and appearance. Clothing provides an appearance which identifies character traits and gender distinctions. Cross-dressing is the changing of these gender distinctions which result in altered perceptions of sexuality and gender. It can be seen through research that certain trends in cross-dressing have occurred. This study looks at the social aspects of cross-dressing, examining why society decides to approve or disapprove of cross-dressing, revealing the factors which influence society's attitudes and their relationship with gender conventions. The psychological aspects of cross-dressing are undertaken in order to understand why people feel the need or necessity to wear the clothes of the opposite sex. Examples are given of cross-dressing for pleasure, subjective cross-dressing and the necessity of cross-dressing as a means of gaining employment. The motives of contemporary cross-dressers and their lives are examined briefly to establish society's influence on them, and female cross dressers highlight how women wearing men's clothes are perceived as different to men in women's clothes.

Gender

Gender is the differentiation between masculine and feminine as opposed to sex which is the difference between male and female. This crucial difference has to be understood in order to interpret our society that as a whole amalgamates sex and gender into a single identity. Society's gender conventions, what it considers to be masculine or feminine, can and do change from time to time. Clothing is seen as the visual representation of gender and a reinforcer of the physical differences between men and women. Consequently, gendered dress indicates sexual inequality as man's clothes symbolise power and authority while a woman's value is measured in physical attractiveness. When women join the workforce, they wish to assume power and authority also and borrow male gender symbols by adopting masculine styles of dress¹. The interpretation of women's clothes from men's styles throughout the centuries is seen as a change of gender image; it seems to be in a constant state of a flux compared to gender conventions. Gender images change due to fashion, often changing from season to season, whereas gender conventions change due to society and are only seen in retrospect. A comment in *The Times* in 1984, during the eighties gender-bender culture describes the connection between gender conventions and gender images.

"We are experiencing the breaking down of traditional barriers between the sexes, and can perceive these changing mental attitudes reflected in street fashion." (O'Brien, 1991, pg. 96)

Societies gender conventions have changed considerably over the centuries. The biblical versions of man's evolution is that God created Adam as an image of His perfection and Eve was created from Adam's rib. Genesis states "male and female created he them". God is stated to be male, so that from the beginning there have been gender distinctions. The male is considered to be perfect and the woman is created out of this perfection. Plato's theory on the creation of mankind in his

¹ A woman will often wear a skirted pin-striped suit in dark blue or grey. Hat and shoe styles have also been borrowed from men's styles.

'Symposium' tells of a curious means of evolution which was quite different to before.

" ' In the first place, there were three sexes -- male, female and hermaphrodite -- and 'each human

being was a rounded whole, with double back and flanks forming a complete circle..... Their strength and vigour made them very formidable, and their pride was overweening; they attacked the Gods, and Zeus retaliated by bisecting them. Man's original body having been cut in two, each yearned for the half from which it had been severed [and] it is from this distant epoch.... that we may date the innate love which restores us to our ancient state by attempting to weld two beings into one and to heal the wounds which humanity suffered.....

Those men who are halves of the beings of the common sex, which was called.....

hermaphrodite, are lovers of women..... Women who are halves of the female whole direct their

affections towards women and pay little attention to men [and] those who are halves of the

male whole pursue males' "

30-32)

(Rolley, 1991, pg.

According to Plato there are not merely two genders and two sexes, but three sexes, and, as he argues, each one seeks its partner in the pursuit of a whole being. Unlike today's belief in two sexes, society until the seventeenth century was adamant that the hermaphrodite existed. *De Spermate* was a series of writings on gender and was prevalent in Europe from the twelfth to the sixteenth century. It believed that the womb was divided into seven sections and whichever of the sections the egg fell into produced various permutations which determined the sex of the child.

" If the seed fall into the right - hand part of the womb, the child is a male However, if a weak

virile seed there combines with a stronger female seed, the child although male, will be fragile in body and mind. It may even happen that from the combination of a weak male seed and a strong female seed there is born a child having both sexes. If the seed falls into the left - hand part of the womb, what is formed is female..... and if the male seed prevails, the girl child created will be virile and strong, sometimes hairy. It may also happen in this case that as a result of the weakness of the female seed there is born a child provided with both sexes"

(Epstein; Straub, 1991, pg.

79)

Society considered and catered for the third sex in the same way as the male and female. Although in 1545 a text 'Birth of Mankind' was published, which rejected the theory, by the mid - seventeenth century midwives still believed the former .

So also did societies gender conventions change in a period of ever - changing beliefs². By glancing at the prevalent fashion throughout the centuries this was evident.

In the fifteenth century fashions were so fantastical and absurd that the sex of a person was unidentified from any distance. A mere sixty years later, gender conventions had changed so much that it was considered an outrage for women to dress in a similar way to men. At the end of the sixteenth century both men and women wore ruff collars, jewelled and slashed bodices which made them appear flat-chested and projected an androgynous look. In contrast, the seventeenth century was fashioned by the wearing, on men, of ringlets, stockings, frills, lace and gloves, which was ultra feminine. Until the seventeenth century, it was deemed that all persons were capable of desiring both genders and those who choose their own gender were known as hermaphrodite. Christian teaching stated that persons may only have sex with their opposite gender, and within the ranks of marriage, for the church believed sex was purely for procreation. It proposed that hermaphrodites choose their own gender and select their sexual partner from the opposite gender only.³ Then, from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century a transition occurred which dramatically changed gender conventions. The existence of a third gender became accepted. It was that of the passive transvestite effeminate male who desired men exclusively. This contradicted previous theories as there were now three genders and subsequently, the hermaphrodite disappeared leaving only two sexes.⁴ This third gender was known as the sodomite or 'molly'. It took another century before the female equivalent, the sapphist, or 'Tommy' became acknowledged - and even then not widespread.

There have been few gender conventions changed since then, but we have seen a great many gender images change with fashion. The twentieth century

²There was much belief in folklore and superstition.

³If they subsequently changed their own gender and subsequently their sexual partner, they were accused of sodomy.

⁴societies attitudes and confusion about the new gender caused the male fear of effeminacy to surface, which was a factor in the dismissal of the hermaphrodite.

acknowledges that there are two sexes - male and female but there are four genders that of heterosexual man and woman, homosexual or gay man and lesbian woman. There are certain subsections within these genders which are particularly influential to the renewal of gender images. They are the transvestite who takes sexual pleasure in wearing the clothes of the opposite sex - and are usually heterosexual⁵ with no desire to be a woman; transsexuals who feel they are trapped in the body of the opposite sex and can identify completely with that opposite sex; and the Drag Queen who is a female impersonator and is usually gay.⁶

A very unusual case of gender ambiguity is Englishwoman Christie Elan-Cain, who firmly believes she was born androgynous, neither male nor female.[ill. 1] She has gone through a series of operations to have her breasts and womb removed and now plans to have her ovaries removed and undergo electrolysis to remove all her body hair. At the moment she shaves everything except her eyebrows and eyelashes. Although most people would consider her behaviour to be a form of self-mutilation, she regards her transformation as very natural and a means of achieving her true identity. (McKay, 1992, pg. 41) Drag Queens, transvestites and others who are separate from the norm, become very influential to gendered dress and indeed are responsible for the popularity of cross-dressing in today's society.

⁵Transvestites are not always heterosexual , examples of gay transvestites are shown in chapter 4

⁶There are of course some exceptions to this, Barry Humphries, better known as Dame Edna Everage, is heterosexual and married.



1. Christie Elan-Cain wishes to be part of the androgynous race.



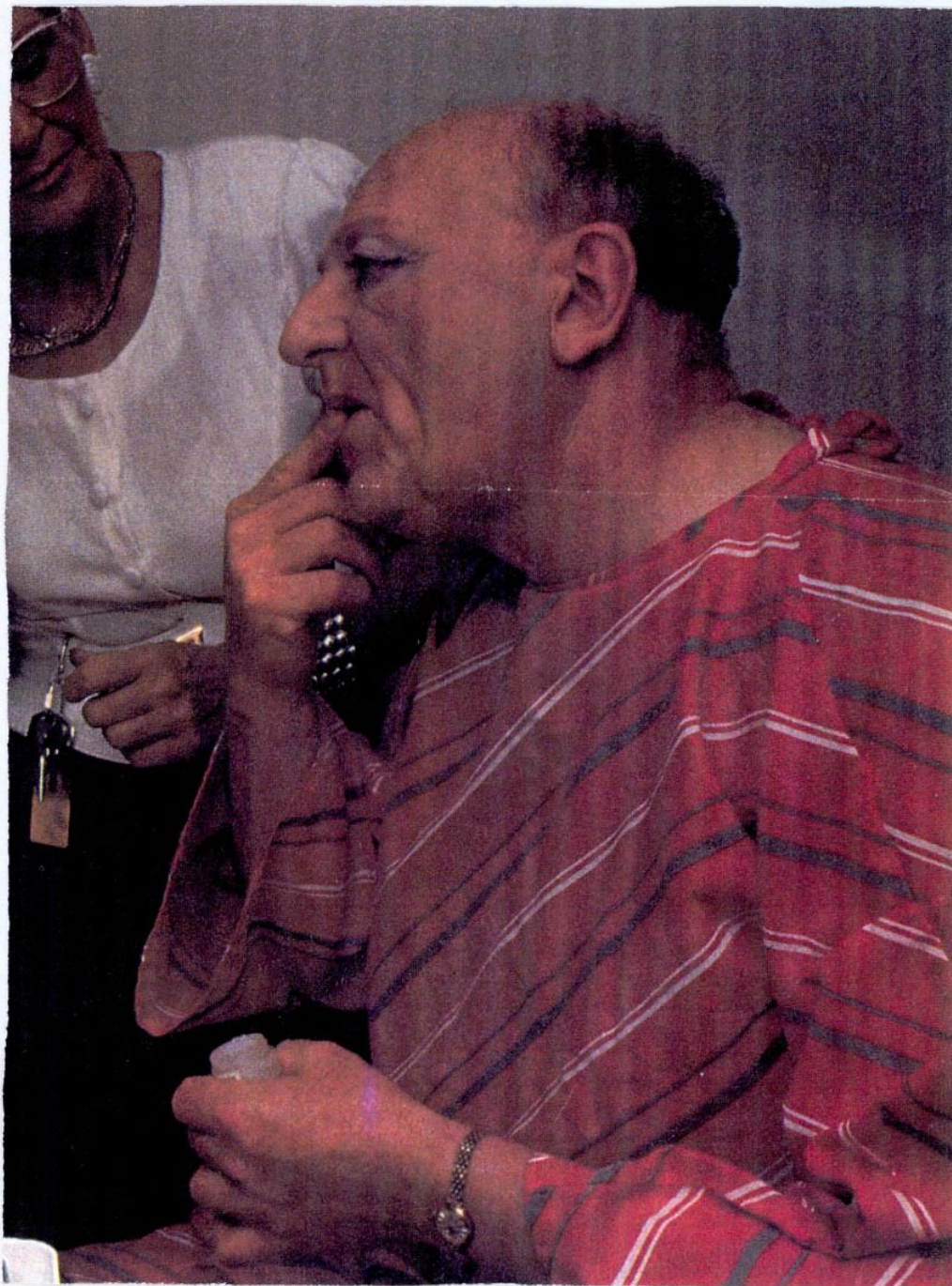
Psychology

What make a man want to look like a woman? Louisa Young⁷ describes some modern day transvestites. Walter is sixty , heterosexual and is thirty years married.[ill. 2] He was born with such a love for his grandmother that he has created a character, Anne, to personify that.[ill. 3] Mark is a twenty-eight year old London banker and transvestite. Louisa explains that Mark feels a man should be strong, tough, unsympathetic, constantly responsible, aggressive, hard working, silent and insensitive. Mark has isolated his gentler side and created his alter ego, Marion, to personify it. When Mark is Marion she is old-fashioned, wears frilly underwear, is very kind and communicative, flirts shamelessly and doesn't have any responsibilities. With the help of his psychiatrist he is trying to re-integrate his double persona into a single unit. (Young, 1992, pg. 54-60) Martin Gore, member of eighties rock group Depeche Mode, explains that he finds male dress very boring and feels restricted by the male code of acceptance. He doesn't see his cross dressing tendencies as 'such a big thing', and can frequently be seen in dresses, diamante jewellery and black nail varnish.⁸ (Rapport, 1989, pg. 76-77.)

By comparison the nineteenth century didn't understand transvestism as we do today, the word was not in general use and it was not considered to be "sexually deviant". Therefore there was a certain naivity about the subject which can be determined throughout the references in this chapter from medical journals in the late 1800's and early twentieth century . Peter Farrer attempts to highlight why people wish to wear the clothes of the opposite sex in a series of magazine correspondence entitled *Men in Petticoats*; The letters range from 1870 until the early twentieth century, and the majority of them are of men describing their delight in wearing women's clothes. People wrote to say the letters were phoney, a hoax devised for publicity. Whether the letters were real or not was irrelevant at first. It must be stated that prejudices against cross-dressing today aren't comparable with those in Victorian times, and Victorian implications of sexuality

⁷in her article, " Transvestites ", for *Woman* magazine.

