

The cool and casual style of the new American androgyny.

## DRESSED TO THRILL

BY ANNE HOLLANDER

WHEN QUENTIN BELL applied Veblen's principles of Conspicuous Consumption and Conspicuous Waste to fashion, he added another—Conspicuous Outrage. This one now clearly leads the other two. In this decade we want the latest trends in appearance to strain our sense of the suitable and give us a real jolt. The old social systems that generated a need for conspicuous display have modified enough to dull the chic of straight extravagance: the chic of shock has continuous vitality. Dramatically perverse sexual signals are always powerful elements in the modern fashionable vocabulary; and the most sensational component among present trends is something referred to as androgyny. Many modish women's clothes imitate what Robert Taylor wore in 1940 publicity stills, and Michael Jackson's startling feminine beauty challenges public responses from every store window, as well as in many living replicas.

The mode in appearance mirrors collective fantasy, not fundamental aims and beliefs. We are not all really longing for two sexes in a single body, and the true hermaphrodite still counts as a monster. We are not seeing a complete and free interchange of physical characteristics across the sexual divide. There are no silky false moustaches or dashing fake goatees finely crafted of imported sable for the discriminating woman, or luxuriant jaw-length sideburns of the softest bristle sold with moisturizing glue and a designer applicator. Although the new ideal feminine torso has strong square shoulders, flat hips, and no belly at all, the corresponding ideal male body is certainly not displaying the beauties of a soft round stomach, flaring hips, full thighs, and delicately sloping shoulders. On the new woman's ideally athletic shape, breasts may be large or not—a flat chest is not required; and below the belt in

back, the buttocks may sharply protrude. But no space remains in front to house a safely cushioned uterus and ovaries, or even well-upholstered labia: under the lower half of the new, high-cut minimal swimsuits, there is room only for a clitoris. Meanwhile the thrilling style of male beauty embodied by Michael Jackson runs chiefly to unprecedented surface adornment—cosmetics and sequins, jewels and elaborate hair, all the old privileges once granted to women, to give them every erotic advantage in the sex wars of the past.

The point about all this is clearly not androgyny at all, but the idea of detachable pleasure. Each sex is not trying to take up the fundamental qualities of the other sex, but rather of the other sexuality—the erotic dimension, which can transcend biology and its attendant social assumptions and institutions. Eroticism is being shown to float free of sexual function. Virility is displayed as a capacity for feeling and generating excitement, not for felling trees or enemies and generating children. Femininity has abandoned the old gestures of passivity to take on main force: ravishing female models now stare purposefully into the viewer's eyes instead of flashing provocative glances or gazing remotely away. Erotic attractiveness appears ready to exert its strength in unforeseeable and formerly forbidden ways and places. Recognition is now being given to sexual desire for objects of all kinds once considered unsuitable—some of them inanimate, judging from the seductiveness of most advertising photography.

Homosexual desire is now an acknowledged aspect of common life, deserving of truthful representation in popular culture, not just in coterie vehicles of expression. The aging parents of youthful characters in movie and television dramas are no longer rendered as mentally stuffy and physically withered, but as stunningly attractive sexual beings—legitimate and non-ridiculous rivals for the lustful attentions of the

young. The curved flanks of travel-irons and food processors in the Bloomingdale's catalogue make as strong an appeal to erotic desire as the satiny behinds and moist lips of the makeup and underwear models. So do the unfolding petals of lettuces and the rosy flesh of cut tomatoes on TV food commercials. In this general eroticization of the material world, visual culture is openly acknowledging that lust is by nature wayward.

To register as attractive under current assumptions, a female body may now show its affinities not only with delicious objects but with attractive male bodies, without having to relinquish any feminine erotic resources. Male beauty may be enhanced by feminine usages that increase rather than diminish its masculine effect. Men and women may both wear clothes loosely fashioned by designers like Gianni Versace or Issey Miyake to render all bodies attractive whatever their structure, like the drapery of antiquity. In such clothes, sexuality is expressed obliquely in a fluid fabric envelope that follows bodily movement and also forms a graceful counterpoint to the nonchalant postures of modern repose. The aim of such dress is to emphasize the sexiness of a rather generalized sensuality, not of male or female characteristics; and our present sense of personal appearance, like our sense of all material display, shows that we are more interested in generalized sensuality than in anything else. In our multiformal culture, it seems to serve as an equalizer.

