

*Charles Winick*

with a new  
introduction  
by the author

**de** SEXUALIZATION  
in AMERICAN *Life*

# **Desexualization in American Life**

**Classics in Communication and  
Mass Culture Series**

**Arthur Asa Berger, Series Editor**

*Agit-Pop*, Arthur Asa Berger

*The Astonished Muse*, Reuel Denney

*Beyond Words*, Kurt W. Back

*Communication and Social Order*, Hugh Dalziel Duncan

*Desexualization in American Life*, Charles Winick

*Everyday Life in the Modern World*, Henri Lefebvre

*The Flow of Information*, Melvin DeFleur and Otto N. Larson

*The Hollywood TV Producer*, Muriel G. Cantor

*Mass Media in Modern Society*, Norman Jacobs

*The Play Theory of Mass Communication*, William Stephenson

*Political Culture and Public Opinion*, Arthur Asa Berger

*Polls and the Awareness of Public Opinion*, Leo Bogart

*The Public Arts*, Gilbert Seldes

*Television as an Instrument of Terror*, Arthur Asa Berger

*Television in Society*, Arthur Asa Berger

*T.V.: The Most Popular Art*, Horace Newcomb

*The Uses of Literacy*, Richard Hoggart

# Desexualization in American Life

*Charles Winick*

with a new introduction by the author

 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group  
LONDON AND NEW YORK

Originally published in 1968 by Western Publishing Company, Inc.

Published 1995 by Transaction Publishers

Published 2017 by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor and Francis Group, an informa business*

New material this edition copyright © 1995 by Taylor & Francis.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Notice:

Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

Library of Congress Catalog Number: 94-26254

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Winick, Charles, 1922-

[New people]

Desexualization in American life/Charles Winick; with a new introduction by the author.

p. cm. —(Classics in communication and mass culture)

Originally published: The new people. New York: Pegasus, 1968.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 1-56000-799-0 (pbk.) : \$22.95

1. Popular culture—United States. 2. Sex role—United States. 3. Masculinity (Psychology)—United States. 4. Femininity (Psychology)

I. Title. II. Series.

E169.12.W56 1994

973.923—dc20

94-26254

CIP

ISBN 13: 978-1-56000-799-9 (pbk)

# contents

introduction to the transaction edition	1
preface	29
1 arts and the man	33
2 the hero unhorsed	77
3 fun and games	141
4 the country of the bland	163
5 inner and outer space	183
6 childhood, a journey with new maps	215
7 costume and custom: the vanishing difference	241
8 men, women, and other minority groups	291
9 the seventh veil	319
10 the way of the neuter	359
acknowledgments	377
notes	379



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# introduction to the transaction edition

L. P. Hartley, a modern English novelist, has written that the past is a foreign country because “they do things differently there.” *Desexualization in American Life*, originally published in 1968 under the title *The New People*, examines the ways in which small but remarkable changes in our traditional patterns of thinking and doing affect our national and individual life. To the people of the 1960s, the American past might have been regarded as a foreign country in which things were done differently. Today, a quarter of a century later, we are surrounded by the changes first noticed at that time. They are no longer “foreign” or “different.” They are more obvious, more widespread, have greater ramifications, and are now accepted almost as routine. And they are certainly more significant. The small signposts of 1968 have mushroomed in size and consequence to such a degree that they are too obvious to be ignored. To paraphrase Pogo, we have met those foreigners and they are us.

*Desexualization in American Life* was written during the late 1960s to call attention to significant changes in American life at that time. The changes were occurring in the social and sex roles, social structure, and popular culture of the period. They appeared to be interrelated, mutually reinforcing, and consistent. They also were an omen of serious consequences for the quality of our lives. The book examines trends in a wide range

of activities. It looks at the arts, the uses of leisure, what we eat and drink, how we dress, sex roles, how we rear children, and some aspects of history. The exploration reveals a common thread: American life is undergoing a blurring, a homogenization, a neutering. It is almost as if the color and spirit of individual choice and taste are quietly tip-toeing off the national stage, leaving behind a nation of pallid mannequins.

My previous studies had involved subjects like the crossing over of men's and women's clothes, changes in the performing arts, the growing popularity of new kinds of given names, shifts in kinds of people who were heroes in the mass media, changes in preference for pets, and other aspects of social life. The findings of these studies suggested some larger warning signs up the road toward which America heading.

During the 1960s, an enlarged range of choices in gender, roles, life-style, politics, and culture was emerging. Although many of these new options were creative, life-enhancing, empowering, and healthy, there were others that appeared to have less happy consequences. One theme of the book is that a major mass movement in life-style occurred in the 1960s. At the same time, there was a large expansion of options for the individual and the burgeoning power of previously nonparticipating groups. Since that time, we have learned to live with what has since become almost a series of norms with variations that reflect complex relationships between politics and popular culture. The book explores some of the controversy over male and female roles that was beginning to acquire momentum in the 1960s. It examines the trends in male and female participation in a wide range of activities as well as their representation in the popular arts and more serious ones as well. It also suggests that the unisex mode and the blurring of male/female roles are complexly related to a corresponding flattening in other significant aspects of American life. Since the book deals with so many aspects of American culture, a full updating would require at least as lengthy a discussion as the original. Comment here will address key themes in the book that are especially significant today.

## The Popular Arts

In popular music and art, most of the major trends from the 1960s have continued. Although the discotheques vanished by the late 1970s, nonpartner noncontact dances, with new names, still prevail. In popular music, the gender cross-over is still important. Exaggerated women's makeup helps to sustain the popularity of the male singer Alice Cooper and the male group Kiss. Boy George's dressing on- and offstage as a girl is his trademark. Rock personality RuPaul is a tall man who wears stunning platinum wigs as part of his drag queen appearances and k. d. Lang's oversized men's suits and male cowboy outfits are typical of other women pop singers who dress like men. Les Ballets Trocadero de Monte Carlo, which started in 1974, is a transvestite male company. As one of its dancers said, "We are ballerinas...we are not imitating women." The ambiguous sexuality of Mick Jagger, whose stage movements were described by Truman Capote as a parody between a drum majorette and Fred Astaire, remains a central appeal. The New York Dolls and Duran Duran in the 1970s and 1980s are among the many groups that flaunted their androgyny. In what have been called the Aqua Net Years, from 1984 to 1986, groups like Bon Jovi, Billy Idol, and Guns 'n' Roses were helped to gain fame by their heavy use of hair dye and spray. Flowing degendered hair continues to characterize many rockers since then. The appearance of such musical eminences, along with their startling or unusual names, contribute to their performance art.