⁸Martin says that he is considered gay because of the way he dresses, but claims that girls prefer effeminate males nowadays.



2. Walter.



2



3. Walter as Anne.



3

were of a more innocent nature. Complaints by women of tight lacing brought forward comments by men on the subject, such as the reply in *Modern Society* of a man's curiosity of how it feels to be of the opposite sex."(Farrer, 1987, pg. 19) In 1867 another man assured readers of *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* that "the sensation of being tightly laced in a pair of elegant, well made, tightly fitting corsets is superb." (Farrer, 1987, pg. 4) Women endured pain and immobility to achieve the fashionable sixteen inch "wasp-waist". Perhaps men were envious of women's discipline in aspiring to the confines of society's conventions and wished to imitate that, as one man wrote in *The Family Doctor* in 1886, "ascribing the desire to wear the clothes of the opposite sex to the desire of one sex to imitate the other."(Farrer, 1987, pg. 12) At this time, it was increasingly popular for men to wear stays, more like a large belt than a corset, for medical and practical reasons.⁹[ill. 4] By the end of the nineteenth century men were exposing their feelings about wearing corsets. In a letter dated 19th August, 1893, one gentleman considered it " delightful to wear the apparel of the opposite sex" and explains how he "enjoys the knowledge of what he is wearing underneath his outer garments."(Farrer, 1987, pg. 16) It seems that Victorian men were taking pleasure in the feel of the lacy underwear, that was so different to their own, in a similar way to the modern-day transvestite, although there were no pre-conceived ideas as to what transvestism was, and it certainly wasn't publicly discussed.

In reply to these bold statements were many condemnations of the wearers of stays. Cross-dressing was seen to be a sign of intellectual and sexual weakness from which curiosity was the main factor to blame.(Farrer, 1987, pg. 16) The consequence of the awakening of the topic brought many other stories to people's attention; Walter¹⁰ describes how he had been forced into a corset at his Austrian School, but after a few months he grew to like it and has worn one ever since. Men wrote of their experience being brought up as a girl. One man was brought up by an aunt who hated men and rough boys and thought he would avoid being bullied

⁹Men wore corsets to support their back in outdoor activities such as horse-riding; to diminish a spreading waistline and to produce a fashionable slim figure.

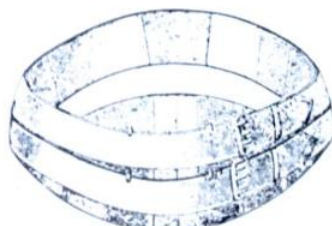
¹⁰Not to be confused with the Walter mentioned in chapter one.

MADAME DOWDING,

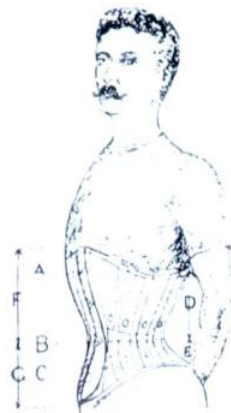
3 & 10, CHARING CROSS ROAD (Opposite the National Gallery Trafalgar Square),
Ladies' Tailor, Corsetiere, and Court Dressmaker.



No. 1 THE MARLBORO

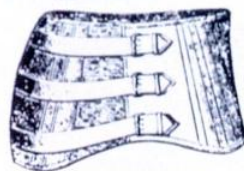


No. 2 THE MILLER

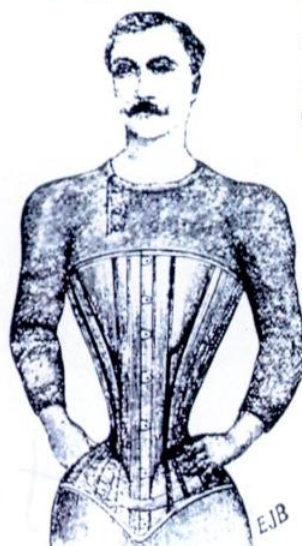


No. 3 THE KITCHENER

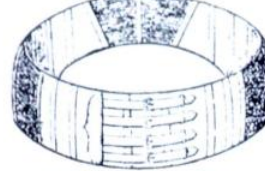
A 36in.
B 24in.
C 36in.
D 9in.
E 4in.
F 10in.
G 5in.



No. 5 THE HUNTING BELT.



No. 4 THE CARLTON



No. 6 THE SLEEPING BELT



No. 7 THE QUEEN OF CORSETS.

In the Improved REJANE shape.
From 21 to 7 guineas. Silk skirt to match from 30.



No. 8 THE BULLER.



No. 9 THE IMPROVED REJANE CORSET

For Obesity.
Price from 38s. to 74 guineas.

Made to order in Silk Couture, from 2 guineas.
The improved Rejane Corset, designed by Madame Dowding, is declared by several of the West End doctors to be the most perfect of any "anatomical" Corset, yet invented, and supplies a long felt requirement to those habitually inclined to "lump-point." This new Corset has been tried with marvellous results by ladies inclined to obesity.

All these Belts are absolutely Hygienic and can only be procured from Madame DOWDING, the Sole Inventor and Designer.
Samples can be executed under seven days notice. The demand for these Corsets is daily increasing, and is, indeed, a great satisfaction to the Inventor.
Madame DOWDING begs to thank the numerous West End Tailors for their kind recommendations. All Communications STRICTLY PRIVATE in Belt Dept.



if he were dressed as a girl. Another man tells his story in *Society*, 1st April, 1900, about how he was adopted by a wealthy lady who on a whim dressed him as a female to accompany her on a long trip abroad.

"I had to endure three years of this bondage, and became so soft and effeminate that, when the death of the lady who adopted me made me independent, I went back to the garb of my own sex with reluctance and difficulty." (Farrer, 1987, pg. 42)

Its incredible to think that by merely wearing the costume of the opposite sex that one could envisage themselves to be like the opposite sex both visibly and psychologically. Boys were also brought up as girls out of hardship. In poor families the young children often wore the 'hand-down' clothes belonging to their elder brothers or sisters, of the opposite sex. A woman tells of dressing her son as a girl for years so as to inherit property, which due to a condition in the will, would only be left to "the female issue". Another woman, a widow who bought a girls boarding school, educated her son there, as a girl, for economic reasons. The son, who wrote the correspondence in *Society*, on April 21st, 1900, says he was always aware of his mother's decision to dress him as a female, but when he finished school he found he couldn't adjust back to male dress.

"I felt so uncomfortable that, whenever my mother and I were alone, I would resume my female dress, and have never discarded the underclothing.....I still continue to do so beneath my ordinary attire." (Farrer, 1987, pg. 42)

The examples of cross-dressing laid out above, have all been subjected onto boys for various reasons; they did not choose to wear female clothing, but having done so, it had affected them so much that they continued to wear the clothing. They saw nothing wrong in their actions and this consequently influenced the gender conventions leading to a slightly more accepted view of cross-dressing in the following decades.

Another group of cross dressers at the time were those who couldn't find work as men and for economic reasons dressed as women and pursued female jobs. Similar to the modern-day "Tootsie"¹¹ These men had no desire to be women and assumed male status at other times. Women too, cross-dressed in order to get better jobs. One woman in particular, who was married to another servant in the household, would have continued her job as coachman but she was found to be pregnant (Epstein; Straub, 1991, pg. 116) Another form of subjective cross-dressing had been as punishment. Mothers made young boys wear girls clothes; girls by contrast had to wear baby clothes. It was seen as a bigger insult for a boy to wear girls clothes than visa-versa as a means of corrective discipline because it was attacking and heightening the male's natural fear of effeminacy.¹²

Cross-dressing as punishment was also carried out by various women on their husbands. The reason for this was not to punish, as in the childish sense, but to get back at males in general for subjecting women to the corset; the husband was the ideal victim.¹³ Frequently, the wife had inherited the money in the marriage and similarly, she was often the older of the two. One such example is that of the wife who tricked her husband into wearing female attire. The husband was obliged to sign a marriage contract whereby he must Dress in whichever way satisfied her to wear female dress, and she had manipulated the situation to take her resentment out on him. He describes her punishment onto him in *Society*, 18 August, 1894 as such:

" She insisted on my constantly wearing a long-waisted satin corset...I was obliged to don high-heeled shoes in the evening...dress from head to foot in female dress every night...my imperious wife seems to delight in nothing more than the idea that she has forced one of the 'ugly' sex to conform to the dainty restraint of corsets, heels and petticoats."

(Farrer, 1987, pg.

33)

Another man described his similar situation, in his letter to *Society*, 11 August, 1894, with an authoritative wife who was older than him. She wished to subject

¹¹ Dustin Hoffman starred in *Tootsie*, as an actor who could only get work as a woman.

¹² Sigmund Freud's theory on effeminacy stated that males rejected dress that suggested the feminine and passive., as they associated it with insecurity and vulnerability.

¹³ this can be equated with the woman 'wearing the trousers in the marriage' nowadays.

him to a similar torture to what she had been subjected to by her mother. As well as making him wear a corset and female attire, she would also inflict a 'punishment stay' for, as he says "omissions of courtesies and for minor faults". This corset was laced extra-tight and was completed by a safety chain-a steel chain around the waist with a safety lock so that the corset would not come loose. An interesting aspect of this relationship was that the wife partook in cross-dressing also and although it is not evident from the contents of the letter whether she sought sexual thrills from cross-dressing both her husband and herself, she carried out these actions because of her resentment of mans' treatment of women and thus humiliated her husband by making him wear the apparel of the 'weaker sex'.

"The wife has an occasional mania for reversing their dress, and she has provided her husband with a complete outfit...while she herself is provided with a dainty suit consisting of velvet knickerbockers and a jacket cut to reveal her slender figure"

(Farrer, 1987,

pg. 33)

By contrast, the women who dressed their sons as girls may have influenced them to take up the wearing of women's clothes in later life by awakening their curiosity of the subject at an early age. Consequently, at the end of the nineteenth century there were many reasons for cross-dressing, men were wearing corsets to improve their own health and appearance; there were people who, in a variety of circumstances, were subjected to wear the clothes of the other sex, which increased their knowledge and curiosity in the subject; and there were those who took to cross-dressing out of innocent curiosity. Factors concerning this curiosity will be dealt with in the next chapter.

Society

"There has been of late years a great extension of the taste for private theatricals, while, at the same time, the burlesques at our public theatres have accustomed people to that once detestable object, a man impersonating a female character, and making a by-no-means bad looking woman.

Possibly these facts have induced a practice which has unquestionably become more common of late, namely, the mania among young men of girlish appearance for dressing themselves up like women." (Farrer, 1987, pg. 4)

This quote is from a newspaper report in the "Graphic" on May 7th 1870. It was the introduction for a story about two men, Ernest Boulton and Frederick Park, who were arrested for masquerading as women.[ill. 5,6&7] Drag had been around for centuries, in Shakespearean theatre, and as part of certain cultures, such as Hindus, Greeks and Romans. Peter Farrer's book, *In female disguise*, highlights the abundance of references to cross dressing in literature, with examples such as Jane Austin's *Pride and Prejudice*,¹⁴ and Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*.¹⁵ (Farrer, 1992, pg. 113 & pg. 279) Later in this chapter I will discuss the Thai culture which accepts effeminacy as a central part of its culture.