In fashion, however, pervasive eroticism is still frequently being represented as the perpetual overthrow of all the restrictive categories left over from the last century, a sort of ongoing revolution. We are still pretending to congratulate ourselves on what a long way we have come. The lush men and strong girls now on view in the media may be continuing a long-range trend that began between the World Wars; but there have been significant inter-

Anne Hollander is the author of *Seeing Through Clothes* (Viking).

ruptions and an important shift of tone. Then, too, men had smooth faces, thick, wavy hair and full, pouting lips, and women often wore pants, had shingled hair, and athletic torsos. But the important point in those days was to be as anti-Victorian as possible. The rigid and bearded Victorian male was being eased out of his tight carapace and distancing whiskers; the whole ladylike panoply was being simplified so that the actual woman became apparent to the eye and touch.

Much of our present female mannishness and feminized manhood is a nostalgic reference to the effects fashionable for men and women in those pioneering days, rather than a new revolutionary expression of the same authentic kind.

There is obviously more to it all now than there was between the wars. We have already gone through some fake Victorian revivals, both unself-conscious in the 1950s and self-conscious in the '60s and '70s, and lately our sense of all style has become slightly corrupt. Apart from the sexiness of sex, we have discovered the stylishness of style and the fashionableness of fashion. Evolving conventions of dress and

sudden revolts from them have both become stylistically forced; there have been heavy quotation marks around almost all conspicuous modes of clothing in the last fifteen or twenty years, as there were not in more hopeful days. Life is now recognized to have a grotesque and inflated media dimension by which ordinary experience is measured, and all fashion has taken to looking over its own shoulder. Our contemporary revolutionary modes are mostly theatrical costumes, since we have now learned to assume that appearances are detachable and interchangeable and only have provisional meanings.

Many of the more extreme new sartorial phenomena display such uncooked incoherence that they fail to represent any main trend in twentieth-century

taste except a certain perverse taste for garbage—which is similarly fragmented and inexpressive, even though it can always be sifted and categorized. We have become obsessed with picking over the past instead of plowing it under, where it can do some good. Perversity has moreover been fostered in fashion by its relentless presentation as a form of ongoing public entertainment. The need for constant impact naturally causes originality to get confused with

olence or loss of decorum, a high level of civilization without any forbidding and tyrannical stiffness or antiquated formality. At the same time, women's fashions were stressing an articulated female shape that sought to be perceived as clearly as the male. Both were the first modern styles to take up the flavor of general physical ease, in timely and pertinent defiance of the social restrictions and symbolic sexual distinctions made by dress in the preceding time. Now, however, those same easy men's clothes are being worn by women; and the honest old figure of freedom seems to be dressed up in the spirit of pastiche. We did come a long way for a while, but then we stopped and went on the stage.

Strong and separate sexual definition in the old Victorian manner tried to forbid the generally erotic and foster the romantic. Against such a background even slightly blurring the definition automatically did the opposite; and so when Victorian women dared adopt any partial assortment of male dress they were always extremely disturbing. They called attention to those aspects of female sexuality that develop in sharp con-

trast to both female biology and romantic rhetoric. Consequently, when female fashion underwent its great changes early in this century, such aspects were deliberately and vehemently emphasized by a new mobility and quasi-masculine leanness. Women with no plump extensions at all but with obvious and movable legs suddenly made their appearance, occasionally even in trousers. They indicated a mettlesome eagerness for action, even unencumbered amorous action, and great lack of interest in sitting still receiving homage or rocking the cradle. Meanwhile when men adopted the casual suits of modern leisure, they began to suggest a certain new readiness to sit and talk, to listen and laugh at themselves, to dally and tarry rather than couple briskly and



BY MICHAEL SELL FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

the capacity to cause a sensation; and sensations can always be created, just as in all show business, by the crudest of allusions.

In the '20s, the revolutionary new fashions were much more important but much less brutally intrusive. Photos from the '20s, '30s, and even the very early '40s, show the young Tyrone Power and Robert Taylor smiling with scintillating confidence, caressed by soft focus and glittering highlights, and wearing the full-cut, casual topcoats with the collar up that we see in today's ads for women, then as now opened to show the fully-draped trousers, loose sweaters and long, broad jackets of that time. Then it was an alluringly modern and feminized version of male beauty, freshly suggesting pleasure without vi-

straightway depart for work or battle. Men and women visibly desired to rewrite the rules about how the two sexes should express their interest in sex; and the liberated modern ideal was crystallized.

