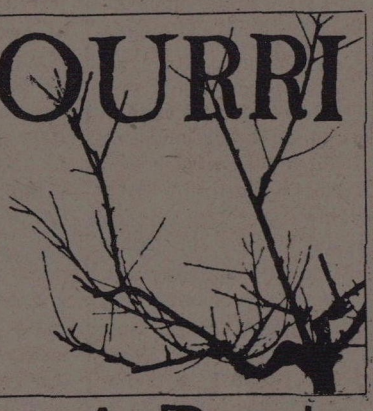
POETPOURRI



Androgyny: A Dual Way Of Being One

by Tom Plante

Shocks Magazine, Number 6, The Androgyny Issue (Box 14061, San Francisco, CA 94114, 110 pages, $2.50).

Androgyne Magazine, Number 2, (930 Shields, San Francisco, CA 94132. 48 pages, $1.50).

Neither of my chewed-up editions of **Webster's** offers a definition of androgyny, but the combined ideas presented in these recent issues of local literary magazines should serve to define and expand the meaning of the term.

* * *

The theme of the latest issue of **Shocks** is "men looking at the women in themselves, women looking at the men in themselves." Editors Barbara Baer, Debra McGee and Stephen Vincent searched for writing which focused on "a fresh sense of what it is to be called a man or a woman" and in so doing unlocked the imaginations of 46 writers who contributed to the project.

"the woman in me is emerging/ as i write these poems" says William Talcott. In a similar vein Barbar Einzig writes "Being a man/ is not a violation/ of my femininity."

Whether the subject is transvestite liberation, as Shelia Sullivan choses, or the first woman president ("she warned us against triumph" writes Norma Smith,) the selections in this issue deal with a certain wholeness, transcending male and female.

The "androgynous solution," however, is not an easy one and the authors of the individual pieces collected in **Shocks** seem to evidence the same difficulty I had in trying to arrive at a simple definition. What they do share, though, is a willingness to shuck the existing blanket of norms covering sexual roles and identity in favor of a more open, less polarized attitude toward personality and physical relationships. "As you breathe your form/ Is no longer your own" suggests John Carpenter.

A poem entitled **Sports**, by Jack Anderson, brings us into the locker room where teammates strip the he-man hero "down to the buff, fling off/ things he didn't even know he had."

The wholeness is discovered in a variety of situations. Horseback riding is the ticket to "aphrodisiac fields" for Jana Harris. Tai-Chi is the vehicle for Susan Efros: "a quiet love affair begins/ swaying between my thighs and the earth." Ntozake Shange states that while "weavin garments for the moon/ with my tears/ i found god in myself/ loved her/ loved her fiercely."

These few quotes from a fascinating issue of **Shocks** serve merely as a come-on. The bulk of the matter awaits your exploring fingers and eyes and the mind restless for the further frontier.

* * *

While exploring the shelves upstairs at Moe's recently, where many small press titles are exiled, I found the second issue of **Androgyne** Magazine, a convenient discovery for this reviewer, in the wake of receipt of **Shocks** #6 a few days earlier.

A comparison of the two magazines wouldn't be fair, for the scope and range of content are nowhere near the same. Suffice it to say they both work in their own context and, while **Androgyne** Magazine is slimmer and more general, both are accomplished efforts.

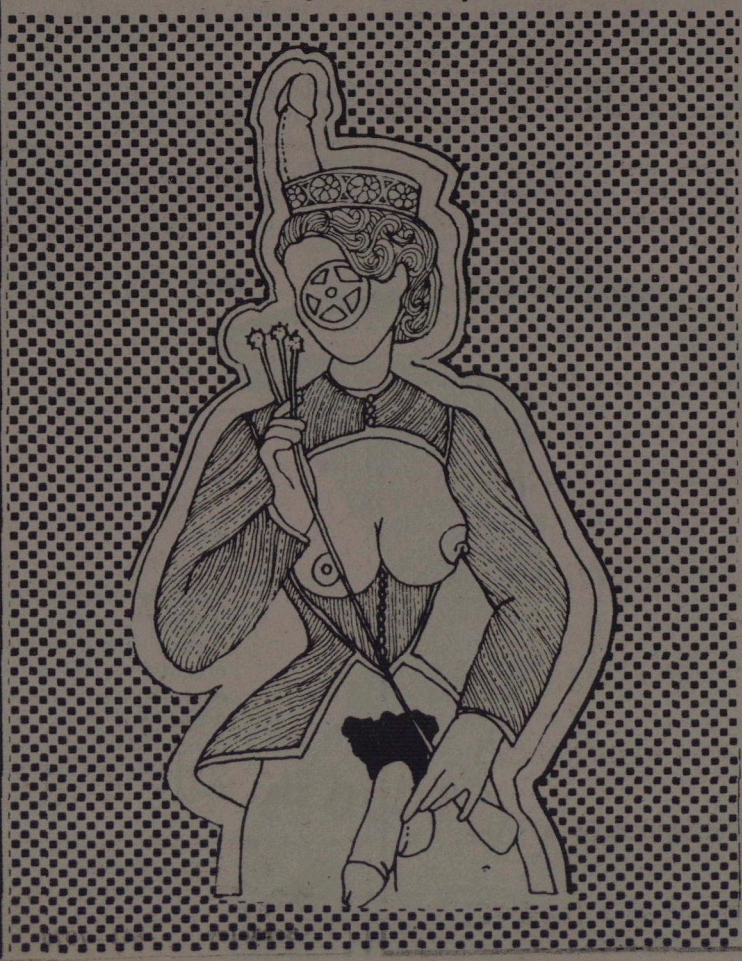
The mixture of androgyny ("the perfection of a primordial non-conditioned state") and alchemy results in a transformation of experience which is manifested by the 17 contributors to **Androgyne** #2.

Nancy Green, writing about the triangle between herself and her friend, reveals "she and he being one person. . .I am the alchemist transmuting their souls." Jeanne Sirotkin dreams of men as lion-tamers that eventually get eaten by their caged beasts.

Joel Deutsch writes of the surrealism of our cities and our selves ("we squirm. . .pull a technicolor sunset/ close enough/ to keep us warm.") while Nanos Valaoritis finds it all Too Much in the Bay Area, "Where the Universal Stop-sign says "GO."

For the inflated male-ego, there are enough ruptures. Noticing a fly in her room at night, Pamela Edwards knows exactly what to do. "I do not even get annoyed./ I crush him with my fist." Letitia Noble rallies the other women at the laundromat against falling for the only man around. "I ain't putting my rubies between his sheets."

As a continuing project, **Androgyne** has a long way to go to reach "the universal formula for the expression of wholeness, the co-existence of the contraries," but in the process it sure covers a lot of ground.



Courtesy of Momo Press