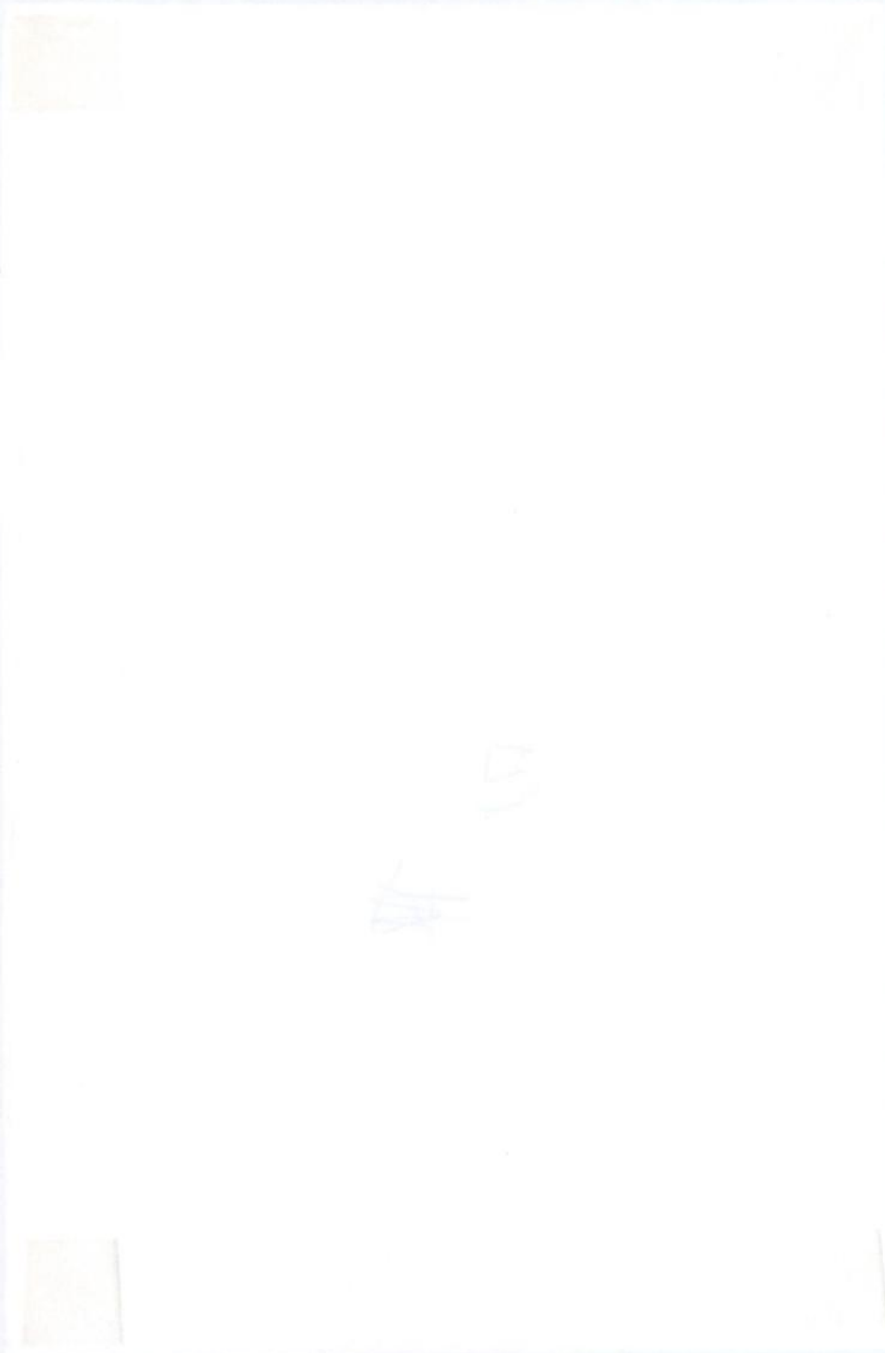
There was a trend circa 1870 of 'going about in drag', which brought cross-dressing out of the limelight and into daylight. Some men took to wearing women's clothes as a parody of the feminine as a means to control their fear of effeminacy. The greater the fear, the more grotesque the parody, and this parody was to be seen in Drag. In the Victorian era, the acceptance of drag by society counteracted its fear of effeminacy so that the appearance of drag was part of society's changing gender conventions. The Boulton and Park case highlighted this trend. What I wish to stress importance on is the views of society which affected the gender conventions of the day. In the early eighteenth century, a mere hundred years before, the lavish decorative dress which was considered perfectly normal in court and aristocratic circles, would be deemed effeminate by Victorian standards. This lavish dress indicated an attitude which was now, a century later, disapproved of and even punished for by conventions of Victorian society. The Victorians instilled

¹⁴A man is dressed as a lady to go to a dance.

¹⁵Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn help Jim the slave to escape by wearing white calico dresses.



5. Ernest Boulton.





6. Frederick Park.



6



7. Ernest Boulton and Frederick Park.

a fear of effeminacy into it's society. Those who still wore effeminate dress in the nineteenth century were assumed to sympathise with the new and largely unaccepted gender, that of the male 'Molly'. This new gender was looked down upon because it went against the Victorian ideal - that of the family unit and the sentimentalizing of women. To consider this new gender in society was to break with the ideal of the family unit. Also, anyone who wore effeminate dress was being associated with the effeminate male "Mollies" who were being discriminated against.¹⁶ The Law tried to punish this illegitimate gender. In 1885 the Criminal Law Amendment Act stated that both public and private acts of gross indecency between two men were liable to a prison sentence of up to two years. What must be said is that until now, society had not heard of transvestism¹⁷ and they were not 'on the defensive', as people tend to be today; they did not deem transvestites as sexual perverts because the phrase 'sexual pervert' was not in general use - certainly not in terms of men dressing in women's clothes. Theatrical drag was being brought one stage further and women's clothing was being worn by men for "private theatricals" and even for limited exposure out of doors. There was a feeling of innocence about the subject of cross - dressing , as discussed in the letters of the previous chapter. Moreover, cross - dressing was becoming more popular and the society was becoming "accustomed" to this peculiarity, until the gender conventions caused the fear of effeminacy. So, while people were becoming curious and gaining knowledge about cross - dressing, with an air of leniency about the subject, the combination of the Criminal Law Amendment Act and bad feeling toward "the illegitimate gender ", led to the fear of effeminacy and subsequently, biased judgements towards 'sexual deviants' and homophobia which is prevalent today. A recent letter in *The Sunday Independent* from a sixty year old transvestite, shows the difference between society today and in the Victorian era. His primary concern is that his habit must remain a secret, for he knows it is not

¹⁶Some cross dressers were "Mollies" but many others were not.

¹⁷A publication in 1911 by Magnus Hirschfeld called *Die Transvestiten* was the earliest account of transvestism.

socially acceptable. "I run the risk of destruction if discovered." (Dear Patricia..., Sunday Independent, 24 January, 1993^{page no.}) Victorian cross dressers, were by comparison, quite blasé and unconscientious, unaware that there would be condemnation for their actions, that it would become forbidden behaviour.

Thailand's views' on sexuality are very different to those in Europe. Thai people follow the Chinese principals of Yin and Yang, and they acknowledge the person with an almost equal balance of male and female. In Thai terms, this is the transvestite or *Katoi*. There has always been a role for *Katoi* in Thai society and the attitude of that society is quite tolerant. *Katoi* work as dancers in many of Thailand's transvestite cabarets. A Channel 4 documentary, entitled *Ladyboys*, describes the lives of some of Thailand's *Katoi*.^{fill. 8,9]} The *Katoi* have an elitist sentimentality about their work as their wages, although a pittance, is considerably more than any other profession in their communities. One *Katoi* tries to explain their society's' tolerance of transvestism by suggesting that their wages are a deciding factor.

"[Parents] didn't like it at first, but since I've started sending money home they've accepted me."

(Ladyboys, Ch.4, November 1992)

The *Katoi* are a tourist attraction, as Thailand offers foreign men freedom to indulge in their fantasies.¹⁸ Ironically, government and tourist officials are trying to repress the *Katoi* by claiming that the *Katoi* are not acceptable to foreigners. But the *Katoi* feel they have a right to their own identity, especially in their own country that has accepted them as part of its culture for centuries.

By comparison, contemporary western society states that there are two sexes and

¹⁸Men can 'pick -up ' transvestities while they are away from home, and at a fraction of the cost. Confusion sometimes occurs when the foreigners who go to 'pick-up' girls, realise, too late, that they are at a transvestite cabaret.



8. *Katoï* dancer.



9. *Katoi* - male waiting for a pick-up after work.



9



four genders; a stable basis for its gender conventions. Contemporary gender images, which change considerably, have been influenced by popular culture and music styles.

In the early sixties, a British pop singer, Polly Perkins rebelled against the skinny modest and demure image of the female pop-stars. She was openly gay, and dressed in pinstripe collar-and-tie suits, sung songs such as "Superdyke". (O'Brien, 1991, pg. 86) Her attitude was too avant-garde for the general mode of the sixties which culminated in a unisex dressing of flared jeans and long flowing hair worn by both sexes. This hippy style was a 'natural look', where girls portrayed their femininity and boys their masculinity, regardless of the confines of similar clothing.¹⁹

The seventies glam rock scene was abundant with camp and bisexual styles. David Bowie's 'futuristic' alter ego, Ziggy Stardust, with metallic stage costume, make-up and orange hair, exemplified the beginning of pop androgyny.[ill. 10] It encouraged a trend for gender ambiguity which questioned the boundaries of masculinity and femininity.

The late seventies punk phenomenon was seen as a reaction to the 'natural' hippy ethics. Punk was a confrontational style of dressing, aimed to shock by using obscene imagery and encompassing sado-masochism, sleaze and tawdry glamour. [ill. 11]Punks wished to express themselves with asexual ugliness and both sexes were integrated into the movement that was more of an "anarchistic punk pantomime than serious cross-dressing." (O'Brien, 1991, pg. 87)

In the early eighties, a major trend for androgyny emerged. 'Blitz Culture' was a "blurring of sexual divisions in an orgy of costume"(Chapkis, 1988, pg. 42) which was collectively known as gender bending. Both gay and straight clubbers played with transvestism.[ill. 12] Annie Lennox, who will be mentioned in chapter 5, and Boy George were two media gender-bender pioneers. They were seen as opposites, he was pretty and risqué, while she was more threatening in her ambiguity. Boy

¹⁹To view from behind the 'hippy look' was genderless, and it was hard to differentiate between the sexes, but from the front their gender was evident, for many reasons, such as men growing facial hair and girls wearing semi-transparent tops.

It is important to note that for the gender controversy, the gender of the author has been influential in the past. In the past, the gender of the author has been influential in the past.

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10. David Bowie as Ziggy Stardust.



10





11. A punk couple. Genders become indistinct.





12. Blitz culture produced effeminate males.



George's image was a juxtaposition of glam rock, punk and reggae. His camp style and cross-dressing were seen as 'pure pop pantomime'. [ill. 13] (O'Brien, 1991, pg. 95)

"In the early eighties, George became Britain's first gender-bending cuddly toy.Culture Club

purged punk from the public consciousness.. compared to Johnny Rotten lead singer of the Sex Pistols, George was a sugar-plum fairy. He was safe, had a larger than life image and a warm, witty personality that just loved media attention." (Rouse, Feb. 1991, pg. 40)

The 'gender-bender' culture was a necessary change of gender values and a stark contrast to punk imagery. The emergence of style magazines²⁰, meant that both sexes were informed of the culture.

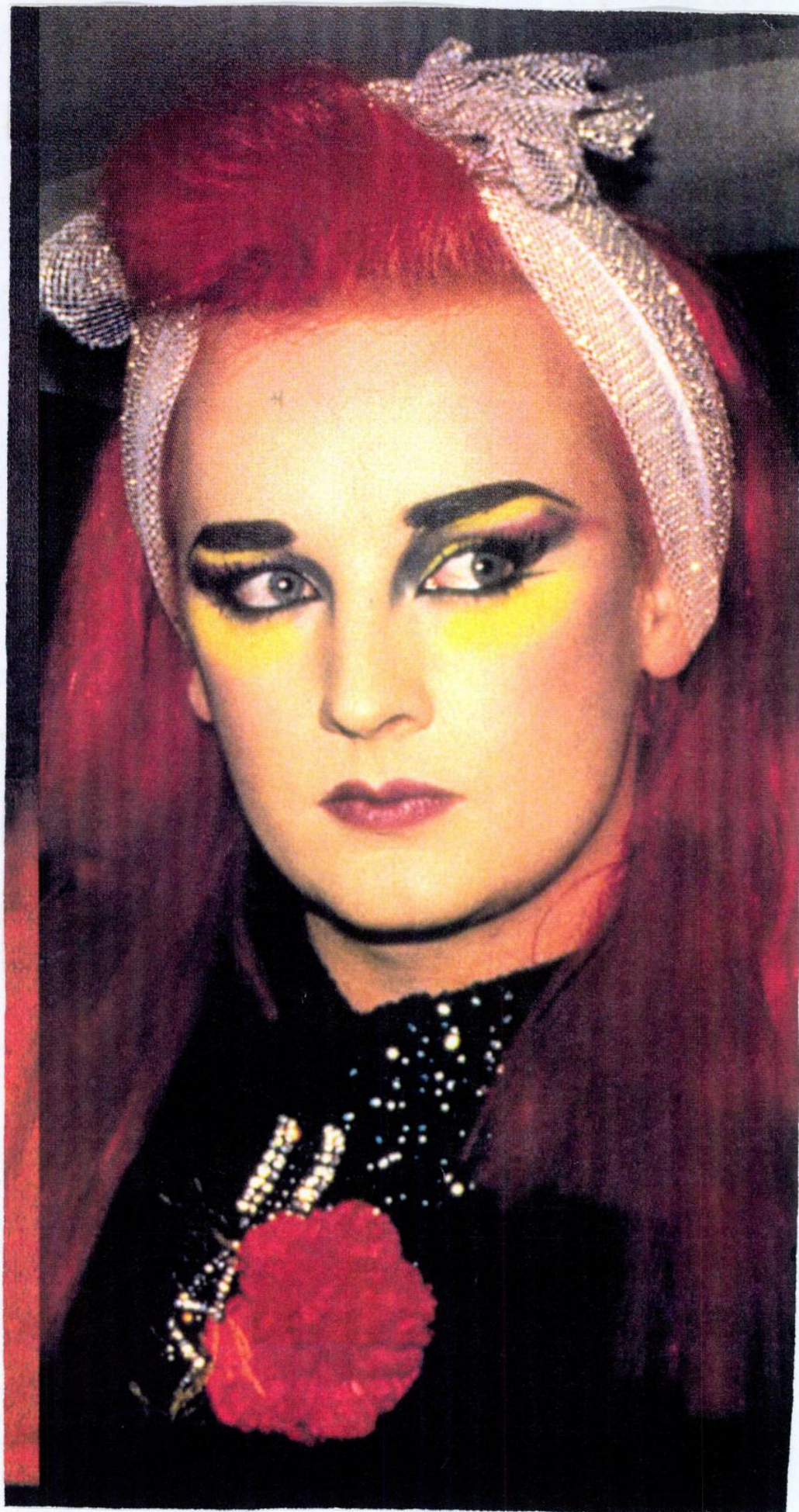
The latest cross-dressing cult to date is the new drag . The new drag was also an end to the androgyny and aloofness of the eighties. Described by Holly Brubach²¹ as "articulate social criticism" of eighties androgyny and of society's gender identities, the New York based cult is about temporarily leaving this world and experiencing the visual reality of an imagined persona; a self-transformation. "Dressing in drag makes you someone special. It's an escape from the boring world." (Pike, March 1992, pg. 36) At first the gay movement were against the new drag claiming that it parodied homosexuality but now both straight and gay clubbers are dressing in drag. Moreover, the nineties drag queens aren't trying to imitate women and claim the new drag goes "beyond male and female." (Pike, 1992, pg. 33) [ill. 14] Drag set the precedence for social outcasts²² to be accepted into society. For their video of the song *Easy*,²³ Faith No More perform in an apartment amongst a crowd of drag queens, and although the band were not dressed in drag, they were unruffled by the presence of the drag queen and accepted them without disdain. Mike Patton²⁴ projects a feeling of nonchalance

²⁰ Holly Brubach, is fashion editor for the *New Yorker*, and was a judge at the Love Ball - an Aids benefit show, where transvestites share the catwalk with the Supermodels.