But a sexual ideal of maturity and enlightened savoir faire also informed that period of our imaginative history. In the fantasy of the '30s, manifested in the films of Claudette Colbert, for example, or Gable and Lombard, adult men and women ideally pursued pleasure without sacrificing reason, humor, or courtesy—even in those dramas devoted to the ridiculous. The sexes were still regarded as fundamentally different kinds of being, although the style of their sexuality was reconceived. The aim of amorous life was still to take on the challenging dialectic of the sexes, which alone could yield the fullest kind of sexual pleasure. Erotic feeling was inseparable from dramatic situation.

By those same '30s, modern adult clothing was also a fully developed stylistic achievement. It duly continued to refine, until it finally became unbearably mannered in the first half of the '60s. The famous ensuing sartorial revolution, though perfectly authentic, was also the first to occur in front of the camera—always in the mirror, as it were. And somehow the subsequent two decades have seen a great fragmentation both of fashion and of sexuality.

Extreme imagery, much of it androgynous like Boy George's looks, or the many punk styles and all the raunchier fashion photos, has become quite commonplace; but it has also become progressively remote from most common practice. It offers appearances that we may label "fashion," but that we really know to be media inventions created especially to stun, provoke, and dismay us. At the same time, some very conventional outrageous effects have been

revived in the realm of accessible fashion, where there is always room for them. Ordinary outrageousness and perverse daring in dress are the signs of licensed play, never the signal of serious action. They are licitly engaged in by the basically powerless, including clowns and children and other innocuous performers, who are always allowed to make extreme emotional claims that may stir up strong personal responses but have no serious public

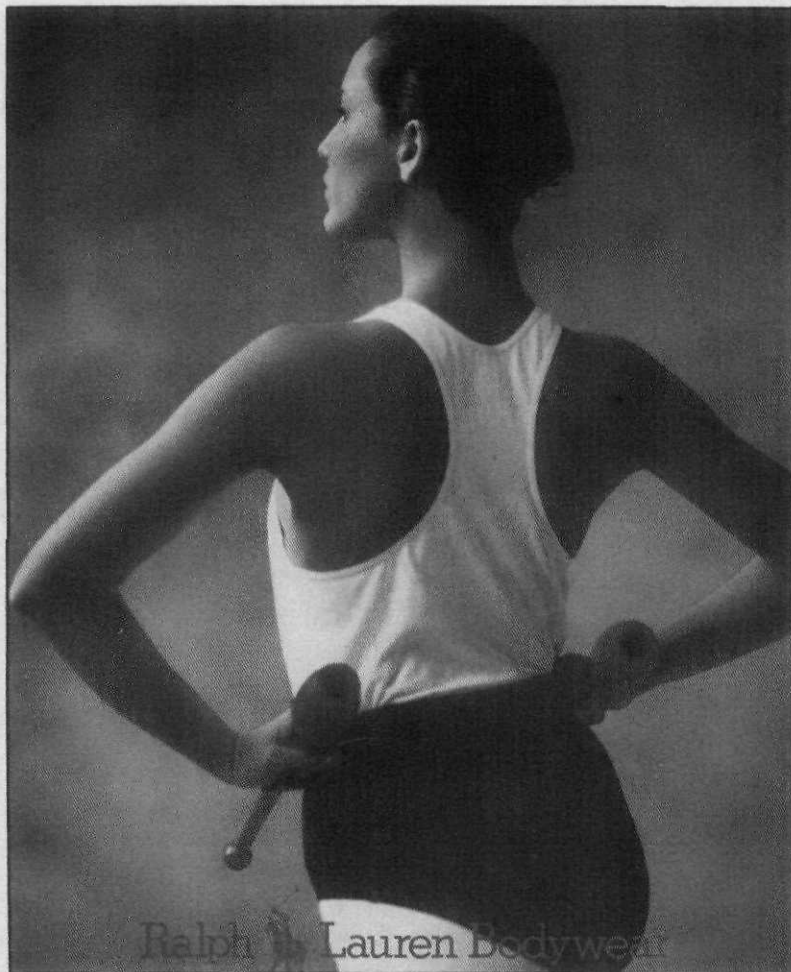
that she looked at first like a small child being funny in adult gear, and then like a fragile girl wrapped in a strong man's coat, a combined emblem of bruised innocence and clownishness. These are both familiar "outrageous" devices culled particularly from the theatrical past.