Dance-pop personality singer Madonna resembles former film stars Marlene Dietrich and Mae West in communicating both the carnal and ridiculous dimensions of sexuality. Because her hard-edged eroticism is self-involved and hints at ambiguous sexuality, it offers no threat to its audience. Her costumes are fun because they are so campy. She sports Dietrich's monocle and double-breasted suit while her male

dancers wear oversized cone-shaped brassieres. Skillful and energetic promotion of her ambisexuality and of the dissonance between her defiant persona and sacramental name has made Madonna one of the most powerful women in entertainment, with a multimedia empire that includes books, music publishing, recordings, television, concerts, and movies.

Whether or not the designation of Michael Jackson as the King of Pop is justified, he is certainly a member of the pop royalty, and his "Thriller" of 1982 remains the best-selling album of all time. Jackson is perhaps the most neutral and either-way popular culture figure of the last half century. His pre-pubescent appearance and clothing are reminiscent of the early Beatles. His voice has both a Column A and Column B quality; it can be considered either masculine or feminine. Jackson's sexual ambiguity has helped to make him a star player in the fantasies of millions of young admirers. A man of 35, he comes across as a Peter Pan who is a virgin of both genders. When he gives his shows names like "Bad" and "Dangerous" they are likely to be perceived as attractive rather than threatening. Jackson provides an alternative to gangster rap, hard rock, and heavy metal.

Barbra Streisand has established herself as the premier pop singer. On March 27, 1994, when tickets for her five New York concerts went on sale, about 5 million calls were placed to the ticket office between noon and 3:00 P.M. and a similar response was reported in the other cities on her 22-concert tour. Neither Elvis Presley or Frank Sinatra ever generated such a response. Barbra Streisand is more than a pop superstar. She is also the most powerful woman in Hollywood. She has enough influence to have lobbied successfully for a film that was based on I. B. Singer's *Yentl* (1983), the story of a young woman who disguises herself as a man in order to become a rabbi in a European ghetto. Streisand not only starred in the film but also directed, produced, and co-wrote the script. Her eminence is so established that *The New York Times* observed

that when Streisand and President Clinton got together, it was not clear who was deigning to see whom.

The American musical theater, second only to jazz as an original contribution to the arts, has been barely limping along for decades. Broadway has essentially presented exotic programs, high concept shows, British pseudo-opera imports with unexceptional bland music, and revivals. The musical leading man is an endangered species. As in the 1960s, women have been the stars of the relatively few successful American musicals, like *Sunset Boulevard* or the revival of *Gypsy*.

Movies continue to reflect the new role of women in a number of ways. Martin Scorsese's *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* (1974) was the first film from a major studio in decades in which the central character was a woman. Since then, a number of actresses have played independent women whose lives do not depend on men. The main character in *Julia* (1977) was a spy for the Allies before World War II. In *Norma Rae* (1979), the title character fought for union representation and in *Silkwood* (1983), the female protagonist wanted to expose hazardous working conditions. The eponymous titles derive from the primary figure, a woman.

One powerful trend in movies is represented by *Thelma and Louise* (1991), with Susan Sarandon and Geena Davis. Consider the story: Sarandon shoots and kills a man who tried to rape Davis. The two women then drive off, blowing up trucks and engaging in armed robbery and other acts of violence, en route to a personal nowhere. There was a huge outcry when the film appeared, not so much because of its violence but because the two stars, who reflected the pressure of enduring sexist indignities, were in charge of their destinies, expressed their power, and did not back down from making amoral decisions. In the same year, Jodie Foster played an FBI trainee who mentally triumphs over the brilliant criminal Hannibal Lecter in *Silence of the Lambs*.

One reason that some movies now present women in stronger roles is their greater prominence as studio executives,

producers, and directors. Three of the six major studios had women production presidents at the same time during the 1980s. Lisa Henson, at 33 the youngest studio head in decades, is president of Columbia Pictures and had previously been executive vice president at Warner Brothers. During the last fifteen years, women have produced a number of major films, received more important directing and writing assignments, and are executives at the talent agencies that represent key movie personnel.

The new power of women could be seen by the spontaneous negative reaction, all over America, to several movies, released around the same time in 1993, in which a woman was rented out by her fiancé or husband to another man. Nicholas Cage in *Honeymoon in Vegas* gives his fiancée to James Caan to pay off a large gambling debt. In *Indecent Proposal* Woody Harrelson rents wife Demi Moore for one night for \$1 million to interested party Robert Redford. In *Mad Dog and Glory*, Robert De Niro saves gangster Bill Murray's life and his reward is the enjoyment of Uma Thurman's most memorable attentions for a week. Women's groups and others expressed outrage at the idea of films that presented the woman as a disposable utensil. The films probably represent a regressive blip; the future is more likely to see more stories like *Angie* (1994), a mainstream mall film in which unmarried and pregnant Geena Davis is involved with two men but decides that her future doesn't depend on either one. This kind of female detachment from a traditional role is likely to stir up a mass uneasiness that will remind some people of the outrage provoked by pathfinder Ibsen with regard to his work *A Doll's House*.

Already in the 1960s, the traditional leading man in movies was being replaced by vigilantes, superior weapons, and androids. The extraordinary appeal in our time of the James Bond vigilante theme has made it the most successful movie series in history. In these films a dazzling array of gadgets played starring roles alongside Agent Bond. In the more than

a quarter century since *Doctor No* appeared in 1962, there have been sixteen movies about Bond. The popularity of the series—and its gadgets—has continued through five different actors playing Bond plus a considerable range of directors.

The weaponry that was the true hero of the Bond saga continues to characterize our most popular heroes. John Wayne, in contrast, whose *Stagecoach* (1939) and *Red River* (1948) helped to define the classic western, was able to entrance audiences and tame the west, armed only with a six-shooter and without benefit of wizard technology. At around the time of the early Bond films, Clint Eastwood was the vigilante mercenary in a trilogy of spaghetti westerns (1964-67). He became a superstar as *Dirty Harry* (1971), a “moral” detective at war with the light-duty morality of superiors, judges, liberals, and of course, criminals. Eastwood’s co-star is a .44 Magnum, which, as he tells an evildoer just before shooting him in *Dirty Harry*, is “the most powerful handgun in the world.” In the same film, Eastwood breaks into a criminal’s home without a search warrant and tortures him. In *Magnum Force* (1973) and *The Enforcer* (1976), he and his oversized enforcement tool continue their love match with bad behavior.