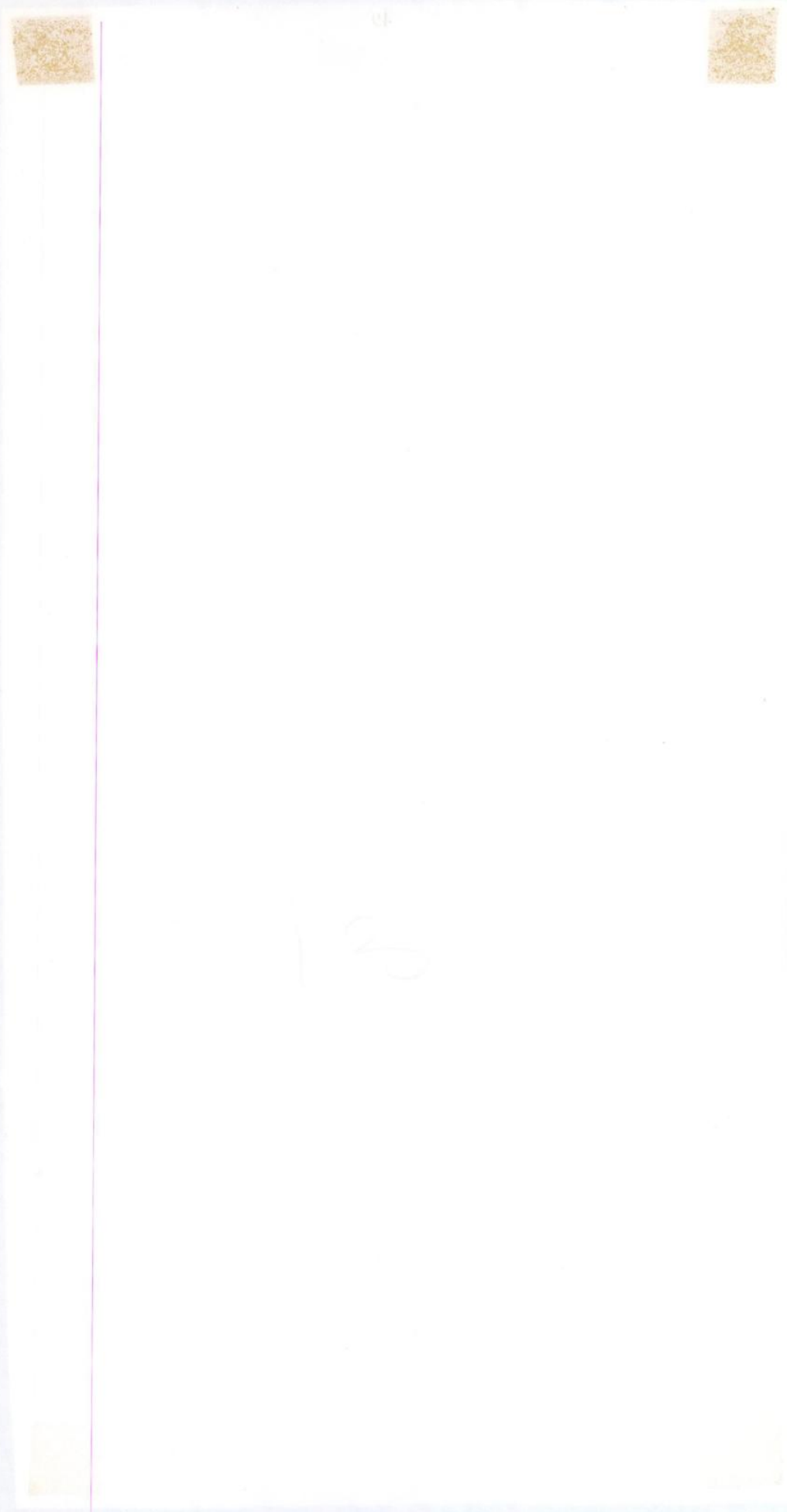
²² such as the sexually deviant.

²³ Lionel Richie's song *Easy* (...like Sunday morning) describes a laid-back attitude concerned with romantic love. Faith No More parody this notion using the drag queens, heightening a 'laid-back' acceptance of the new drag.

²⁴ Lead singer with Faith No More.



13. Boy George - a gender bending cuddly toy.



15



14. 90's New York Drag Queen.

14

about the situation, which, I believe, alludes to the new attitude of social integration whereby individuals hold into their identity while mixing with other social groups. Lypsinka²⁵ highlights this in her explanation of the new drag.

"The eighties were all about exclusivity; the nineties are about mixing. Activists are mixing with the arty farty crowd, and socialites are mixing with drag queens."

(Pike, Elle, March 1992, pg.

34)

Lypsinka is perhaps the most successful of the New Drag artistes, for as well as a solo show in New York and Los Angeles, she performs at charity shows, has shared the catwalk with top models at Thierry Mugler's shows in Paris, and goes out to dinner with celebrities such as Karl Lagerfeld and Liza Minelli.[ill. 15]

²⁵Lypsinka is a New York drag artiste.



15. Lypsinka.



Cross dressers

Thailand's transvestites, whom I have referred to in the previous chapter, the *Katoi*, are mostly gay. They are a curious mixture of genders, and while some of them have cultivated long flowing hair and gone on a certain pills to enlarge their breasts, others have had breast implant and sex-change operations. [ill. 16]

During a conversation shown on *Ladyboys*, one *Katoi* states that he would rather be a woman in the next life, and another replies by saying, "I'm happy as I am, a bit of everything." Some *Katoi* look like members of an hermaphrodite race, possessing both breasts and penis. [ill. 17] Their voices are still quite deep and gruff but their characteristics are decidedly feminine. When the *Katoi* start their working life, they grow long hair and take pills to encourage feminine traits, such as enlarged breasts and hips. Many would opt for the breast implant operation. *Katoi* recognise the fact that gay men who don't admit they are gay, are often more comfortable with boys who look like girls. This applies both to the foreign customers who 'pick-up' the *Katoi* after work and to the gay men who live with the *Katoi*. For this reason, many *Katoi* choose to have the £1,000 sex-change operation.

"The operation is the most important thing for the men who live with us. If we don't have the operation, they might leave us. It's better to have it done and keep them."

(Ladyboys, Ch.4, November

'92)

A comparison to the *Katoi*, is the transvestite in Neil Jordan's *Crying Game*. Dil (Jaye davidson) would do anything for his man; he reluctantly agrees to cutting all his hair off which, both physically and psychologically, makes him vulnerable, as a contrast to his female personality. Transvestites in Western society sometimes choose to have sex-change operations, but for different reasons. Tracy, 39, from Manchester is a transsexual and can be described as 'gender in transit.' She grew up as a man but after attending a doctor for two years, has decided to join the three year waiting list at Charing Cross Hospital. She wants to be a woman so much that nothing will deter her.

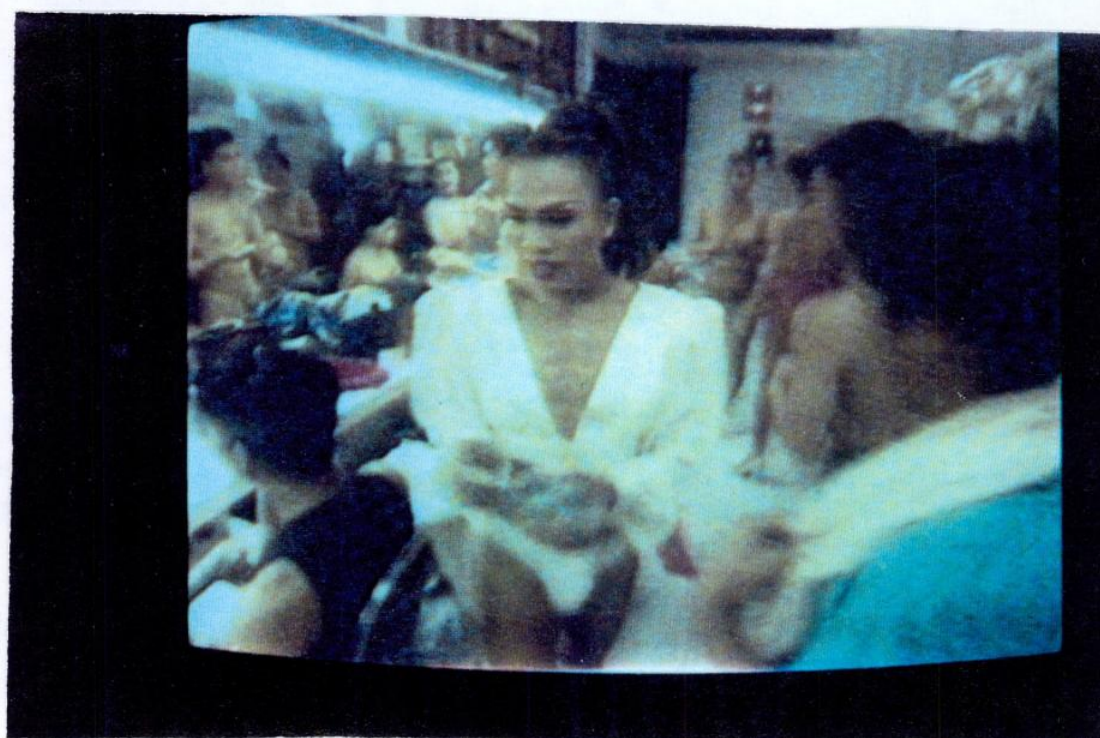
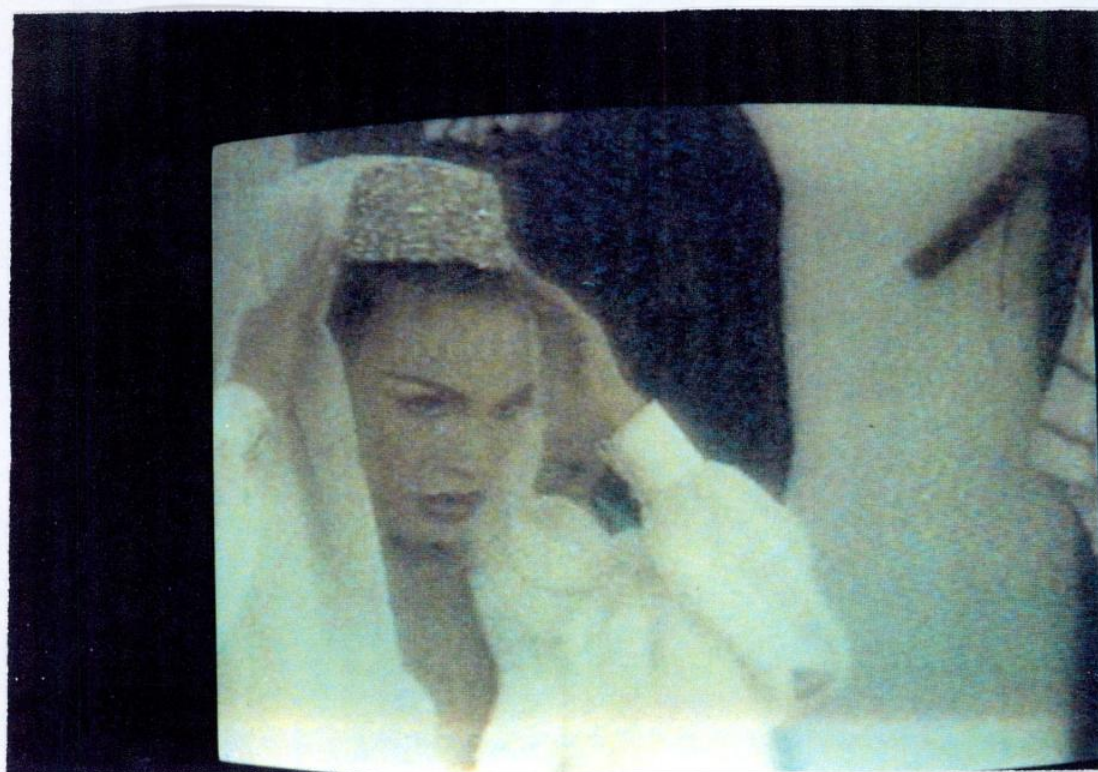
Conclusion

The study of the human mind is a complex task. It is a task that requires a deep understanding of the human mind and its various functions. The study of the human mind is a task that requires a deep understanding of the human mind and its various functions.