Long before modern fashion took it up, the conventionally outrageous theme of an attractive feminine woman in breeches proved an invariably stimu-

lating refinement in the long history of racy popular art, both for the stage and in print. The most important erotic aim of this theme was never to make a woman actually seem to be a man—looking butch has never been generally attractive—but to make a girl assume the unsettling beauty that dwells in the sexual uncertainty of an adolescent boy. It is an obvious clever move for modern fashionable women to combine the old show-business-like excitement of the suggestive trousered female with the cultivated self-possession of early twentieth-century menswear—itsself already a feminized male style. It suits, especially in the present disintegrated erotic climate that has rendered the purer forms of outrageousness somewhat passé.

Such uses of men's clothes have nothing to do with an impulse toward androgyny. They instead invoke all the old tension between the sexes; and complete drag, whichever sex wears it, also insists on sexual polarity. Most drag for men veers toward the exaggerated accoutrements of the standard siren; and on the current screen, *Tootsie* and *Yentl* are both demonstrating how different and how divided the sexes are.

While the extreme phenomena are getting all the attention, however, we are acting out quite another forbidden fantasy in our ordinary lives. The really androgynous realm in personal appear-



importance. Women's fashion constantly made use of outrage in this way during the centuries of female powerlessness, and selective borrowing from men was one of its most effective motifs.

After the '60s and before the present menswear mode, the masculine components in women's fashions still made girls look either excitingly shocking or touchingly pathetic. The various neat tuxedos made famous by Yves St. Laurent, for example, were intended to give a woman the look of a depraved youth, a sort of tempting Dorian Gray. The "Annie Hall" clothes swamped the woman in oversized male garments, so

ance is that of active sports clothing. The unprecedented appeal of running gear and gym clothes and all the other garb associated with strenuous physical effort seems to be offering an alternative in sexual expression. Beyond the simple pleasures of physical fitness, and the right-minded satisfactions of banishing class difference that were first expressed in the blue-jeans revolution of the '60s, this version of pastoral suggests a new erotic appeal in the perceived androgyny of childhood. The short shorts and other ingenuous bright play clothes in primary colors that now clothe bodies of all sizes and sexes are giving a startling kindergarten cast to everybody's public looks, especially in summer.

The real excitement of androgynous appearance is again revealed as associated only with extreme youth—apparently the more extreme the better. The natural androgyny of old age has acquired no appeal. The tendency of male and female bodies to resemble each other in late maturity is still conventionally ridiculous and deplorable; sportswear on old women looks crisp and convenient, not sexually attractive. But the fresh, unfinished androgyny of the nursery is evidently a newly expanded arena for sexual fantasy.

**I**N THE unisex look of the ordinary clothing that has become increasingly common in the past two decades, there has been a submerged but unmistakable element of child-worship. This note has been struck at a great distance from the slick and expensive ambiguities of high fashion that include couture children's clothes aping the vagaries of current adult chic. It resonates instead in the everyday sexual ambiguity of rough duck or corduroy pants, flannel shirts, T-shirts, sweaters, and sneakers. Any subway car or supermarket is full of people dressed this way. The guises for this fantasy have extended past play clothes to children's underwear, the little knitted skirts and briefs that everyone wears at the age of 5. One ubiquitous ad for these even showed a shirtless sliding up to expose an adult breast, to emphasize the sexiness of the fashion; but the breast has been prudently canceled in publicly displayed versions.

Our erotic obsession with children has overt and easily deplored expressions in the media, where steamy 12-year-old fashion models star in ads and 12-year-old prostitutes figure in dramas

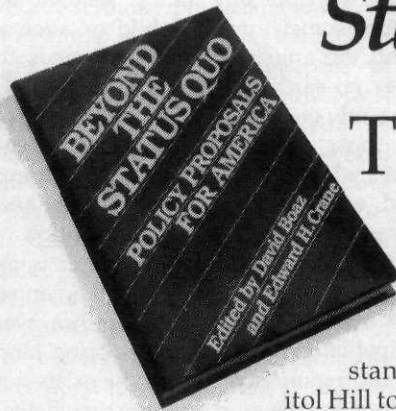
and news stories. The high-fashion modes for children also have the flavor of forced eroticism. Child abuse and kiddie porn are now publicly discussed concerns, ventilated in the righteous spirit of reform; and yet unconscious custom reflects the same preoccupation with the sexual condition of childhood. The androgynous sportswear that was formerly the acceptable everyday dress only of children is now everyone's leisure clothing: its new currency must have more than one meaning.

