



LIBER DIONYSIA:

Ritual Uses of Transvestism

by

Fra. Belarion, VIII^o O.T.B.

Illustration by Carl Alessi

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(This essay is dedicated to Soror KALI, High Priestess, Temple of Pan, who encouraged its writing and lent inspiration along the way.)

It is said of the god, Dionysus, that during his infancy the Goddess Persephone placed him with Queen Ino, who raised him as a girl, so that he grew up to be effeminate, unable to differentiate feminine from masculine functioning in himself. "Like an eternal youth," writes Jungian psychologist June Singer, "he wanders over the world, changing shape, going mad, drinking himself into insensibility, living the abandonment of total nature and, like nature, experiencing the cycles of death and rebirth."¹

In both his bisexuality and his penchant for divine frenzy, Dionysus is redolent of the "0" trump in the Tarot, The Fool, whose ecstasy and twin-sexed nature further recall the Gnostic Bythos, the Tao, the Ayin-Soph of the Qabalists, and the Alchemists' Divine Androgyne.² All are manifestations of the Mobius sheet of the human psyche -- anima united with animus, yang with yin. The Whole is the Universe considered as $(+1) + (-1) = 0$. A male only becomes a Divine Fool by his rediscovery of the female within, by integrating his unconscious femininity. Or, as it was put in the Gnostic Gospel According to Thomas:

...When you make the male and the female into a single one, so that the male will not be male, and the female not be female...then shall you enter the Kingdom.³

It should be borne in mind that, to an occultist, it is axiomatic that, "All the gods are one god; all the goddesses, one goddess." Dionysus, then, in his role as consort to the goddess Ariadne, will be seen to have much in common with the other "consort" gods, among them Attis (companion of Cybele), Tammuz (Ishtar), and Osiris (Isis). He may be even more familiar to the Neo-Pagan movement today as Cernunnos, Horned God and consort of the Mother Goddess of the Witches.

Hence, a tremendous reservoir of psychic energy has been stored up over the centuries by those who have ritually worshipped or invoked these deities, and the tradition is very old: The shamanists'

Horned God alone dates to at least as early as 40,000 B.C. Recently, it occurred to me, Why not tap this energy for the purposes of the Great Work? Better yet, why not design and perform rituals whose efficacy can be increased by emulation of the ecstatic and enthusiastic elements of the ancient initiatory, Mystery religions? It seemed to me that the object of the Great Work was transformation of the psyche into the Divine Androgyne; ritual, therefore, might possibly effect union of the animus of the Goddess with my own anima.

I considered the best method of doing this to be identifying so strongly with the Goddess that I might be indistinguishable from her. The ancients were particularly adept at this process of enthusiasmos, whereby one's personality, by fasting, frenzied dancing, meditation upon sacred objects, inhalation of certain odours, hallucination, and suggestion, is inspired, or "replenished" by a deity. By this process of enthusiasm (Crowley called it "Energized Enthusiasm"), one might be possessed of a deity, "full of God," or of a Goddess. Some ancients even went so far as to claim that all trance prophecies and dream revelations during the ecstatic state were direct communications from the deity.⁴

In many of the Mystery religions, enthusiasmos included transvestism. The Galli, for example, or Priests of Cybele (or Kybele, Phrygian Great Mother Goddess, or Magma Mater) ritually dressed in resplendent female attire, the better to identify with their patroness. Similarly, we are told, the Phoenician priests at the temples of Baal and Astarte "dressed themselves as women, rouged their faces and eyes."⁵ Dufour, in his History of Prostitution, says that the priests of Baal "were handsome, unbearded young men, their entire bodies being depilated and perfumed with fragrant salves."⁶ And in the Hysteria, festivals of Aphrodite held in Argos, both sexes were seen to cross-dress.⁷

Transvestive enthusiasmos will be seen, in ritual, to constitute an invocation par excellence. It may bring about a "taking in" of female traits by the male, for the purpose of united his anima with the Goddess' animus, and it can be even more potent as a form of ceremonial Magick if combined with sex.⁸ Interestingly, what is known today as "gender-fuck" actually has ancient origins: "The hermaphroditic god Aphroditus was represented as bearded in certain statues, with male organs, but had the bodily form and wore the dress of a woman."⁹ So, hirsuteness is hardly an obstacle to doing ritual in drag.