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16. *Katoi* in full costume.

17. *Katoi* with flat chest and male attributes.



16. A card with the text "A card with the text and number 16." and a small yellow tab on the right side.

"Its nothing to do with guts. Its knowing I've come out in the open, being one person, deciding I'm not afraid anymore. Now I am the person I walk about as-before I wasn't one or the other."

(Young, 1992, pg. 56)

Shaun a gay twenty-five year old Liverpudlian is in a similar situation to the *Katoi* in that he has lived for five years with his gay lover, being the perfect housewife, "My only work was to look beautiful. I treat men with the respect they love, treat them as big and macho..." (Young, 1992, pg. 60) Shaun sees himself playing the passive role; he is a woman in the old-fashioned sense, but he doesn't want to be a woman all the time.[ill. 18] Neither does he want a sex change but might have to as he gets older. He sees the advantages in his being a woman, although in my opinion, its a very narrow, sexist view of womankind-a parody of the female sex. Louisa Young adds that "his notion of what constitutes womanhood makes you wonder whether transvestism isn't just another male plot to denigrate real women." (Young, 1992, pg. 60)

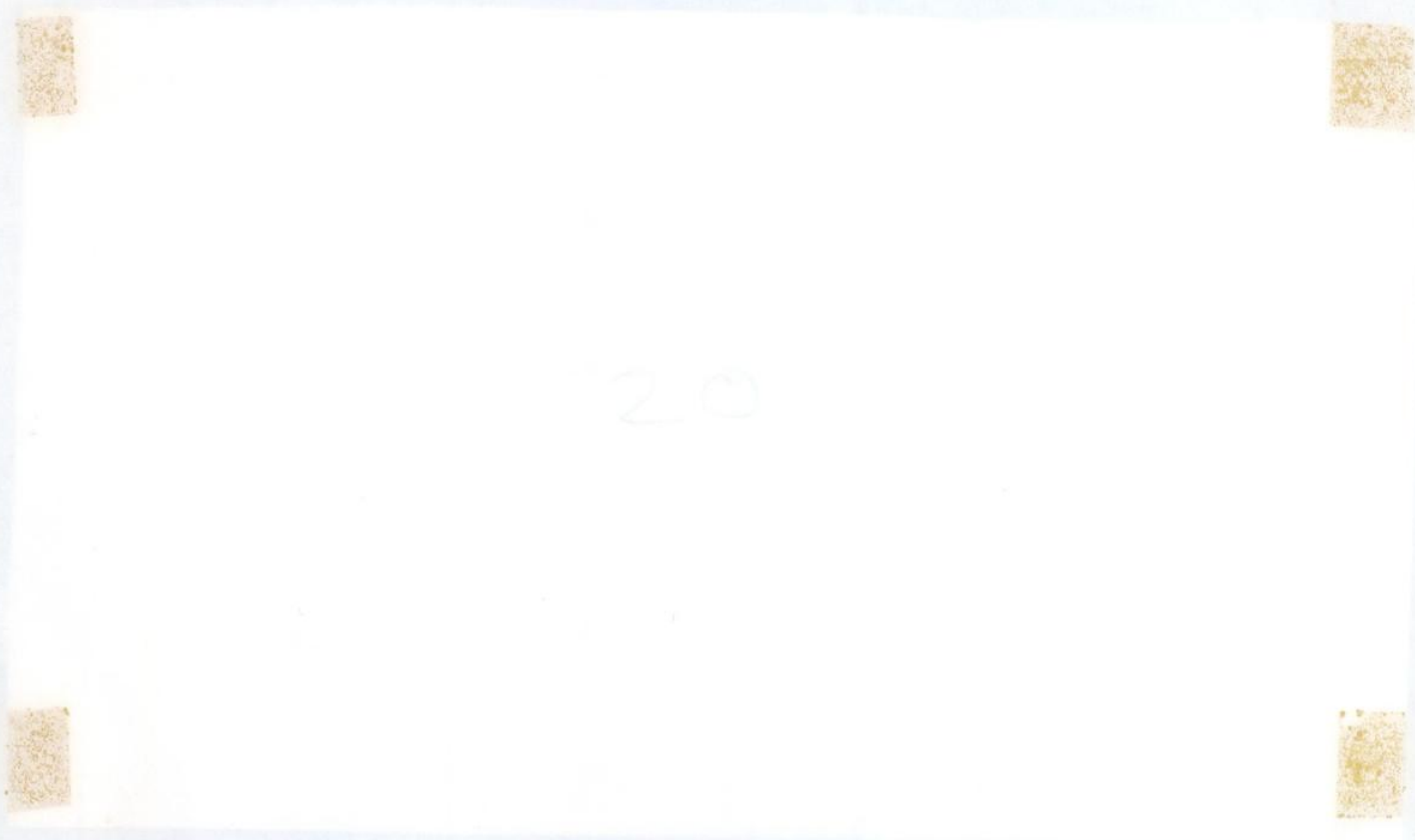
"My head is a woman's. My brain. I know more about being a woman than almost anybody because when I've not got a penny, I'm looked down on-when I'm a woman, in a wig and with my full face on, I don't need a penny; I get taken out, meals bought for me..." (Young, 1992, pg. 60)

Shaun's friend Gordon, is a gay transvestite also. He doesn't wish to be a woman all the time either. [ill. 19] He keeps his dual personas separate and prefers hunky stubble with his male persona. "I'd feel ugly if I was queenish as a man." As his make-up goes on his movements become subtly more feminine. He insists that when he is 'Julie' most gay blokes aren't interested in him that they would prefer 'butch men'. (Young, 1992, pg. 60) All the examples laid out above, tell of people who are torn between who they are and who they wish to be ;they have to contend with a dual persona ,or resign to the confusion and torment of not being true to themselves.[ill. 20, 21, 22]

Public interest in drag, and indeed drag itself, has changed considerably in recent years. The media is swamped with images of theatrical drag queens, such as Danny La Rue and ^mDane Edna Everage. Barry Humphries a.k.a. Dame Edna, is



- 18. Shaun.
- 19. Gordon.
- 20. Shaun and Gordon as in full make-up.





21. Gordon applying silicone breasts.

21



22. Shaun and Gordon as transvestites.



different to most drag queens by being heterosexual and married. In Barry's ^{Hughes} native Australia, the gay community hold drag festivals where everybody dons a dress, heels and make-up.[ill. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29] Charles Gibson, with his illustration for life magazine in 1889, indicates the growing interest in drag at the time.[ill. 30] In the 1920's, New York hosted massive drag balls in Harlem, at the Savoy, the Hotel Astor and Madison Square Garden, where "some men wore evening gowns and some women wore tuxedos and many came to be spectators." ^{my} People dressed not only as women but as a parody of the student, homeboy, or businessman. In the 1990's Madonna's *Vogueing*, based on the 1920's Drag Balls, has influenced a new spate of Drag in New York. Madonna is currently involved in a film venture with drag celebutantes, Holly Woodlawn and Candy Darling.²⁶ The new breed of drag queens don't want to be women, they are clambering for pop-stardom. RuPaul Charles, from New Jersey U.S.A., states "The truth is that I'm a man. The illusion is I look like a woman. But the illusion is truer." [ill. 31] A stunning illusion at 6 ft. 7 ins. in stilettos and blonde wig, RuPaul is a prime example of drag going mainstream; from lip-synching in dimly lit cabarets to shaking her stuff on the B-52's *Love Shack* video to being signed for the *Tommy Boy* record label.²⁷ RuPaul dresses for shock appeal and says that people often have a problem with what they associate him with. (MTV News at Night, 3rd Feb., 1993) RuPaul stresses that the new drag is not a parody of womanliness but a breakdown of social barriers in an air of acceptance in the 90's.

"In New York in the 80's, I saw a whole new kind of drag that wasn't about trying to pass as a woman. We called it 'Bopper's Drag'-guys would have lipstick smeared all over their face or be wearing a dress with combat boots" (Pike, March '92, pg. 34)

Incidentally, for their video, released in autumn 1992, *In Bloom*, Nirvana are dressed in 'Boppers Drag'. The video shows them performing in costume, where shots alternate between sixties style suits and flowery dresses worn with Dr. Marten Boots. Nirvana claim they enjoy the feel of wearing a dress, and promote

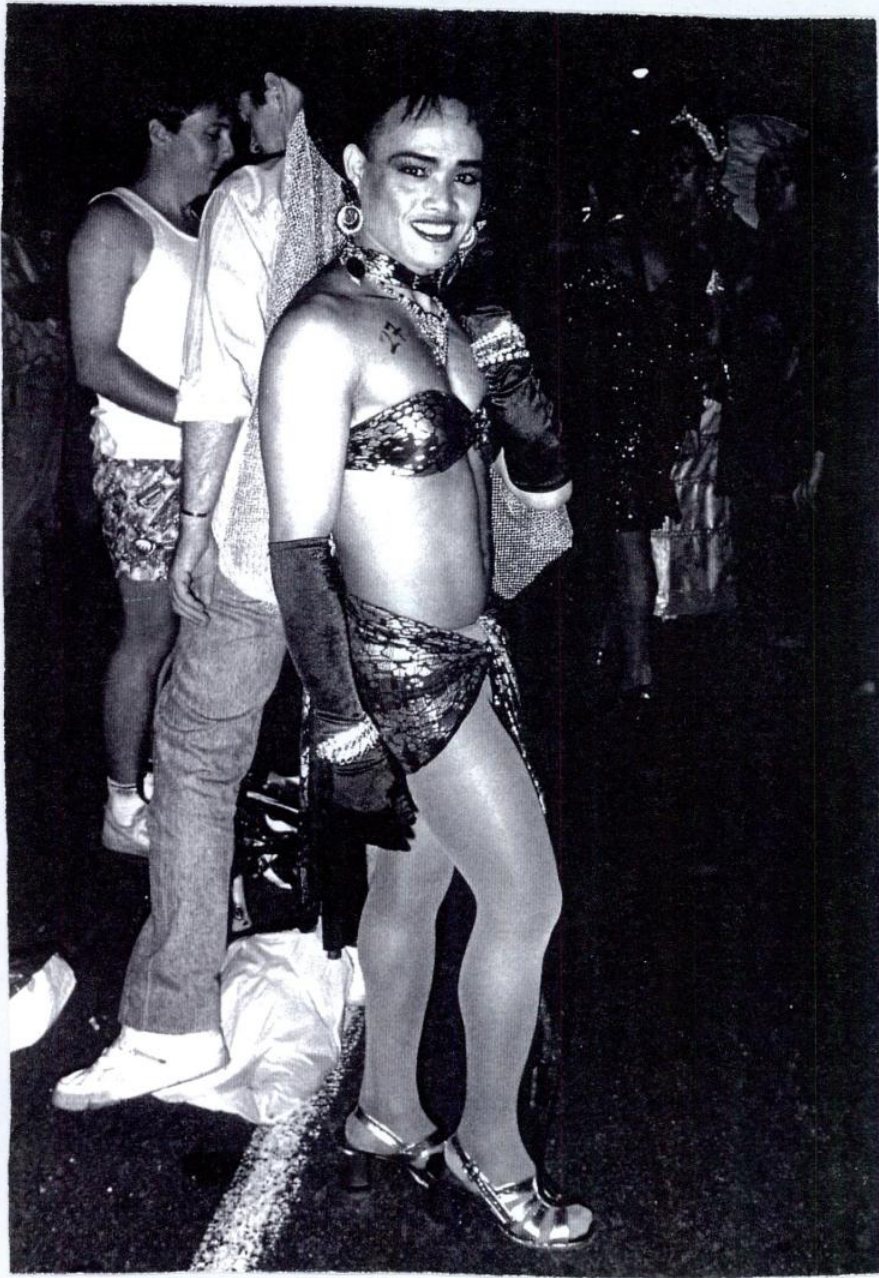
²⁶Madonna's film production company, 'Maverick', are working on the memoirs of drag artiste, Holly Woodlawn, *A Low Life in High Heels*.

²⁷RuPaul's single *Super model* is in the U.S. charts (Feb. 93) on the "Tommy Boy" label.