On the surface, of course, it invokes the straight appeal of the physical life, the rural life, and perhaps even especially the taxing life of the dedicated athlete, which used to include sexual abstinence along with the chance of glory. The world may wish to look as if it were constantly in training to win, or equipped to explore; but there is another condition it is also less obviously longing for—freedom from the strain of fully adult sexuality. These styles of clothing signal a retreat into the unfinished, undefined sexuality of childhood—that we are now finding so erotic, and that carries no difficult social or personal responsibilities.

From 1925 to 1965, 4-year-old girls

and boys could tumble in the sandbox in identical cotton overalls or knitted suits, innocently aping the clothes of skiers, railroadmen, or miners, while their mom wore a dress, hat, and stockings, and their dad a suit, hat, and tie—the modern dress of sexual maturity, also worn by Gable, Lombard, and all the young and glittering Hollywood company. Now the whole family wears sweat suits and overalls and goes bareheaded. Such gear is also designed to encourage the game of dressing up like all the non-amorous and ultraphysical heroes of modern folklore—forest rangers and cowboys, spacemen and frogmen, pilots and motorcyclists, migrant workers and terrorists—that is constantly urged on children. The great masquerade party of the late '60s ostensibly came to an end; but it had irreversibly given to ordinary grownups the right to wear fancy costumes for fun that was formerly a child's privilege. The traditional dress of the separate adult sexes is reserved for public appearances, and in general it is now socially correct to express impatience with it. "Informal" is the only proper style in middle-class social life; and for private leisure, when impulse governs choices,

## Challenging the Status Quo . . .



**T**oo much public policy analysis in America is enmeshed in the governmental status quo, dedicated to fine-tuning existing programs. But fundamentally flawed programs require fundamental solutions. In this book 13 distinguished scholars and analysts stand back from the daily battles on Capitol Hill to gain a broader perspective and offer a wide range of proposals for moving public policy beyond the status quo. Authors include Murray Weidenbaum on international trade, Earl Ravenel on NATO, Joan Kennedy Taylor on poverty, and James Dale Davidson on balancing the budget. \$20.00/cloth, \$8.95/paper; 290 pp.

Please enclose payment with your order. Return to:  
Cato Institute, Dept. NR, 224 Second St., S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003

**CATO**  
INSTITUTE

kids' clothes are the leading one. Apparently the erotic androgynous child is the new forbidden creature of unconscious fantasy, not only the infantile fashion model or rock star but the ordinary kid, who has exciting sexual potential hidden under its unsexed dress-up play clothes.

**F**ASHIONS of the remote past dealt straightforwardly with the sexuality of children by dressing them just like ordinary adults, suitably different according to sex. But in Romantic times, children were perceived to exist in a special condition much purer and closer to beneficent nature than their elders, requiring clothes that kept them visibly separate from the complex corruptions of adult society, including full-scale erotic awareness. The habit of putting children in fancy dress began then, too, especially boys. They were dressed as wee, chubby, and harmless soldiers and sailors, or Turks and Romans, to emphasize their innocence by contrast. Children's clothes still differed according to sex—girls had sweet little chemises and sashes instead of fancy costumes—but their overriding common flavor was one of artlessness.

Later on the Victorians overdid it, and loaded their children with clothing, but it was still two-sexed and distinctively designed for them. Finally the enlightened twentieth century invented the use of mock sportswear for the wiggly little bodies of both boys and girls. Nevertheless, the costumes now suitable for children on display still tend toward the Victorian, with a good deal of nostalgic velvet and lace. In line with Romantic views of women, some feminine styles also used to feature infantine suggestions drawn from little girls' costumes: the last was the tiny baby dress worn with big shoes and big hair in the later '60s, just before the eruption of the women's movement. But only since then has a whole generation of adults felt like dressing up in mock rough gear, like androgynous children at play, to form a race of apparently presexual but unmistakably erotic beings.