Arnold Schwarzenegger is somewhat shorter than Wayne or Eastwood and this may explain the large and heavy weapons that he brandishes as a violence-prone cyborg in *The Terminator* series. In his earlier films, there is often the suggestion that he is a merely an avant garde ambulatory servo-mechanism. Sylvester Stallone, another man co-starring with an arsenal, has been a daring well-meaning avenger in three movies as John J. Rambo.

The popularity of vigilantism is the major reason that Charles Bronson has appeared in five movies, beginning with *Death Wish* in 1974 and spanning three decades, portraying the pacifist architect Paul Kersey. Kersey moves from city to city seeking to avenge the murder of his wife and rape of his daughter by two hoodlums. Even the detective assigned to catch Kersey is so sympathetic to the aggrieved man’s murderous mission that he enables him to avoid arrest.

In the recent decades in which our problems seem too overwhelming even for movie heroes, audiences are reassured by the weaponry and the vigilantes. The multiple heroes who began to dominate westerns twenty-five years ago in films like *The Wild Bunch* and *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* are more popular than ever. *Silverado* (1985), one of the rare westerns produced by a major Hollywood studio in the last few decades, had four buddies opposing the villains. Two or more co-heroes provide a broader base for identification and help to assuage anxiety and concern in audiences. Even Clint Eastwood needed two assistants in the Academy Award winning *Unforgiven* (1992). In 1994, *Tombstone* featured Wyatt Earp, who needed the help of his three brothers, and *Bad Girls*, in which four western woman avenged themselves on the villains, corralled the nation's top box office spot in the week of its release.

The multiple heroes who began dominating police and detective fiction and television several decades ago have flourished in all the mass media but especially in television. Programs like "Hill Street Blues," "Law and Order," and "NYPD Blue" have more than one hero, plus problems that are not always resolved at the end of each episode. They may be carried forward for weeks, reinforcing any audience uncertainties about the ability of law enforcement heroes to provide closure.

The most popular and dominant figures in four major television formats—situation comedy, talk show, news, and mystery—are women. "Roseanne," the situation comedy with the largest audience, derives from the family-size personality of star Roseanne Arnold. The talk show was given a new dimension by Oprah Winfrey, who has consistently led the more than two dozen such programs in audience size since she began in 1986. She is the only host who has developed a parallel career as a major actress, entrepreneur, and producer. Barbara Walters, the first woman to anchor a network news program, is the most durable and highly paid performer in

television news. She is more famous than most of the people she interviews. Angela Lansbury, who made her screen debut a half century ago in *Gaslight*, subsequently became a scene stealer in many movies and starred in major New York and London stage musicals before her smashing television success as a mystery investigator in "Murder She Wrote."

One area in the arts in which there has been a significant change in the last quarter century is opera. At any given time in the history of opera, there are likely to be more gifted sopranos than tenors. One reason for this is physiological: the most significant break for all voices is the move between "chest voice" and "head voice," and this break occurs at virtually the same place in all voices—between E and F# above middle C. The reason that the tenor voice is so difficult is that it is the only voice that has to spend so much time negotiating this fundamental register change—and for whom that change occurs so close to the dramatic peak of the instrument. Sopranos experience a "lift" or lesser sense of register change an octave above, but nevertheless, since they spend the great majority of their time singing in head voice, above the fundamental register break, they have an easier time of it than tenors.

Because of the extraordinary confluence of singers like Renata Tebaldi, Joan Sutherland, Birgit Nilsson, Leontyne Price, and Maria Callas in the 1960s, the diminished numbers of tenors of star quality was especially notable. The last two decades in opera are atypical in the fact that two tenors, Luciano Pavarotti and Placido Domingo, have been dominant. Starting with exceptional voices, each man has carefully shaped his career, planning the season's repertory in a sequence requiring different aspects of his voice. The impact of Pavarotti's vocal technique and Domingo's total performance skills have substantially expanded the number of works involving tenors in the repertory today. When they retire, it is plausible to expect that sopranos will regain their former eminence.

## Sports and Leisure

Women's new roles in other aspects of social life are emphatic in sports. Until recently, professional sports have been relatively slow in reflecting women's interest. But this is changing and according to the National Basketball Association, women constitute 40 percent of the audiences at its games. Forty-one percent of football audiences are women, says the National Football League.

Women's slow but steady erosion of men's leadership in athletics might be predicted from their greater participation in fitness activities. Women are the majority in the six most popular such activities: calisthenics, swimming, bicycling, aerobics, exercise walking, and exercise with equipment. Men are the majority (63 percent) only in running.

A new generation of women can be found as team owners, sports writers, locker room interviewers, commentators, managers, officials, and coaches. Title IX of the Educational Amendment Act of 1972 required high schools and colleges to offer men and women students equal opportunities to participate in competitive sports. In intercollegiate competition, a number of women's varsity teams outdraw the parallel men's teams.

Tennis provides a clear illustration of what is happening in the sporting scene. Women's growing power in tennis has dramatically increased in a number of ways. Billie Jean King, who won twenty Wimbledon titles, founded the women's professional tournament. Largely because of her, men and women professionals are now winning equal purses in the major competitions. Students of gender will note that tournament tennis may be the only occupation in which women earn as much as men for less work: men win by three out of five sets but women are required to win only two out of three sets. Women have actually earned more than men: Steffi Graf won \$1,963,905 in 1989, compared with top male player Stefan Edberg's \$1,661,491.

Chris Evert's two-handed backhand and her strong baseline style contributed substantially to her replacing King as the reigning woman player. Martina Navratilova, in turn, became the leading woman player and won nine Wimbledon singles titles by adopting the traditional male strategy first developed by Ellsworth Vines in the 1930s: a precision cannonball serve that permitted either no return or a return so weak that it could be put away with a well-placed volley.

The two-handed backhand and the serve and volley approach have made women's tennis more powerful while remaining more interesting for audiences than the men's game. Women are more likely than men to use the wide bodied racquet, which has more power and is faster than the traditional racquet.

Tournament audiences tend to enjoy women's competition tennis more than men's because there are more strokes per point, so it is easier to relate to the game. In contrast, watching Michael Stich or Goran Ivanovic or other male super servers hit a ball at 100 or 120 miles per hour is more boring for audiences. The differences in men's and women's tennis styles is so important because there is no other sport where spectators express such identification with the participants. Many audience members wear clothes—warm up clothes, sneakers, tennis outfits—that are similar to those of the participants. Audiences usually do not talk during the match, from the serve throughout completion of the point, out of respect for the players.