23. Australian drag festival.

24. Man in full make-up, drag with hairy chest.



25. Man in drag.



25



26. Man in drag.





27. Man in drag.

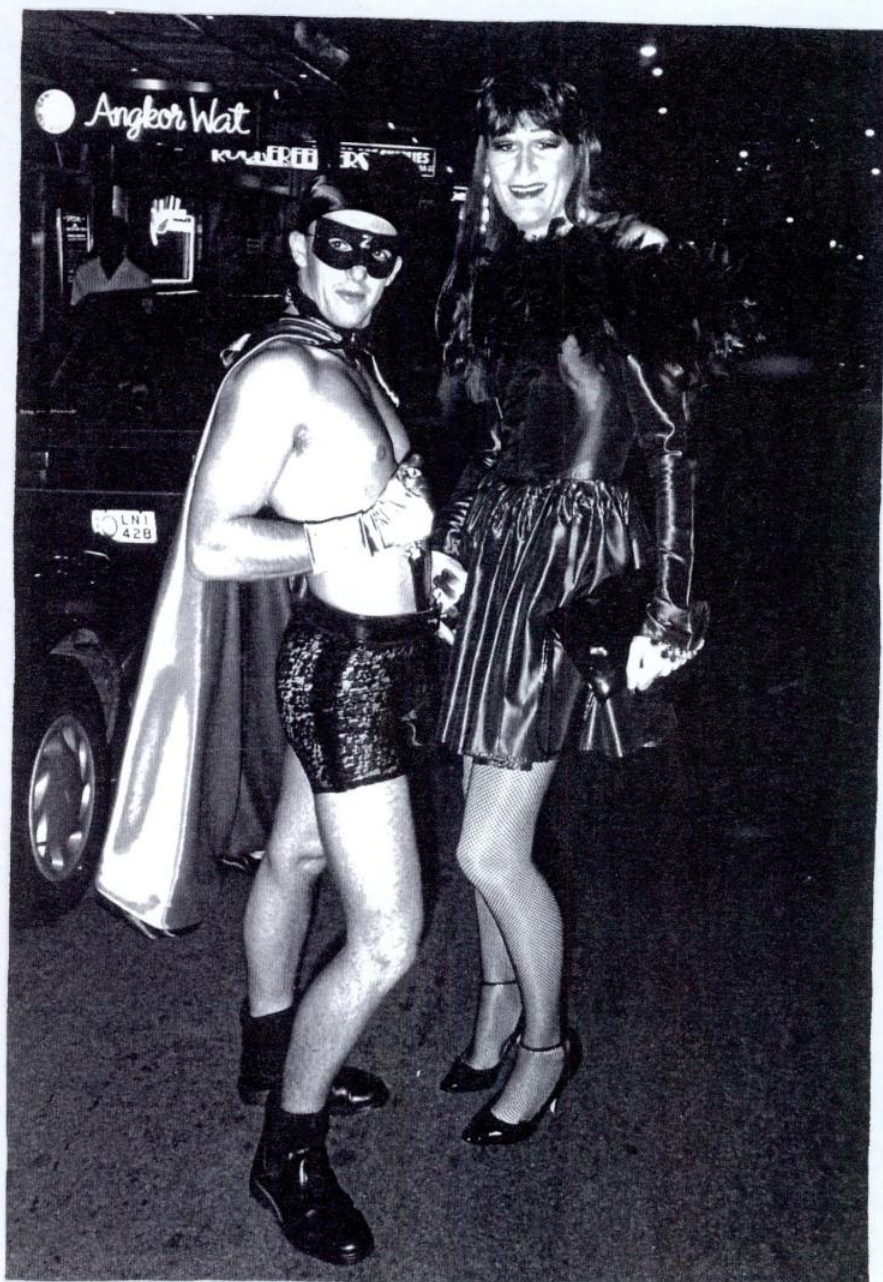


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28. Men in drag.





29. Men in drag.



29



30. Gibson's illustration for *Life* magazine.



31. RuPaul Charles



the notion that anybody can adopt an imaginary persona.(MTV, News at Night, 9th Dec. 1992.) In 1992, U2 released *One*, with a video in which the band dressed in drag. The video didn't poke fun at the subject but approached it in a serious yet slightly voyeuristic tone, helping to reflect new attitudes of social integration and bring drag into mainstream society.

I recently spoke to Paul Woodfull of *The Glam farts*, a Dublin-based tribute band to seventies Glam rock, mimicking artistes like David Bowie and Gary Glitter, who dress in the seventies rock tradition of glitzy nylon skin-tight clothes, platforms and lots of make-up. During his performance, Paul strips down from fur jackets, nylon body suit and high-heel boots to suspenders and fishnet tights, projecting the glam rock image of the seventies effeminate male. He likes to shock his audience by trying to "relate to what people associate with femininity," as it poses questions about gender and sexuality.[ill. 32, 33, 34] He claims that there is an element of bisexuality in everybody but most people are afraid to accept that. He would like people to be more liberal in their attitudes and his performance suggests an acceptance of effeminate behaviour. Paul recognises that society has changed, with the advent of Aids, and that attitudes have changed also and suggests that the 'New Drag' is similar to flirting on a large scale. Society is flirting with the idea of being outrageous, but it has become too dangerous, so that outrageous dress seems to be the other alternative. Fenton Bailey²⁸ reflects this thought by saying "sex is no longer safe, but wearing a wig..." (Pike, March '92 pg. 36)

²⁸ Fenton Bailey is manager to RuPaul Charles and other drag artistes.



32. Paul Woodfull - The Glam Tarts.

40



31



33. Paul Woodfull - The Glam Tarts.

33



34. Paul Woodfull - The Glam Tarts.

32

Women

to "to masquerade as a man, and to do it well, is to enter a no-man's land 'beyond femininity, exceed the limits of delicacy." (Epstein; Straub, 1991, pg. 113)

When men dress as women their parody is an exaggerated image of the female role-model. When transvestites dress as women they often choose women of the same age and social class as themselves. But when women parody men they choose the dignified gent as their alter-ego. Marlene Dietrich was not seen as an androgynous but her sexuality was tinged with ambiguity. Her female transvestism exuded power which was to be seen in "Morocco" when she wore a top hat and tuxedo and later in "Blonde Venue," when she wore a glittering white tux. Yves St. Laurent's 'le smoking' was a stunning upper-class male parody, and Coco Chanel revolutionised womenswear with her designs based on the male wardrobe. Historically, cross-dressing has been a way for women to express their love for other women.²⁹ Other styles of cross-dressing, such as the *Annie Hall*³⁰ look, which was based on the male over-sized clothes, tended to look vulnerable and non-authoritative. Either way, women were not dressing as their social and physical counter-part. I shall discuss the current trend for women to don menswear at work and examine Annie Lennox who led the way with androgyny for women in the eighties, both examples of cross-dressing which

ref/ "exceed the limits of delicacy."

At the beginning of her career with Eurythmics, Annie Lennox decided to visually become a man rather than adapt bits and pieces of male clothing. "I wanted to see if I could kill the woman completely." She choose to wear suits, as they were both a sign of male power and authority and a symbol of normality, with a bright orange cropped haircut, black eyeliner and a minimum amount of make-up.[ill. 35] From this, she moved onto a female androgynous character and then a multiple

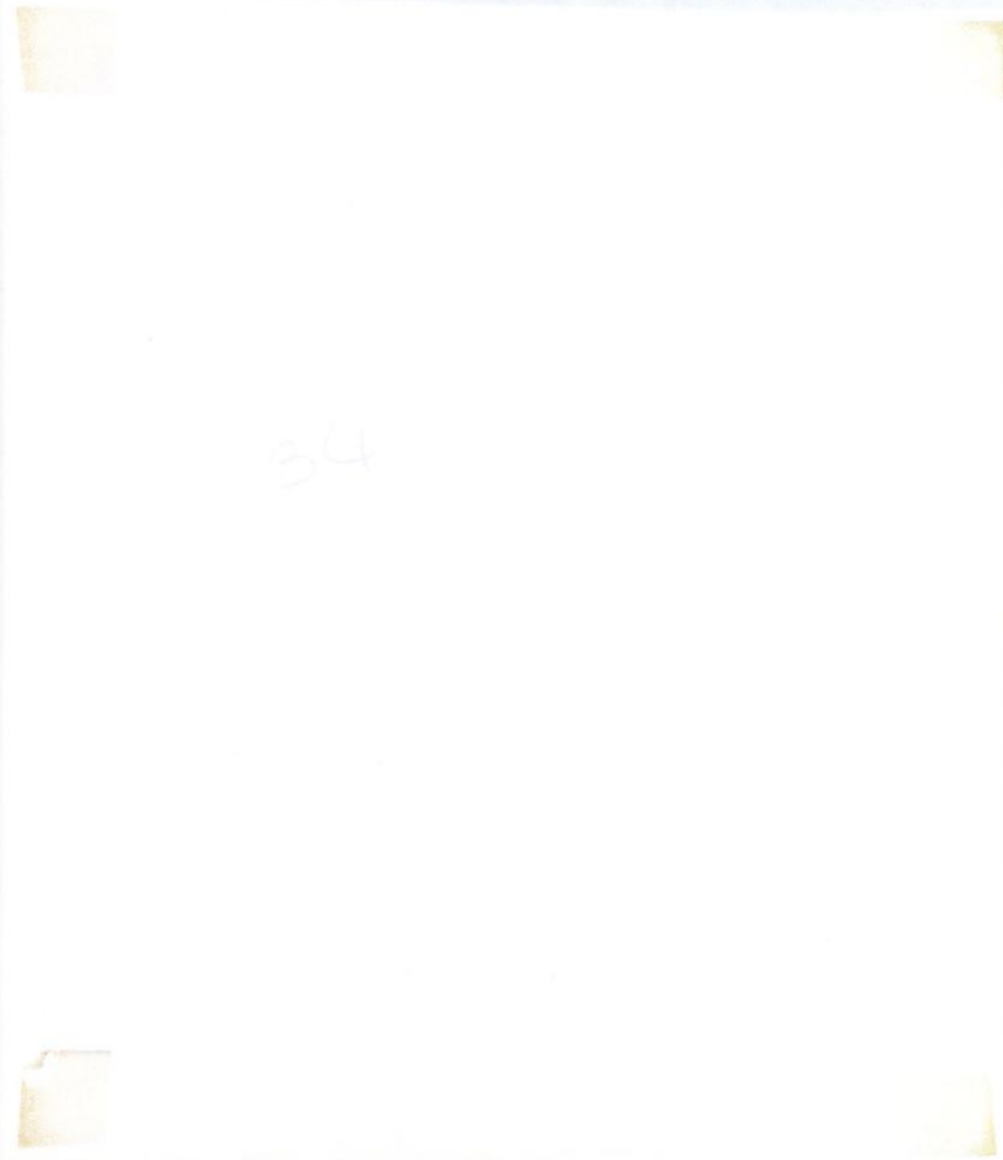
²⁹ especially in lesbian relationships where one of the couple takes on a male persona.

³⁰ Wood Allen's film *Annie Hall*, starred Diane Keaton who dressed in oversized men's clothes which created a vulnerable neurotic feel.

made
Tradition French
casual evening wear
not white tee but
black tee in light
sweater culture



35. Annie Lennox.



parody of femininity as housewife, starlet, angel and whore. The Eurythmics' video for *Who's that girl* is steeped in gender ambiguity. Annie is the starlet in a night-club with little black dress and blonde wig,[ill. 36] singing of love betrayed, when her unfaithful lover walks in with various girls (including the cross-dresser, Marilyn, in drag). She is watched by a mysterious dark-suited man with sideburns and stubble, who is really Annie disguised as a man. Annie the starlet, annoyed with her lover, dramatically leaves the stage and goes off with the stranger, her male self. The scene ends when they turn toward each other and Annie, as a man kisses herself, Annie the starlet. Annie has succeeded where the transvestites in chapter 4 have failed; to be a harmonious amalgam of two opposites. She sought to avoid the pop illusion of sexual availability and tried to find a balance between acknowledging her sexuality and not conforming to a stereotype.[ill. 37,38] She believes that being neither overtly male nor female widens your scope, makes you threatening and gives you a certain power. "To think of someone kissing their ideal projection of what a man should be, but to also be that man, was great".(O'Brien, 1991, pg. 77).

Women in suits can be seen as the most socially accepted form of cross-dressers. The Autumn/Winter '92 season has had women everywhere opting for the tailored menswear look. Before I discuss this I wish to examine both the eighties power-dressing phenomenon and the late seventies 'dress for success' look which was its precursor.

John T. Molloy,³¹ author of *The Women's Dress for Success Book*, gave a very cautious and conservative guideline for dressing to gain respect and promotion in a workplace dominated by males. Women had adopted elements of men's clothes, hoping that male power and authority would transcend onto them. [ill. 39] Molloy advised women against the 'imitation man' look because it heightened their feminine vulnerability and de-emphasized their authority. I find Molloy's 'dress for success' look to be in direct contrast to the nineties look of new femininity which

³¹J. T Molloy is a 'wardrobe consultant' and author of a book on men's clothes entitled 'New Dress for Success'.