I was perplexed as to how to go about "designing" a ritual involving invocation of the Goddess using transvestive enthusiasm until I awoke one morning with a "start thought" (sudden inspiration evolving from the residue of dreams): Consult Crowley's Liber Astarte vel Berylli, subtitled, appropriately enough, "the Book of Uniting

Himself to a particular Deity by devotion." Here, in just 15 pages, we are given a veritable Complete Guide to Constructing Rituals. For purposes of the present essay, section nine of the treatise, "Concerning the Robes and Instruments," is most instructive:

For the Robes, that of a Philosophus or that of an Adept Within is most suitable; or the robe best fitted for the service of a particular Deity, as a bassara for Bacchus, a white robe for Vesta....¹⁰

Liber 777 by Crowley will be most helpful, too, for selection of Magick weapons, colors, perfumes, and other correspondences to the particular deity sought for invocation.

While it is generally true that "A genuine ritual, like a living symbol or a religious experience, cannot be fabricated; it can only be discovered,"¹¹ works like Liber 777 and Magick in Theory and Practice can inspire your selection of the composite parts that make up your ritual. Remember at all times that you are creating a work of art, and that "All Art is Magick."¹² One of the main reasons why humanity is turning away from organized mass religion and seeking a more personalized, more direct experience of illumination is that the church-goer cannot participate in priestly duties; he remains a semi-active observer. In personalized ritual, this is not the case.

Being mindful of the axiom that "All goddesses are one goddess," you will first find a goddess-persona that you have some special affinity with. This may be one of the following: Ceres (Roman goddess of grain and agriculture), Cybele (earth and nature goddess associated with mountains and wild animals), Sekhet (Egyptian goddess of war, known variously as "Lady of the Beginning of Time," "Lady of Flame," "Lady of the Lamp," and "Great One of Magic"), Hathor (cow goddess of love, joy, and sunlight), Kali (goddess of fertility and time, consort of Shiva), Aphrodite (goddess of love and lust), Astarte (goddess of female fertility) and Artemis of Ephesus ("Lady of Wild Creatures").

As it so happens, Venus as both wife and mother corresponds to all of these deities; hence, a Venusian ritual would seem to propitiate any or all of them. Your best chances of exchanging gnosis with Venus are on the day sacred to her, to-wit, Friday; the best times, the first and eighth hours after sunrise, and the third and tenth hours after sunset.¹³ Fast for at least twelve hours prior to the rite, taking only water at this time. Make as great an effort as possible to concentrate upon the peculiar attributes of the goddess.

In fashioning a Venus ritual, select weapons, incenses, and so forth with Venus in mind. The dove, for example, is sacred to her, as is the sparrow. If fruit is to be offered to the goddess or consumed by the celebrant, let it be her sacred fig or peach or apple. Her precious stone is the emerald; if you cannot afford one for your altar, buy a turquoise instead. Her weapon is the Girdle, since whosoever wears the girdle of Aphrodite becomes the object of universal love and desire. Burn sandalwood incense in her honor and annoint thy body with oil of myrtle.

No hard and fast rules can be set forth regarding such matters as dress and makeup, although "plain" "drag" is out of the question; if you approach your temple dressed like a gay bar comedienne, your ritual is doomed to failure. Stylization, in a word, is the key to success. Study, for example, the tapestries and painted statuary of ancient Egypt, Babylon, and Assyria. Shop at used clothing stores, "thrift" shops, and "Second-Hand Rose"-type emporia where garments from the art nouveau era, or their like, may be purchased.¹⁴

Solo ritual workings in the VIII^o are particularly potent if you employ an artificial phallus ("dildo"), using it as the instrument of the consort (e.g. Hephaestus, Adonis, or Ares, for Aphrodite). Naturally, this entails the incorporation into the rite of some words indicating penetration on the part of the corresponding god. In IX^o workings, the female can wear a dildo secured to her pubic area by what is called a universal harness. Naturally, this is unnecessary if the "god" role is taken by another male, as is often the case with strictly homosexual couples. In this case, the working would be pseudo-IX^o, or an XI^o with IX^o trappings.¹⁵

As for the wording of the invocation, let the ritual itself suggest the tone and tenor. I've found that a standard temple opening and closing that provides, somewhere midway, for a "statement of purpose" works best. You may even use a Golden Dawn-style "Opening by Watchtowers" if you wish. (I have, with quite satisfactory results.) I would not recommend mixing Paths. Venus and Shaitan, after all, can hardly be said to have much in common. Nor would I attempt to "wed" one goddess to a god not her choosing. I did this once in a combined Venus-Jupiter ritual to obtain monies and failed miserably.