A women's baseball team began officially competing in the professional minor leagues for the first time in 1994. Two thousand women tried out for the Colorado Silver Bullets, based in Knoxville, Tennessee. After spring training in March 1994, the games started in May. The Bullets compete with men's teams. The time may come when a woman from the Bullets could be recruited by a major league team and start a trend that could radically change the national pastime and perhaps many men's feelings about it.

Women athletes have been assuming the mythical status that was formerly reserved for men. The whole country became incensed when Olympic figure skater Nancy Kerrigan was assaulted by a man before the 1994 Winter Olympics in a plot to prevent her from competing in Norway. There was similar outrage a few years earlier when a fan of tennis star Steffi Graf stabbed Monica Seles in the back so that his co-national would become the top player in the world.

Country clubs, which historically allowed only men as members, have been moving slowly but steadily toward becoming gender neutral. A number of clubs have amended their by-laws to accept single women and give voting rights to them. As more women have full-time weekday jobs, they increasingly enjoy the same golf privileges as men, playing during weekend morning hours that had been reserved for men. These trends can be seen very clearly on New York State's Long Island, where there are sixty-four country clubs.

The island's newest club, the Atlantic Golf Club in Bridgehampton which opened in 1992, is typical of the trend in not differentiating between women and men on membership, voting, or golf privileges. Half the women members are single. Possibly the most prestigious club on the island, the Maidstone in East Hampton, has single female members who have full privileges.

The opening of non-sport private clubs to women, which began a quarter century ago, is now almost complete. In New York, the Harvard Club has had women as full members for over twenty years, with access to all facilities and service as officers and board members. Other college alumni and social clubs have made similar changes in the last two decades.

The Friars' Club, as its name implies, has been a traditional haven for show business males. It has now progressed from limited facilities for women to admitting them to full membership. The club has finally permitted them the ultimate recognition: they are now privileged to be honored with a "roast," at which they are insulted, ridiculed, and made the butt of

ribald humor, and thus rhetorically reduced to the public ignominy of similarly glorified male members. Another famous club for performers, the Players Club, founded by Edwin Booth in 1888, waited a full century before admitting women. When Lynn Redgrave was elected the first woman president in 1994, she noted that Booth and she had much in common, including reverence for Shakespeare and siblings who got into trouble.

The staircase that is clearly visible through the glass doors of the Century Association on New York's West 43rd Street can be seen as a symbol of the recognition and upward mobility that its distinguished members, from civic life, the arts, and professions, have achieved. The Centurions had resisted women members for years until a woman scholar sued on the ground that her inability to become a member had cost her significant career opportunities. The members now admit women.

## Food and Drink

Some significant social changes of the 1960s had parallel situations in more recent years. The enormous surge in the popularity of Scotch whiskey in the 1950s resulted from some American entrepreneurs taking advantage of the non-availability of the product during the Korean War and mounting a very aggressive marketing campaign for a "light" product. The more recent ascendance of vodka as the country's leading spirit similarly resulted from vigorous marketing in response to a military situation. Through the 1970s, brands with Russian names accounted for over 90 percent of vodka sales. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, sales of the Russian brands began to decline. They plummeted after Soviet leaders defended the shooting down of a Korean Air Lines flight by their fighter planes in September 1983, with the loss of all 269 people on board.

As a result, the American armed forces instituted a boycott of Russian vodka brands at its commissaries, and other distributors followed suit. Recognizing that the boycott would leave a major void, the importer of an obscure Swedish vodka (Absolut) began a massive advertising and promotional campaign that was most effective and continues to this day. Annually, there has been a steady increase in the sale of vodka, sparked by the Swedish brand's advertising. Its \$30 million annual advertising budget is the largest for any liquor and is one reason that the brand accounts for 63 percent of all American vodka sales. The advertising has helped to create a personality for a premium priced vodka although it is practically indistinguishable from other brands, since all vodka is colorless and odorless. The popularity of vodka, an alcoholic beverage the major attribute of which is its lack of attributes, is a subtle cultural signpost.

One reason that a vodka could become the most successful spirit in the United States was that so many drinkers were ready to leave "brown goods" like bourbon whiskey for presumably lighter and healthier "white goods" like gin and vodka. The image-conscious 1980s were ideal for a marketing campaign that enabled consumers to have the cachet of an expensive brand with sophisticated advertising that also had a latent cold war dimension. Sweden, after all, is world famous for being neutral and vodka is the most neutral alcoholic beverage.

Even though interest in light food remains very relevant, there is a simultaneous retreat from food nationalism. Interest in different kinds of ethnic specialties is now flourishing. Pasta has been transformed from the mundane spaghetti and meatballs to a protean product well up in the higher levels of cuisine. Mexican, Oriental, and Thai dishes have also become popular. Many newspapers have restaurant reviewers who apply standards as rigorous as those used to evaluate movies and books. Food journalism, formerly a female enclave, attracts prominent men writers such as Craig Claiborne and

Raymond Sokolov. There has, however, been a decline in writing about dishes that please men. The country's oldest continuously reprinted community cookbook, published in 1901 as *The Way to a Man's Heart: The Settlement Cookbook*, has been published since 1976 with the title now in "reverse English"—*The Settlement Cookbook: The Way to a Man's Heart*. To emphasize the demotion in status, the subtitle is in tiny letters.

## Baby Doll

The last quarter century has witnessed an acceleration of the established epochs of psychosexual development, as exemplified in the spread of child-woman clothing and the continued dominance of the Barbie doll. Probably the most resonant content of Madonna's picture book *Sex* (1992) was her series of prepubescent poses, in Mary Jane shoes, baby doll pajamas of checkered gingham, holding a teddy bear.

The somewhat flattened body surfaces of model Kate Moss are a clear expression of the blurring of sexual distinctions and of ambivalence toward gender independence. Moss, a 19-year-old from England, is a top model who in 1994 appeared simultaneously on the cover of both the leading American (*American Photo*) and European magazines (*Photo*) concerned with fashion photography. Always identified as "supermodel," she combines full lips, high cheekbones and starved body in a kind of middy-bloused schoolgirl mode. She has been described as a little match girl for the 1990s and signifies the backlash caused by the presence of strong women in our lives. She is an example of social class pornography that eroticizes the fragile and dewomanized waif. Her blank face reflects the absence of experience. When she—inevitably—is replaced as the leading model, her successor will almost surely be another one of life's presumably lost and forsaken strays.