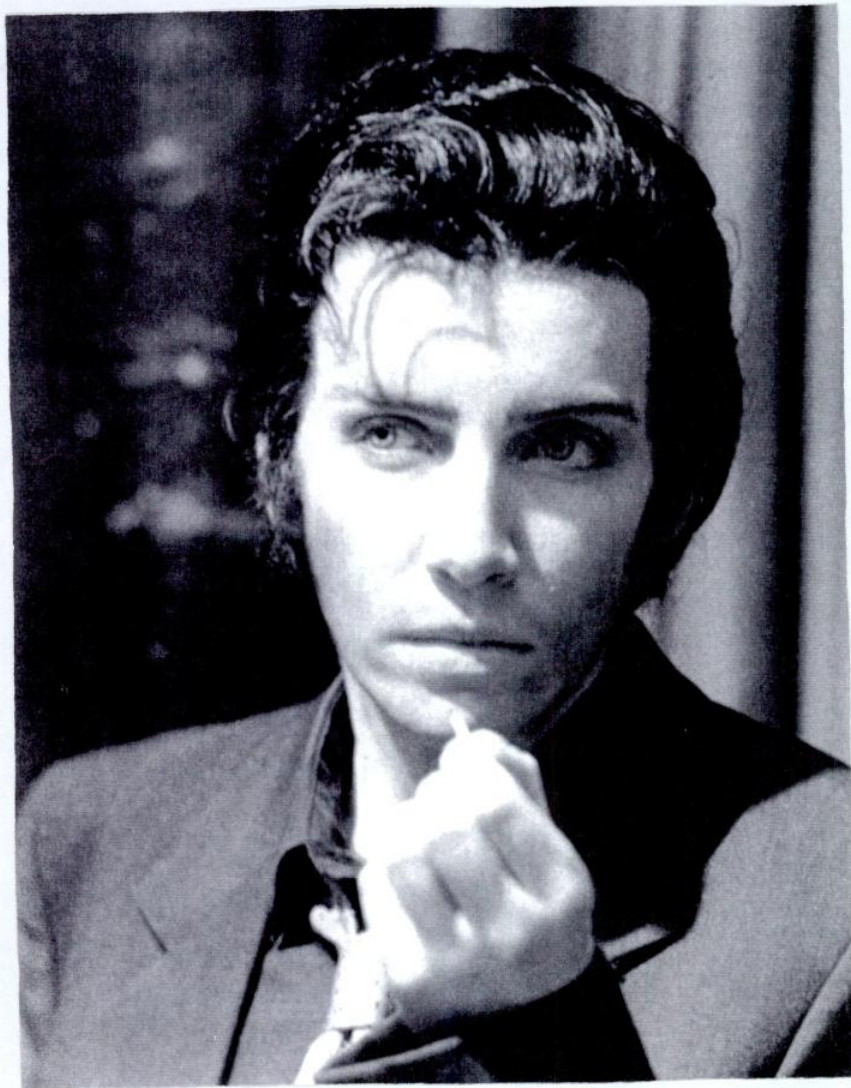


36. Annie Lennox as the starlet.

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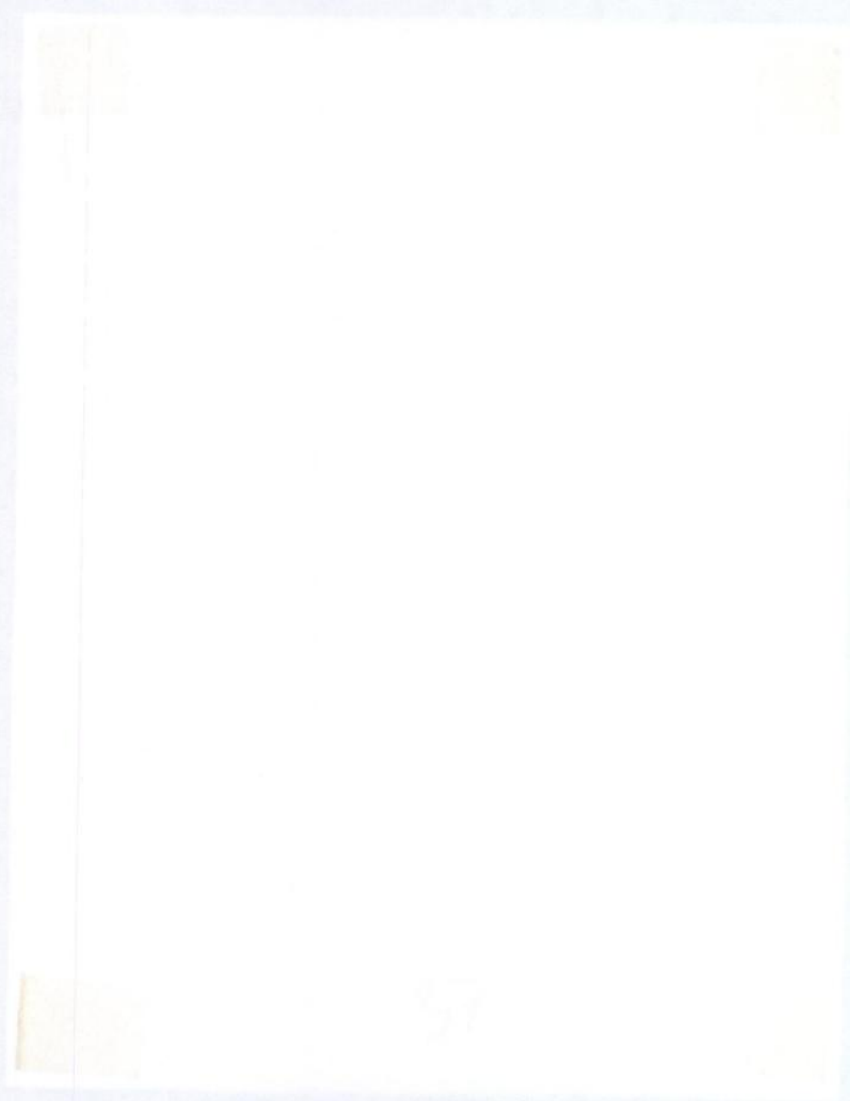


37. Annie Lennox in her man in a suit costume.



38. Annie Lennox impersonates Elvis.

100



57



39. Women's suit style adopted from men's clothes.

38

encourages women to use their sexuality to an advantage. Instead, Molloy advocated the skirted suit in dark shades of blue and grey.[ill. 40] Molly stressed throughout the book that sexual attraction undermined a woman's authority so that if a woman wanted to be authoritative she had to look sexually unattractive.

" A three-piece pinstriped suit not only does not add to a woman's authority, it destroys it. It makes her look like an 'imitation man' . The effect is more like that of a small boy who dresses up in his fathers clothing. He looks cute, not authoritative..... When a woman wears certain clothes with male colours or patterns, her femaleness is accentuated. She frequently looks mere diminutive. And this reduces her authority..... Some men find the 'imitation man' look sexy. Other men are completely turned off by it. In either case a woman's authority is diminished".
(Molloy, 1977, pg. 28)

Eighties power dressing was a progression from the 'dress for success' look and was fuelled by media hype in T.V. soap operas.³² Joan Collins was the archetypal power-dresser, wearing large jackets with huge shoulder pads. While John T. Molly proposed ultra-conservative blues and greys as work wear colours, power dressing enthralled in bright, garnish colours which functioned in making the wearer stand out from the crowd³³. [ill. 41] The power-dressers wore jacket styles that were adopted from men's wardrobes but this time the clothes were fitted and consequently there was no play on vulnerability. The fitted jackets had large shoulder pads which created a triangular shaped silhouette similar to that of a mans.[ill. 42] This eventually created what Valerie Steele describes as a 'suppressed sexless, air-hostess look', (Steele, 1985, pg. 128) for although power-dressers looked extremely smart and authoritative, they were still sexually unattractive. Power dressing was an androgynous look; women were neither tough enough to be masculine nor pretty enough to be feminine.

The new femininity associated with the power-dressing of the nineties is all about relaxed tailoring; more fluid lines instead of angular silhouettes and enormous shoulder pads; neutral colours instead of day brights, in fact the whole mood is

³²Soap operas such as *Dallas* and *Dynasty* highlighted the fashion for 'power dressing'.

Joan Collins of *Dynasty* fame was the most popular of these.

³³This was popular with media professionals and women politicians. Royals especially Princess Diana wore couture versions.



40. John T. Molloy's "dress for success" look.

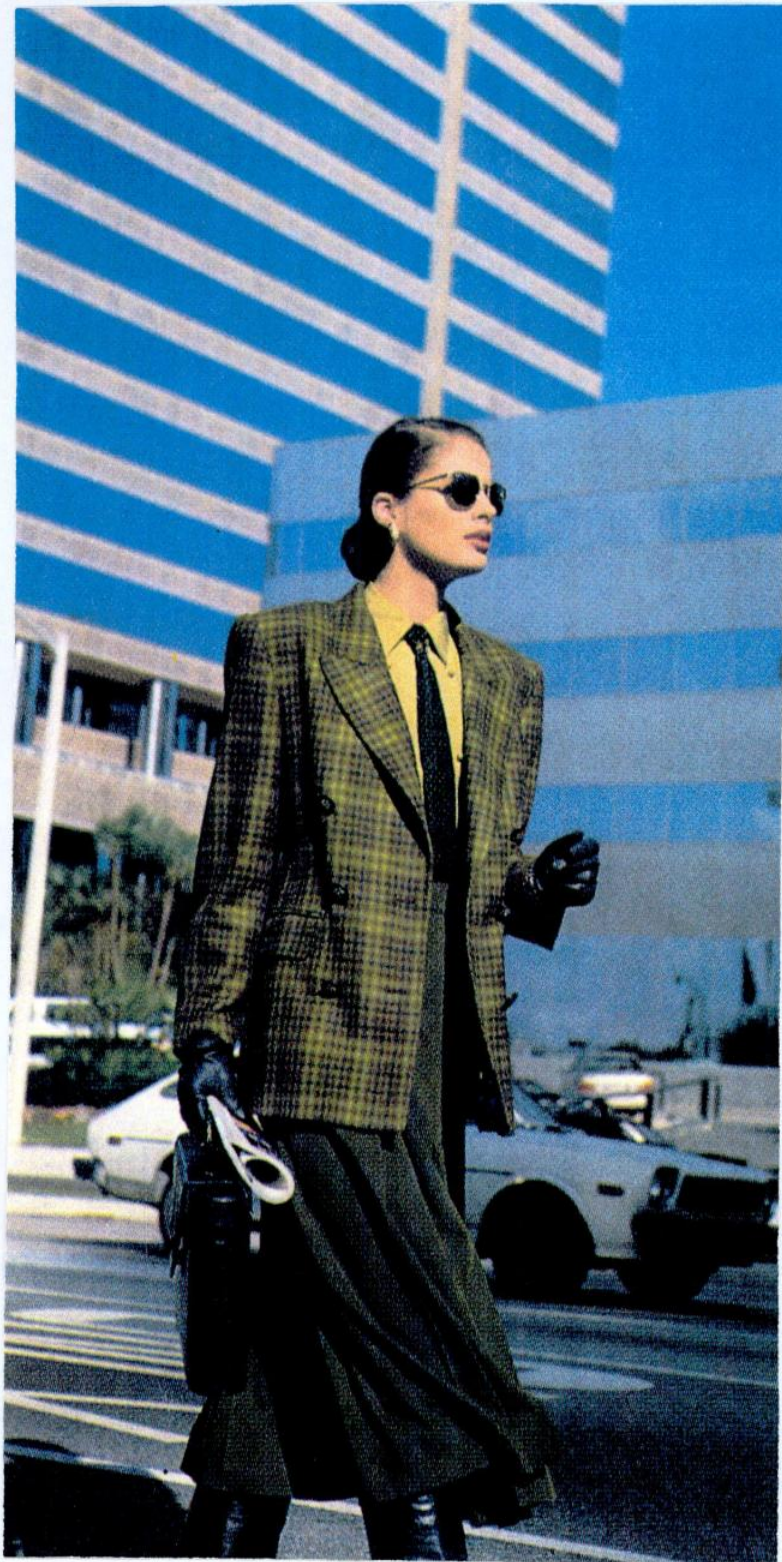
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41. The smart power suit.





42. The masculine look, 80's power dressing.



more relaxed which reflects the silent strength of the modern women.[ill. 43] Firstly, nineties menswear for women is designed to fit, tailored so as to follow female curves, so that there is no play on vulnerability.[ill. 44] Secondly, it draws attention to female physicality by suggesting rather than exposing. Sarah Mower describes it as such,

"The effect is striking, combining the hardness and professionalism of 'male' with the voluptuous individuality of 'female'..... a powerful image of self-sufficiency in which the best attributes of both sexes are equally balanced."

(Mower, September 1992, pg. 396)

Indeed, if the eighties power-dressing is seen as androgynous, then nineties power-dressing must be hermaphrodite. Nineties power-dressing also reflects the attitudes of women today, they have fought for equal recognition with men and have decided to use their femininity as an asset. Women are using sex appeal as a means of power. Woody Hochswender of the *New York Times* feels that women are tired of the monotony of eighties power-dressing, and got for the new femininity of their nineties style power-dressing to reaffirm their individuality.