Once again, very pointedly, the clothes for the role are male. Our modern sense of artlessness seems to prefer the masculine brand; and when we dress our little boys and girls alike to blur their sexuality—or ourselves in imitation of them—that means we dress the girls like the boys, in the manifold

costumes celebrating nonsexual physical prowess. At leisure, both men and women prefer to suggest versions of Adam alone in Eden before he knew he had a sex, innocently wearing his primal sweat suit made only of native worth and honor.

The Romantic sense of the child as naturally privileged and instinctively good like Adam seems to stay with us. But we have lately added the belief in a child's potential depravity, which may go unpaid for and unpunished just because of all children's categorical innocence. Perhaps this society abuses its children, and also aggressively dresses them in lipstick and sequins, for the same reason it imitates them—from a helpless envy of what they get away with. The everyday androgynous costume is the suit of diminished erotic responsibility and exemption from adult sexual risk. What it clothes is the child's license to make demands and receive gratification with no risk of dishonor—to be erotic, but to pose as unsexual and therefore unaccountable.

**E**VEN more forbidden and outrageous than the sexual child is its near relation, the erotic angel. While the ordinary world is routinely dressing itself and its kids in unisex jeans, it is simultaneously conjuring up mercurial apparitions who offer an enchanting counterpoint to life's mundane transactions. In the rock star form, they embody the opposing fantasy face of the troublesome domestic child or adolescent: the angelic visitor who needs to obey no earthly rules. Funny little E.T. was only one version. The type includes all those supremely compelling creatures who may shine while they stomp and whirl and scream and hum and never suffer the slightest humiliation.

A child, however ideologized, is always real and problematic, but an angel has a fine mythic remoteness however palpable he seems. The opposing kind of androgyny invests him: he exists not before but beyond human sexual life, and he comes as a powerful messenger from spheres where there is no taking or giving in marriage, but where extreme kinds of joy are said to be infinite. Our rock-video beings cultivate the unhuman look of ultimate synthesis: they aim to transcend sexual conflict by becoming fearsome angels, universally stimulating creatures fit for real existence only out of this world. Like all angels, they profoundly excite; but they

don't excite desire, even though they do make the air crackle with promise and menace. Their job is to bring the message and then leave, having somehow transformed the world. Michael Jackson reportedly leads a life both angelic and artificially childlike, and he makes his appearances in epiphanic style. David Bowie still appears to be the man who fell to earth, not someone born here. Grace Jones also seems to come from altogether elsewhere. Such idols only function in the sphere of unattainability. While they flourish they remain sojourners, leading lives of vivid otherness in what seems a sexual no-man's-land.

**A**NGELS were in fact once firmly male and uncompromisingly austere. The disturbing sensuality they acquired in the art of later centuries, like that of the luscious angel in Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks*, always reads as a feminization—and from this one must conclude that adding feminine elements to the male is what produces androgyny's most intense effects. Almost all our androgynous stars are in fact males in feminized trim; their muscular and crop-haired female counterparts, such as Annie Lennox, are less numerous and have a more limited appeal. The meaning in all our androgyny, both modish and ordinary, still seems to be the same: the male is the primary sex, straightforward, simple, and active. He can be improved and embellished, however, and have and give a better time if he allows himself to be modified by the complexities of female influence.

The process does not work the other way. Elegant women in fashionable menswear expound the same thought, not its opposite: traditional jackets and trousers are austere beautiful, but they are patently enhanced by high heels, flowing scarves, cosmetics, and earrings. Lisa Lyon, the body builder, has been photographed by Robert Mapplethorpe to show that her excessively developed muscles do not make her manish but instead have been feminized to go with, not against, her flowered hats and lipstick. Ordinary women wearing men's active gear while wheeling strollers on the street or carrying bags across the parking lot are subduing and adapting harsh male dress to flexible female life and giving it some new scope. Common androgynous costume is always some kind of suit or jumpsuit, or pants, shirt and jacket, not some kind of dress,

bodice and skirt, or gown. A hat may go with it, or perhaps a hood or scarf, but not a coif or veil. A few real female skirts (not kilts or Greek evzone skirts) are now being very occasionally and sensorially tried out by some highly visible men—daring designers, media performers and their imitators, fashion models and theirs—but all kinds of pants are being worn by all kinds of women all the time. We can read the message: the male is the first sex, now at last prepared to consider the other one anew, with much fanfare. It is still a case of female sexuality enlightening the straight male world—still the arrival of Eve and all her subsequent business in and beyond the garden—that is being celebrated. The “androgynous” mode for both sexes suggests that the female has come on the scene to educate the male about the imaginative pleasures of sex, signified chiefly by the pleasures of adornment. About its difficulties, summed up by that glaringly absent round belly, she is naturally keeping quiet.