In the last two decades, the sexualized girl-woman figured prominently in a number of successful films. Jodie Foster, in 1976, appeared both as a 12-year-old prostitute working for a

pimp in *Taxi Driver* and as a murdering nymphet in *The Little Girl Who Lives Down the Lane*. Two years later, 12-year-old Brooke Shields was the star of *Pretty Baby* as a child prostitute in a Storyville, New Orleans brothel. By 1980, in *Little Darlings*, Kristy McNichol and Tatum O'Neal were 15-year-olds in a summer camp in a race to lose their virginity. O'Neal attempted to seduce Richard Burton in *A Circle of Two* (1980).

The most persistent example of precocious sexuality in girls is the Barbie doll. By now, Barbie is the most successful doll in history. On the doll's thirty-fifth anniversary in March 1994, she was still selling at the rate of a million dolls a week. It may be relevant to note that a major increase in teenage girls starting to smoke began around 1967 and that the increase of teenage pregnancy has roughly corresponded with Barbie's popularity.

Parents have ignored for a long time the questionable effects of young girls playing with Barbie dolls so that it was heartening to learn in 1992 that some parents objected vigorously to a talking Barbie programmed to say "math class is tough." As a result of the outcry, the stereotypical sentence was cut from the doll's voice box.

## Cross-Dressing

Cross-dressing used to be a minor psychiatric problem, classified among the paraphilias. More recently, it has been celebrated as an important part of American culture, to be analyzed as a literary, semiotic, and cultural studies phenomenon. The importance of cross dressing and the ambivalence it conveys is relevant to the seriousness with which historians and literary scholars have discussed the concepts of ambivalence and ambiguity, following the lead of psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. The many different degrees of cross-dressing range from a casual to a centrally defining activity. Each cross-dresser is expressing an aspect of his or her personality that differs from what he or she communicates with traditional clothing.

In *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (1991), Marjorie Garber argues that transvestism makes culture possible by confusing the bases of gender identification and challenging the social control they seek to maintain. Cross-dressing is disruptive because it is linked to recognition of the power of woman, responses to gay identity, and anxiety about cultural and economic dislocations. It includes the category crisis of male and female and the crisis of category itself. Boundaries certify norms and provide a sense of order and reassurance. As the boundaries of dress are being crossed, other clear demarcations in society are also being violated and many men and women are in a state of anxious uncertainty because a failure of other definitional distinctions occurs once the clothing gender barrier has become permeable.

The permeability of the barrier could be seen in four popular and critically praised films of 1993. When the same theme is relevant to several films released around the same time, it is likely to be more than a coincidence. Four films opening in 1993 dealt with cross-dressing: *The Ballad of Little Jo*, *Mrs. Doubtfire*, and two with Chinese settings: *Farewell My Concubine* and *M. Butterfly*. *Little Jo* is about a young nineteenth-century woman who assumes a male identity when she is forced to leave her father's home after having an illegitimate son. Robin Williams as Mrs. Doubtfire becomes a nanny in order to be near his own children, in the year's second most successful film. Cross-dressing and the Beijing Opera both figure in the two Chinese films.

"It's against the law to dress improper to your sex," says a shopkeeper in *Little Jo*. But such "improper" dressing, which was a major American motif in the 1960s, is even more significant in recent years. In 1982, *Victor Victoria* and *Tootsie*, both very successful movie comedies, provided an earlier pocket of cross-dressing. Although drag balls had been held in Harlem for seventy years, the 1991 award winning movie documentary *Paris Is Burning* made a much larger public aware of them. The film's power derives from the impact of :

disvalued ethnic and sexual minority acting out fantasies in a situation that permits achievement of the fantasies.

Such movies extend and reflect clothing trends in real life. In the last two decades, many women have been moving from mannish clothes into more tuxedos, starched shirts, vests, ties, hats, pin stripes, suits and coats actually made for men, like the costumes worn by Diane Keaton in *Annie Hall* (1977). With the continuing lack of agreement among designers on skirt lengths, many women are turning to the more accommodating standards, as well as comfort, represented by men's wear.

Since the 1970s, inspired by Yves Saint Laurent, pants for women have been acceptable for most occasions and other dress codes are losing their rigidity. As more women become employed, few have the time or the desire to change clothes between work and a night out.

Trend setters routinely wear blue jeans to formal affairs. They had become popular in the late 1960s, as part of the trickle-up of working-class clothing, and attained new prestige as designer specialties in the mid-1970s. Although President Jimmy Carter regularly wore them, jeans became major fashion items for women only after brilliant advertising campaigns by several prominent designers. Blue jeans continue their popularity, transcend fashion, have become a way of life for many Americans, and are just as popular with women as with men.

Another contributor to cross-dressing is Giorgio Armani, the most influential designer of the last twenty years. He changed the look of both men's and women's clothes, softening the shoulders and loosening the lines of suits for men and women. Muted earth tones like beige, teal, and slate have been favored by Armani, whose deconstructed designs have largely replaced the exacting sex-linked "dress for success" code that was promoted by several widely publicized writers. The neutral colors promoted by Armani are also found in makeup, interior decoration, and bedding.

One of the great national retailing successes in recent years is represented by the Gap chain of clothing stores, which has become the second largest apparel brand in the country. One reason for this success is that most of the chain's clothes are neutral and unisex, such as T-shirts, sweaters, shirts, socks, sweatpants, sweatshirts, boxer shorts, and outerwear such as car coats, rain slickers, and caps.

When a woman dresses like a man she can be perceived as affirming her power. When a man crosses the line and dresses like a woman, the reverse effect may be achieved. Despite that, more and more men feel comfortable wearing a wide range of jewelry. The popularity of men's jewelry among groups that would have once regarded it as a nonmasculine affectation can be seen in the earring regularly worn by Joey Buttafuoco, the Long Island automobile mechanic whose wife was shot in 1992 by Amy Fisher, his teenage girlfriend. The case was so widely publicized that it became the basis for three television network movies. Even ten years ago, it would have been inconceivable for a suburban blue-collar man to wear earrings routinely. When pop singer George Michael received an award because his hoop earrings made such a "sexy, masculine statement," it was a positive recognition of the routine acceptance of such ornamentation for men.