Shortly before the appointed hour, take a ritual bath in a tub filled with scented water, colored if possible, making sure that the only light in the bathroom is from a circle of candles (emerald blue ones, preferably). Make this bath just as pleasant, relaxing, and sensual as you possibly can -- and dry off with a fresh, clean towel that has not been used since its washing.

Prior to entering the temple -- during the bath is an excellent time -- drink a ritual tea composed of both male and female

herbs and aphrodisiacs. I personally combine damiana (very Yin) with yohimbe (very Yang).¹⁶ To this mixture, I often add scopolamine, in addition to other substances.¹⁷ Under no circumstances should anything alcoholic be taken with yohimbe, incidentally.

As for the poetry of the ritual, use your own or someone else's, bearing always in mind that the name of any deity contains the formula for his or her invocation, so that by rhythmic repetition of that name, invocation becomes more certain. The perfect example of this is Crowley's Hymn to Pan, which I have incorporated into several rituals with outstanding success. Venus poems can be found in almost any book of pre-Christian mythological poetry. Geoffrey Grigson's The Goddess of Love is particularly helpful.¹⁸

Remember that invocation, as contradistinguished from evocation, means "to call in....In invocation, the macrocosm floods the consciousness," and "identity with the [deity] is attained by love and surrender, by giving up or suppressing all irrelevant (and illusory) parts of yourself."¹⁹ If the genitalia are not irrelevant to a Goddess, what is? If the notion that a male is "all" male is not illusory, what is? Truly, we are divided for love's sake, for the chance of union. (Liber Al, I, 29.) At this point, you must be as a mystae, the "normal functions of personality...in abeyance and the moral strivings which form character virtually ceased or relaxed, while the emotional and intuitive" are accentuated.²⁰

During the sex-Magick that normally culminates the transvestive invocation, one strives for what Plato called Divine Frenzy: "In ecstasy, the devotee [is] lifted above the level of his ordinary experience into an abnormal consciousness of an exhilarating condition in which the body [ceases] to be a hindrance to the soul."²¹

Finally, one hopefully realizes the denouement of the Mithraic mysteries, whose liturgy culminates with the frenzied and ecstatic celebrant crying out, "I am thou and thou art I!" The communion has become "so intimate as to pass into identity." You are no longer yourself. You are The Goddess.

$$(-1) + (+1) = 0$$

$$(\text{♀}) + (\text{♂}) = 0$$

FOOTNOTES

1. June Singer, Androgyny: Toward a New Theory of Sexuality (Garden City, N.Y.: 1977), p. 64. Singer's work, lamentably out of print at the moment, has justly been acclaimed "a great achievement" and is must reading for anyone interested in Jung, Qabalah, Taoism, and so on.

2. Dionysus was a bisexual deity. In mourning for his pederastic lover, Polymnus, he is said to have carried about with him a wooden phallus. He is said to have inserted this dildo into his anus while squatting over Polymnus's grave as a token of undying love and affection.

3. The Secret Teachings of Jesus, Marvin Meyer, trans. (N.Y.: Random House, 1984). The American Gnostic Church claims to have come into possession of some Gospels According to Judas of Kerioth, believed to be the first Ophite-Cainite Gnostic scriptures extant. They are said to detail Jesus's sexual relationships with the Magdalene and at least two of his disciples.

4. It is entirely possible that this explains the prophetic quality of Liber Al, which Crowley received during an exchange of gnosis with his Holy Guardian Angel, Aiwass. Sections of The Book of the Law now seem a blueprint for the so-called Age of Aquarius of the 60s and 70s and the New Age movement of the 80s.

5. Emile Laurent and Paul Nagour, Magica Sexualis (No. Hollywood: Brandon House, 1966), pp. 251-252. This work has long been out of print and screams out for publication in a hardcover edition with the original graphics restored.

6. Dufour, History of Prostitution, quoted in Laurent et al., op. cit., p. 252.

7. Edward C. Whitmont, Return of the Goddess (N.Y.: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1984). The only time Western man allows himself to cross-dress in public is at a costume party, or during Marti Gras. It should be noted that Aphrodite's attributes commonly ascribed to Venus as well include the cestus, or

girdle, the wearing of which made one irresistible; the rose and myrtle; the swan, dophin, dove, and ram.