**M**EANWHILE the more glittering versions of modish androgyny continue to reflect what we adore in fantasy. Many of us seem to feel that the most erotic condition of all could not be that of any man or woman, or of any child, or of a human being with two sexes, but that of a very young and effeminate male angel—a new version of art history's lascivious *putto*. Such a being may give and take a guiltless delight, wield limitless sexual power without sexual politics, feel all the pleasures of sex with none of the personal risks, can never grow up, never get wise, and never be old. It is a futureless vision, undoubtedly appropriate to a nuclear age; but if any of us manages to survive, the soft round belly will surely again have its day.

In the meantime, as we approach the end of the century and the millennium, the impulse toward a certain fusion in the habits of the sexes may have a more hopeful meaning. After a hundred years of underground struggle, trousers are no longer male dress sometimes worn by women. They have been successfully feminized so as to become authentic costume for both sexes, and to regain the authoritative bisexual status the gown once had in the early Middle Ages. This development is clearly not a quick trend but a true change, generations in the making. Male skirts have

yet to prove themselves; but men have in fact succeeded in making long-term capital out of the short-lived and now forgotten Peacock Revolution of the late '60s. Whole new ranges of rich color, interesting pattern, texture and unusual cut have become generally acceptable in male dress since then, and so has a variety of jewelry. The sort of fashionable

experiment once associated only with women has become a standard male option. Some new agreement between the sexes may actually be forming, signaled by all these persistent visual projections; but just what that accord will turn out to be it is not safe to predict, nor whether it will continue to civilize us further or only perplex us more.

## TREATING WITH THE DEVIL

### Psychotherapy in the Third Reich: The Göring Institute by Geoffrey Cocks

(Oxford University Press, 416 pp., \$24.95)

The Third Reich ended forty years ago, but only now have German psychotherapists discovered their Nazi past. This may seem bizarre, until it is remembered that the German medical profession as a whole has yet to confront its role in Nazi Germany. Others—like lawyers, engineers, and academics—have long since done so. Physicians, however, have by and large been spared this agony; and this despite the fact that after 1933 more physicians joined the Nazi Party, and more quickly, than members of any other profession. To be sure, we are slowly learning more about those physicians involved in the camps, or in the Nazi euthanasia program. Still, the consequences of their daily collaboration with the Nazis have been almost entirely ignored. The physician is supposed to enjoy a special status in Western society, to be above the din of battle—physicians, and especially surgeons, were favorite heroes of popular literature between the World Wars, just as they play this role in our own television culture.

The advance of medicine during the last century has indeed been impressive, as has the physician's soaring social status. It is crucial to consider the aims of the medical profession as it sought to establish a monopoly over health care if we are to understand the collaboration with National Socialism, not just of psychotherapists but of their enemies in academic medicine as well. The contrast made in this book between positivist and rationalist medicine on the one hand, and Nazi medicine with its romantic ideal of treating body and

soul on the other, is somewhat justified; but it misses the subjective element in medical diagnosis which helped so many physicians to adjust to the reality of the Nazi state.

During their struggle against nature healers, midwives, and purveyors of patent medicines, physicians claimed moral authority as well as medical authority, trying with some success to replace priests, ministers, or rabbis as guardians of the moral health of society. Thus one popular book about great doctors, written before the First World War, argued that disease was a sign not merely of physical weakness but also of ethical infirmity. The real advances in medicine must be balanced against such subjectivity: there was a strong tendency, long before the Nazis, to label as healthy whatever supported the norms of society, its manners and morals. Those who did not conform, or who were, like the Jews, potential outsiders, were declared to be subject to nervousness and neurasthenia. It is impossible accurately to discuss the relationship between medicine (including psychotherapy) and National Socialism without pointing out that physicians had already become the guardians of social health as well as personal health, offering solutions to the troubling issues of modernity. They could, it was thought, repair the modern damage and prevent its recurrence for the individual and the race.

The psychiatric center which functioned, even flourished, from 1936 to 1945, was known as the Göring Institute. It was named for its director,

Copyright of New Republic is the property of New Republic and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.

Copyright of New Republic is the property of TNR II, LLC and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.