Unisex hair salons, which provide services for both men and women, were relatively exotic in the late 1960s and 1970s and were primarily located in big cities. Today, they are everywhere and are taken for granted. Even more accepted than unisex salons is the use of fragrance preparations by both sexes. Already in the late 1960s, men were spending more than women on fragrances. In the 1980s, two men's products that shared names with women's brands (Obsession, Eternity) were enormously successful and revitalized the field. Sales soared when men's designated fragrances, no longer designated as cologne, began to use tuberose, jasmine, white flowers, and other ingredients that were traditionally only found in women's products. The brands also dropped famous muscular spokes-

men like Joe Namath and Muhammed Ali in favor of men who represented less aggressive models of masculinity.

The crisscrossing of the gender highway by men's fragrances is facilitated by the very large proportion (70 percent) that are bought by women. Three-fourths of these women buy the product for men but one fourth use it themselves, because it can be worn to work and lasts a relatively long time. Another significant development in unisex aromas is the growing popularity of pure flower and plant essences that have no artificial ingredients and are dabbed on by both men and women. The same essences, such as patchouli or musk, are used by both sexes. A number of fragrances that are marketed as unisex products are named after persons whose names have bisexual connotations, like one product that is named after Emperor Hadrian, who was married but had an extended and important relationship with a male Greek youth. We can only speculate on what happens when a man and woman on a date realize that they are wearing the same fragrance. Only the most rash will speculate on what happens if they are also wearing the same costume.

Now that men and women increasingly look and smell alike, it is easier and more common for people to engage in the kind of cross-dressing often called gender bending. In this approach, the goal of each sex in wearing the costume of the other is less to look like the other than to convey ambiguity, so that the gender of the cross-dresser is uncertain. A number of performers deliberately challenge their audiences by their gender-bending costume and appearance.

### Peeping and Gossip

The Elders who gaped at Susannah and the Peeping Tom of English folklore are ancient examples of obtaining erotic pleasure by looking. President Jimmy Carter was praised for his candor after citing the lust in his heart when he saw attrac-

tive women. In addition to her criss-cross sexuality, Madonna is one artist who has profited from the country's appetite for voyeurism. Her last tour was called "The Girlie Show" and one of her breakthrough videos ("Open Your Heart") showed her dancing in a peep show. In 1994, a television series starring Madonna and called "The Peep Show" was announced. Perhaps the single most influential event in her career occurred in 1985, when two leading men's magazines, at around the same time, published extensive nude photographs of her. Another artist who worked in various media but profited from his ability to translate a lifelong voyeurism into his movies, painting, and other work was Andy Warhol, the most commercially successful American artist of the century and the father of "supply-side aesthetics."

Long before such recent examples of the commercialization of sexual satisfactions derived from looking, such gratifications had been practically a recreational norm in American life. Nowadays, it has come out of the closet and almost become fashionable. Burlesque, which was more popular in America than any other country, has given way to table dancing, lap dancing, topless, and even bottomless clubs. This look-but-don't-touch approach has expanded, in the last five years, to a national network of some 2,500 optical-sex forums with perhaps 200,000 dancers. Each of these ladies, by undulating and cavorting, is expected to soothe the need-to-ogle fevers of even the untired businessman. In New York City, on any given night, over 2,000 topless or bottomless "love girls" appear in more than 100 "gentleman's clubs." Multimillion-dollar advertising uses cable television, city tabloids, and college newspapers, among other media. An image-cleansing public relations campaign helped to reposition the clubs as part of the national hospitality industry in elegant locations rather than back-alley local operations. However, the aim of the performers and the aspirations of the audience remain the same as in burlesque.

The gentleman's club, which can be considered a strip joint in a suit and tie, is where a typical two-minute table dance can generate a \$20 tip. The trade magazine *Gentlemen's Club* estimates that 10 million customers spent \$3 billion in 1993 at such establishments. The decor is upscale, bartenders sport tuxedos, customers wear business clothes, but the women wear very little. The higher socioeconomic status of the men, as in so many areas of moral uncertainty, confers a measure of respectability on the gratifications provided by "just looking." These gratifications, offered in previous decades by strippers, were also the major ingredients in the menu provided by *Confidential*, the 1950s magazine that led all magazines at that time in newsstand sales. By making the private lives of celebrities its only subject, it created a franchise that has expanded enormously in the subsequent thirty-five years. "History is only gossip," said Oscar Wilde. Weekly magazines like *People* and *Us* deal extensively with current history (gossip) while dozens of local and national tabloid television programs steep us in steamy journalism on a daily basis. Supermarket weeklies also spray us generously with this product.

Americans enjoy peeking. There are magazines (e.g., *Celebrity Sleuth*) that specialize in the nude and semi-nude photographs of actresses and other women who have become well known. One directory (*The Bare Facts: Video Guide*), now in its third edition, gives details on exactly where on videotape the dedicated student can discover the "good parts," or specific nude exposure of both men and women. The material is organized by title, performer, and nature of the exposure, with a rating of one to three stars: yawn \*, okay \*\*, or wow! \*\*\*. Each year, the proportion of \*\*\* ratings climbs steadily, as the artificers improve their ability to satisfy what is clearly a rising national need.

Even mainstream news media have become much looser in their handling of sex content. When Lorena Bobbit cut off her husband's penis in 1993, it was widely discussed in newspapers that would discreetly have ignored the story twenty

years ago. In this breakthrough case, the most intimate details of the assault gained headline attention. The media, keeping a straight face, could rationalize their excited coverage of the event and the two subsequent trials by accentuating the themes of male chauvinism, female rage, and marital oppression.

The greater freedom in the print media was one of the indirect outcomes of the increased liberty enjoyed by the movies. The Production Code or Breen Office, which gave a seal of approval to each Hollywood film, was replaced in 1968 by the rating system, which assigned letter ratings based on degrees of sexual content. The ratings made such content more accessible to audiences and facilitated the gradual but steady increase in the size of both the female and male audience for sexually explicit content. When *Deep Throat* (1973) became the highest grossing X-rated movie in history, one reason for its success, perhaps not fully persuasive, was said to be its feminist message that the woman's sexual gratification was paramount. The wide acceptance of the videocassette recorder (VCR) made possible the renting and sale of many X-rated movies to women, who now represent one-third of the market for such materials. There are production companies, such as Femme Productions, that are owned by women and create X-rated movies for women.