"It's a result of gaining credibility in the workplace and deciding to use femininity to an advantage." (U.S. Vogue, October 1991, pg. 234)

Of course, John T. Molly would say that sex appeal reduces a woman's authority, but I believe societies attitudes have changed since 1977, with female role-models such as Madonna, who displayed that an accentuated femininity does not reduce her authority;³⁴ and Annie Lennox who informed us of the subtleties of a woman's sexuality.³⁵ A glance at past few decades shows that when in times of gender confusion, we revert back to the strongest symbols of identity. A transvestite tends to leave subtle clues as to their gender, and so do other cross dressers. The breasts are the most basic indicator of gender, and the examples shown indicate their raw strength. The blitz culture was a total crossover of gender identity, and this female

³⁴Madonna has been a huge influence in the past decade, encouraging women to 'express themselves' and become more independent.

³⁵Annie Lennox caused women to re-evaluate the notion of femininity by her portrayal of gender ambiguities.



43. 90's new femininity.



44. 90's new femininity.



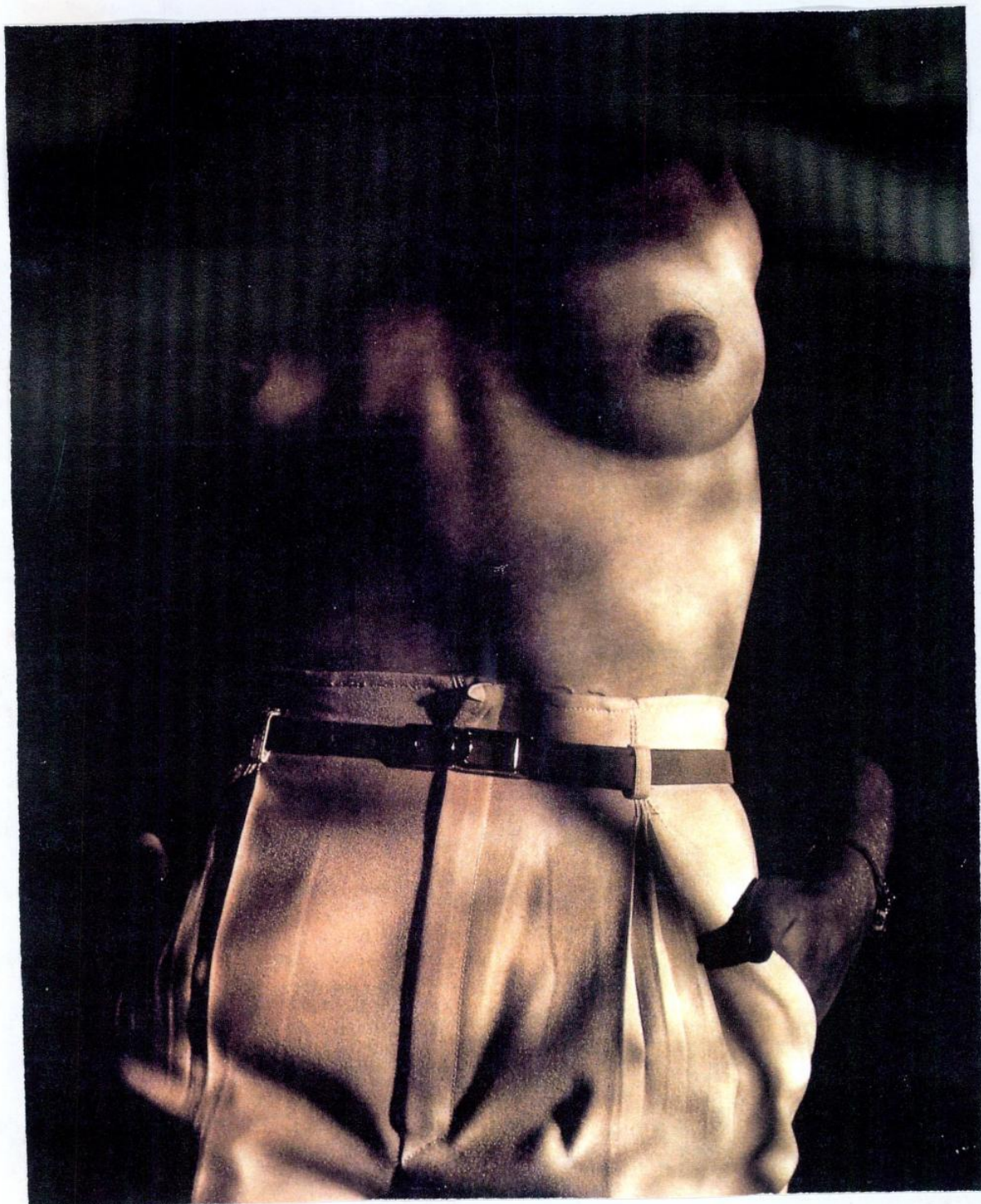
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showed her power by exposing the real thing to which no imitation could compare.[ill. 45]Eighties androgyny was all about power in the workplace, and this female takes command by wearing the trousers, in what seems like an illogical juxtaposition, but is just as valid on a woman as it is on a man.[ill. 46] This compounds what has been said about the new drag, he is not trying to be a woman, and states this by showing his lack of female gender symbol. [ill. 47] Covered or exposed, the breasts hold a lot of power, and women are more aware of this power in the struggle for sexual equality. The ideal way to use femininity to it's advantage.



45. 80's Blitz culture gender distinctions.





46. The antithesis of the imitation man look.



45



47. 90's new drag - not trying to be a woman.



Conclusion

Gender conventions are directly influenced by society's attitudes and are the basis for a change of gender image. During the eighteenth century, gender conventions had changed from the belief in the existence of an hermaphrodite as a third sex, to the acceptance of the third and fourth illegitimate genders. To-day's society allows for the existence of gender ambiguity, with curious mixtures of gender and sexual preferences, which before 1800 would have been labelled hermaphrodite. If this third hermaphroditic gender was in existence today, would it be seen as a third sex in its own right rather than being perceived as deviant from society's norm. I imagine, if it were fully integrated into society, it would become less vulnerable and consequently, attitudes in society such as homophobia, would be less acute.

Nineteenth century society, being so different to to-days, had quite different gender conventions. Cross-dressing was not seen as being "sexually deviant". People passed it off as a peculiarity, at most an indication of sexual and intellectual weakness. Contemporary cross-dressers think differently; Paul Woodfull, cross dressing performer with *The Glam Tarts* sees it rather as a sign of intelligence, as someone who can think beyond the confines of normality; and Martin Gore, cross-dresser with Depeche Mode, believes that as far as sexual weakness is concerned, girls now prefer effeminate boys. In Victorian society, Men and boys were subjected to cross-dressing as a punishment, often as a reaction to the male fear of effeminacy, a psychological fear, which society was aware of. One hundred years previously, in the 1700's, men fashionably wore effeminate dress. A change in gender conventions at this time meant that effeminate dress in the 1800's was associated with male transvestites. This and the changing of the law against masquerading in feminine attire heightened the fear of effeminacy. The nineteenth century custom of 'going about in drag', was an indication of society's loss of control over the new genders. Consequently, it was the beginning of society's prejudice against the illegitimate gender. Thai society, by comparison, has always accepted its illegitimate gender, the *Katoi*, because they have been integrated into the society.

The changes in gender images over the last twenty years have been reactionary, both to previous sub-culture trends and to mainstream fashion imagery. The new drag, the newest sub-culture to contain elements of cross-dressing, is a reaction to the exclusivity of the eighties, and the attitude towards social integration can be seen not only in new drag itself, but in areas of mainstream society also, such as media advertising and popular music. There is an air of acceptance which can be compared to nineteenth century society before its prejudice of transvestism. Of course, this time round, society is very aware of the psychological background to transvestism, but there is a possibility of social acceptance if we follow the example of the Thai people, perhaps, to realise the economic potential of theatrical cross-dressing, with drag artistes such as RuPaul Charles and Lypsinka, but at the same time to bring cross dressing closer to reality, by integration into mainstream society.

While comparing contemporary cross-dressers it is obvious that they must compromise a part of themselves to fit into society. This sometimes leads to having a sex-change operation, which is acceptable for transsexuals, who feel they are trapped in the body of the opposite sex anyway, but others, such as gay transvestites see it as the only way out. They must deal with their dual personality

because of society's non acceptance of their behaviour. The new drag queens, such as RuPaul, are trying to achieve mainstream status as pop stars, so that they may be accepted in their own right. Paul Woodfull tries to bring an acceptance of cross-dressing to his audience so that people may be more liberal in their attitudes towards cross-dressing and effeminacy. He also suggests that drag should be a natural continuation for youth culture, who are now living in the shadow of Aids, that surely dressing up in drag could be permissible, now that society deemed all other behaviour taboo.

Historically, if women parodied men in dress, it highlighted sexual inequality as women tended for upper class role models. Now, women are trying to cross-dress as exact replicas of men, whom they see as their counterparts; reflecting the attitudes of our society. Annie Lennox highlighted the power in gender ambiguity through a variety of guises in her videos. Power dressing, the mainstream cult of the eighties was an attack on equality in the workplace. Women decided to fight back with an angular and butch style of dressing, similar to male styles. This transgressed to the nineties style of power dressing where women use their sexuality as an advantage and lose the stiffness of men's suits. They opt for more fluid lines in an attempt to bond femininity and masculinity to form the true hermaphrodite. Will the Twenty-first century see a breakdown of gender inequality and a fresh perception of sexuality which is consistent with the needs of society as a whole. As RuPaul says, "You're born naked, and the rest is drag."

Appendix

Extracts from interview with Paul Woodfull, singer with *The Glam Tarts*, 'men in effeminate dress' at *The rock Garden*, 22 January, 1993.

Niamh Murphy: Do you associate yourself with the characters you play on stage?

Paul Woodfull: They come from me, I don't think they're like me, there's bits of all of them, probably in everybody.

N.M. : Do you try to appeal to an audience, to make them aware of effeminate behaviour?

P.W. : I think I'm saying this is OK to do and there is a bit of this in everybody but most people are afraid to accept it.

N.M. : Do you think cross-dressing is more accepted now with the emergence of the nineties drag in New York?

P.W. : The Gay movement was against the new drag for a long time. They thought drag queens were giving everyone the impression that this was what gay people were like. The nineties drag is a whole different thing. There are more heterosexuals into drag than gays anyway.

N.M. : Do you feel you're hiding your true persona in your performance cross-dressing?

P.W. : I don't think its similar to me in real life. I'm completely different off stage to any of the characters I play. I do try to do things to outrage people.

N.M. : Do you get a negative reaction because of the way you dress?

P.W. : Sometimes we've had audiences walk out, especially in rural areas, and we got a few kicks and punches by guys in the rock garden. People shout comments onto the stage, but most people are liberal and are just into a bit of fun. I've had clothes ripped off in the *Night Train* by some *rugger* types. They get the wrong idea which reveals attitudes of certain sectors of society that I might enjoy having

all my clothes ripped off and being manhandled by about six rugby players. Trinity won't allow *The Glam Tarts* posters because authorities say they're sexist; the name *Glam Tarts* is degrading to women - a narrow idea of what the word "Tart" means.

N.M. : Do you dress up when you are not in the band?

P.W. : Years ago I was into the *New Romantic* thing and I was also into Punk. I used dress fairly O.T.T. and I've always been inclined to wear make-up. I used work in the Gas Company, I'd have stars on my face and eyeliner; I certainly got a reaction there.

N.M. : What gender do you consider your character to be?

P.W. : There is much debate about what is effeminate and masculine. People are telling up that masculinity and femininity is down to conditioning.. I do like to relate to what people associate with femininity. I am into that in some way, it asks questions for people to put two and two together; it makes them think about attitudes. My tastes seem to go along with the gay culture. I like their tongue in cheek, exaggerated attitude.

N.M. : Would you like to appeal to a gay crowd?

P.W. : We've played gay clubs where they liked it, we got their seal of approval.

N.M. : Were you influenced by seventies attitudes during your youth?

P.W. : Cross-dressing was more acceptable in the seventies. It was cool for guys to be effeminate at that time. Bi-sexuality was the in-thing in the early eighties but Aids suddenly changed the attitudes, people are intolerant towards gays and anything other than the straight and narrow. The new drag is like flirting on a large scale. People are flirting with the idea of being outrageous but that is now too dangerous.

N.M. : Do you thing what you do influences your audiences?

P.W. : Deep down I want people to be more liberal. I do like the idea of shocking an audience, it bugs me that people want to restrict others.

N.M. : Do you see your cross-dressing as a form of escape?

P.W. : Yes, to get attention; an ego thing. It's like having a low self esteem and looking for approval all the time. I try to shock and an element of me wants to get back at certain people.

N.M. : Do you think that because you bring sexuality into your act, people react differently?

P.W. : Yes, I think it disturbs some people, its taboo really. Generally people are amused by it, sex is fun, people are interested in it anyway.

N.M. : In the nineteenth century male cross dressers were deemed intellectually and sexually weak. Do you agree?

P.W. : No they are not unintelligent, Barry Humphries for example. Macho guys are the most sexually weak. Society has changed and attitudes have changed also and the idea that bisexuality is the best of both worlds gets the reaction-that's disgusting. People with that attitude must be quite prudish and be sexually inhibited.

N.M. : Do you think your stage performance heightens peoples awareness of bisexuality?

P.W. : I hope people might be encouraged by it.

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