The interest of both men and women in optical lubricity of all kinds may also reflect the growing concern about AIDS, which could make the fantasy gratifications of a movie, especially one with eye-opening sex, relatively fulfilling. The same concern has probably helped contribute to the large audiences for television's "gamedies," in which strangers discuss their sex lives. There are also dating programs and many talk shows that feature epic recitals of exotic sex behavior. One representative May 1988 program was called "Scandalous Women." A former society matron, introduced as "the strumpet with a trumpet," reported on kinky sex in Palm Beach; a groupie discussed several prominent musician lovers; and a burlesque

performer detailed sexual relationships with Elvis Presley and a former president.

Such developments represent a turning away from the onerous cultural norms we inherited from the Puritans and the repressive American social hygiene movement of the early twentieth century. This heritage had made many Americans uncomfortable in talking about sex, which D. H. Lawrence called society's "dirty little secret," while they were voyeuristically and compulsively interested in the subject. The continuing ambivalence can be seen in our attitudes toward prostitution: the United States is the only country where both customer and prostitute can be convicted for breaking the law. But the law is largely ignored, resulting in what amounts to decriminalization. Although it has the world's most stringent anti-prostitution laws, the United States refused to ratify or accede to the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others.

## Sex Roles

Marshall McLuhan, in *The Mechanical Bride*, some decades ago, demonstrated how the study of advertising content could provide significant clues to what was happening in the larger culture. Twenty-five years later, Erving Goffman's study entitled *Gender Advertisements* (1976), which examined magazine ads, concluded that the content suggested overwhelming male dominance. Men typically were higher in the illustration, while women reflected childlike gestures or postures or smiled too broadly. More recently, such recessive body language in women has been infrequent in advertising. Women increasingly are higher in the pictures than men and are otherwise dominant. The famous still photograph of Burt Lancaster lying on Deborah Kerr in the surf in the movie *From Here to Eternity* (1953) has been modified in a popular recent magazine perfume advertisement with a similar setting in which a

woman is on top of a man. Other current advertisements present men holding babies and women skiing, playing basketball, and engaging in other demanding sports.

Beginning in the 1960s, in advertisements for jeans and other products with both men and women, the latter are looking at the camera more frequently. Advertisements from the 1980s present women who appear more direct and confident and in the 1990s, women whose expressions and posture are more bold and almost defiant. Already in the 1970s, advertising had begun to reflect a new ascendancy for women. One of the decade's most successful and imitated television campaigns featured Mariette Hartley and James Garner chipping away at stereotypes in clever repartee. He was handsome but inept while she ridiculed his chauvinism and clearly established her ease and skill in handling and using the instant camera they were advertising. Around the same time, a woman handsomely turned out in a black tailored man's suit swaggered through advertisements for a woman's perfume (Charlie). In the 1980s, print advertising for the same perfume showed a man and woman from the rear. Each is carrying an attache case, she is patting his rear, she is taller, and he appears to be paying close attention to her remarks.

In the last few decades, the study of sex roles has become a vast field of research, teaching, and commentary, with its own apparatus of textbooks and scholarly journals. The only generalization that can be made with assurance is that the traditional roles are subject to continuing change. Among hundreds of representative areas that have been changing are women's role in crime, interest in the primeval sources of each gender's innermost power, revisionist views of the importance of men, and the physical expression of affection by men. A brief summary of these areas may convey a sense of the range of current discussions.

Criminologists have documented the surge in crime by women. Male arrests exceed female arrests by four to one, but the proportion of female arrests is increasing steadily. This

change has been attributed to women's assuming new lifestyles with attendant stress and strain, which are related to more serious and violent crime. Aileen Wuornos, the first woman serial killer who murdered seven men in Florida in 1989 and 1990, was sentenced to the electric chair. When a documentary film about her (*Aileen Wuornos: The Selling of a Serial Killer*) was shown at the 1992 New York Film Festival, the audience of men and women cheered.

Best-seller *Women Who Run with the Wolves* (1992), by Jungian analyst Clarissa Pinkola Estes, interprets old tales in terms of an archetypal wild woman who has been dangerously tamed by society. Published quietly, the book's exposition of the innate powers of womanhood that have, like the wolf, been driven deep within, attracted a huge audience. Wolves and women are both said to be relational by nature, inquiring, and having great endurance and strength. Two years earlier, in *Iron John*, poet Robert Bly had urged men to re-establish the connection with their central vigorous maleness and sense of lost power. His retreats in the woods have attracted many men seeking to re-establish the connection. The popularity of Estes and Bly could reflect a reaction to the ambiguity of current male and female roles.

The declining potency of men is also a theme of another influential book, *The Myth of Male Power* (1993), by Warren Farrell, an important early feminist who was elected three times to the board of the New York branch of the National Organization of Women. He had previously published several pro-feminist books and conducted workshops attended by over 150,000 men and women. His new book argues that males are disposable, undervalued, oppressed, and love too much. He notes that men have lower net worth than women, commit suicide more often, and live an average of seven years less. Farrell argues that society presents men with stifling stereotypes about manliness that should lead men to speak out and complain.

During the 1960s, men were increasingly encouraged by educators and human relations specialists to express emotion and affection more openly, even by hugging other men. At the January 1993 inauguration, President Clinton and Vice President Gore wrapped their arms around each other in a hug that seemed to last forever. A short distance away, former President Bush and Vice President Quayle somberly shook hands with each other. Clinton's ease about the hugging may reflect his presumed greater warmth, friendliness, and Southern roots, but other men are emulating his use of this contact to express a deeper feeling than is conveyed by a handshake.

*Desexualization in American Life* was published in the year in which Richard Nixon was elected president. One measure of the difference in the cultural climate of then and now is to think of how unlikely it would have been for male hugging to have occurred at the Nixon inauguration. An even sharper indication of the difference between the decades is suggested by the active and independently professional role of Hillary Rodham Clinton as compared with Patricia Nixon's more traditional understated role as First Lady. A signal of the difference is the rage that many men express at the forthright role of Mrs. Clinton in jokes, wisecracks, and other bile-saturated manifestations.

The differences between the two First Families reflect the extent to which sex roles have changed in a quarter century. Some aspects of the culture discussed in *Desexualization in American Life* have changed dramatically; others have not shifted at all. Whatever the differential rate of change of these developments in the future, they will continue to be central in shaping the nature and quality of American life. The French adage tells us that "the more things change, the more they remain the same." Will that adage prove true about the changes noted here? The game is still in play, and only time will tell.

CHARLES WINICK  
May 1994



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# preface

Archeologists are fond of saying that were it not for graves and garbage piles, buried under the ruins of successive societies, we might know relatively little about the character and lives of people in the past. Today, in our economy of abundance and condition of perpetual war, the litter of civilization seems to be more than sufficient for archeologists in years to come. We have produced enough garbage; it has even been transmuted into art and political rhetoric. Yet it is doubtful that the leftovers of our lives will tell enough. If we succeed in completing the nihilistic formula for self-destruction that has made it possible for the nightmares of Leonardo and St. John to come true, the radioactive garbage will be too hot to handle and the graves will be made of whole continents.

After World War II, the tide of human consciousness and its social expression began to move in a radically different direction in the United States. As a new generation grew up in the midst of this transformation, it was difficult for their parents to appreciate either the meaning or magnitude of the change. While we continued to display the relics of western tradition, we largely ignored the arrival of the New People, the troops of an invading army. Their advent went virtually unnoticed and they quietly took over while we were out fighting the cold war.

They set up camps and fought the battle of the cool war, which led to substantial changes in personality and social life. Many of the changes are not reflected in the palpable material objects of our society that would primarily concern the archeologist. The troop movements slipped by with the invisibility of gradual social change, under the cover of darkness which clouded what was to be later seen as a massive shift of human consciousness and its social expression.

Social change is almost invisible to those inside it. But the cumulative impact of the transformation of our lives is all too apparent in the 1960's. The New People have taken over; they are the authorities when it comes to setting the tone of our living together. When we recognize them at all, it is as figures from some elaborate entertainment which has little to do with sensible, everyday life. We hardly notice the invasion because it has been so widespread and successful.

Our infinitely manipulatable, no-deposit, no-return world reflects the compact which man has made with machines, particularly the machinery of his own destruction. It is such a truism, so much an everyday fact of life, that we have almost become comfortable in our plastic wilderness. The New People dress in clothes that make the Martians and the Space Maiden look conservative. They accept and participate in the destruction of obsolete concepts of identity, sexuality, and ways of living. We have failed to recognize them; they are, in fact, invisible. They are ourselves.

Archeologists of the future may regard a radical dislocation of sexual identity as the single most important event of our time. Ethology, the science concerned with animal behavior and interaction with environment, has repeatedly hinted in recent years that radical changes in sex roles may lead to extermination of whole species. This does not mean that we, the New People, will fail to survive or that

we are unable to create a viable substitute for rejected lifestyles. It does suggest that the new tone of life, a bitter, metallic existence, may simply not be worth the price of enduring it.

The change could be related to our downgrading of two radical but unrelated developments which entered the western world at about the same time: gunpowder and romantic love. Gunpowder was introduced to the west during the late medieval period, just about when the troubadours were creating what we have since come to know as romantic love, with its lack of fulfillment and idealization of the beloved beyond mere sensual love. The atom bomb has made gunpowder less significant, and many forces, in our day of disposable sex, make romantic love a less meaningful ideal. The bomb is a model of the new technology that is profoundly affecting every aspect of social and sex roles. The decline of romantic love reflects and reinforces other changes that are modifying expressions of the most basic difference in any society—the difference between its men and women.

The hostess at a dinner party attended by Albert Einstein, according to one of the many charming stories told about him, observed the scientist walking on her terrace and looking at the stars. She identified herself as an amateur astronomer and pointed upward: "Every night I come out here and study Venus with my telescope." Einstein followed her suggestion to look through the telescope and said, "Your hobby is very interesting. But, I believe, that planet is Jupiter." The woman was very impressed: "You certainly are brilliant to be able to tell the sex of a planet at such a great distance." It is increasingly difficult to tell the sex of many things, at almost any distance, in America today. As masculinity and femininity show less polarization and fewer differences, extremes of other kinds are becoming blurred into a neuter. This modification of the American way of life could be the most significant

change of our time and be intimately related to our society's ability to survive.

The chapters which follow set forth some of the changes that have occurred in our life-style, many of which are usually attributed to a mass society's general leveling effect. Other shifts have been hailed as examples of an increase in American sophistication, or explained in terms of growing social and cultural complexity and a tendency to abstraction. This book examines the changes in a spirit of approximation that raises some questions about our possibilities for the future. To range over so many areas of American life is presumptuous, but we have an obligation to conjecture about them in order to help prepare ourselves for the choices that may present themselves.

CHARLES WINICK  
New York, N.Y.

# I

## arts and the man

Practically every evening, a number of men and women wait outside Arthur, a discotheque on East Fifty-fourth Street in New York City. Most are attractive and well-dressed and acne is conspicuously absent from the faces of the younger adults. At regular intervals, the doorman permits some of the happy few to enter. Ginza, Ondine, L'Entredit, Shepheard's, and Cheetah are among the many other New York discotheques whose success led to an explosion of similar places across the country. A new environment has been created to suit the demands of an originally underground life-style which is now highly commercialized and available in a variety of bright, shiny packages. Each of the arts has been responding, in its own way, to the social forces that led to the multiple fission of discotheques.

### Movers and Shakers

The new dances have been hailed as expressions of a new mood of more liberal and permissive sexuality; they also signal a revolution in the way we deal with the social and external environment. The dances are a gigantic

screen on which we can throw public projections of our private fantasies. The new freedom that is expressed by the dances calls for a new cast of characters. In the process of defining how we shall live together in years to come, we have accepted a radical alteration of sexual identity.

It is easier to see the larger patterns of meaning of the new developments in a "second-generation" discotheque like Cheetah, a true cathedral of pop culture where an almost total environment has been created: for the visitor who wants to get switched-on and become a true believer, Cheetah provides vestments (it has *boutiques* for men and women), instant food minus flourishes or gourmet distractions, and a visual feast, a psychedelic experience, by bombarding the dancers with films, abstract slides, and color patterns projected at random on walls, floor, ceiling, and dancers. In Andy Warhol's chillingly prophetic words, *The Plastic Inevitable*.

To paraphrase Yeats, these days it is difficult to tell the dancer from the dance. Our new dances are reasonably clear diagrams of new social patterns, new ways of relating self to others and the external environment. The discotheques are equalizers that attract a broad range of age and economic groups.

One reason for the great, recent success of pop culture is the speed with which rituals and artifacts have been taken out of the possession of the outsiders and priced at what the market will bear. The outsider culture serves an unanticipated function in providing our luxury and leisure market with new games and toys. Once they get into the mainstream, the outsider tastemakers move on to find new ways of affirming their alienation from the respectable world. The dances which they helped shape carry an invisible extra value for the consumer—a new, not terribly systematic style of living. While those who shop in the pop supermarket buy a fairly diluted version of this life-