8. One need not go to the extremes of the galli, however. Nigel Davies, in The Rampant God: Eros Throughout the World, says that the priests of Cybele "would at times even castrate themselves" in emulation of Attis, the goddess' star-crossed lover. "After self-mutilation at the feast of the mother goddess, they would dash their members against the image of the deity; like Attis, they thereafter dressed as women." Davies, p. 157.

9. Op. cit., p. 160.

10. Aleister Crowley, Magick in Theory and Practice (N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1976). One is reminded of To Mega Therion's notorious Paris Working with the young poet, Victor Neuberg, sketched in rough in Francis King's Sexuality, Magic, and Perversion (Secaucus, N.J.: Citadel Press, 1974). This series of homosexual workings in the XI^o were designed to invoke Mercury (Neuberg) and Juppiter (Crowley). While Neuberg had knowledge of Crowley (in the Biblical sense of the word), they chanted, together, "Jungitur in vati vates: rex inclyte rhabdou/Hermes tu venias, verba nefanda ferens" ("Magician is joined with magician: Hermes, King of the Rod, appear, bringing the ineffable word." King notes that his manuscripts of the workings were on loan from Gerald Yorke. To my knowledge they have never been published. What a pity, since we have no way of knowing what sort of vestments were worn, among other subtleties.

11. Whitmont, op. cit., p. 247.

12. Crowley, op. cit., p. 82. In fairness to Whitmont, it should be noted that he reaches much the same conclusion: "...We cannot achieve a ritual by mere rational planning. Like genuine religion, it cannot be imposed by intellect, but must arise from unconscious depths....The creation of a ritual or a liturgy is like the creation of a work of art." Whitmont, p. 24.

13. A note of caution is in order: Certain "Friday spirits" are said to incite sexual desires on Venus's day. When called up, as by accident, they are said to appear as naked girls or as she-goats and in these guises may act as succubi. The author knows of at least one Friday working in which Pan was seen to be copulating with such spirits.

14. Again, it would be interesting if not instructive to

know precisely what Crowley and Neuberg wore for the Paris Workings.

15. I won't go into my standard polemic about bisexuality being the best of all possible worlds. If you're an exclusively gay male, you can't miss what you don't know, and the AIDS problem has convinced me that being "bi" is "no better" than being gay. The Ordo Templi Baphe-Metis (O.T.B.) encourages experimentation in the true spirit of Thelema: Do What Thou Wilt!, and will soon make available -- to members only -- a booklet on The Sex-Magickal Curriculum of the Temple Order of the Knights of Baphomet. For information about the Order, write to Office of the Preceptor, Temple of Pan, P. O. Box 1219, Corpus Christi, Texas 78403, U.S.A.

16. It should be noted that yohimbe, the ground bark of an African tree, is increasingly difficult to find in the States, now that the government has decided that it is a true aphrodisiac. In America, the authorities have a penchant for suppressing anything that gives one pleasure. Fortunately, the drug is still available through some mail order erotica sellers.

17. The exact formula for this tea is available for \$1.00 from the O.T.B. at the address given in footnote 15.

18. Geoffrey Grigson, The Goddess of Love (N.Y.: Stein & Day, 1977). Curiously, the Orphics saw Dionysus as the feminine form of Cybele. One pre-Alexandrian Orphic hymn clearly indicates this:

HYMN OF MISE -- PERFUME: STORAX

I invoke the law-giving, rod-bearing, Dionysos
The never-to-be-forgotten seed, Eubuleus of many names
Who art sacred and sacrosanct Mise, ineffable queen!
Male and female, of double nature, the redeemer Iacchos
Whether thou art delighting in the sweet-smelling temple
of Eleusis
Or art solemnizing mysteries with the Mother in Phrygia,
Or art rejoicing in Cyprus with the fair-crowned Cytherea,
Ordost exult in the pure wheat-bearing plains
With thy mother divine, black-robed, august Isis
And thy busy nurses near the Egyptian stream,
Be gracious and come thou benevolent to accomplish our
tasks.

"Mise" is a name for both Persephone and Dionysus. See Francis Legge, Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity (New Hyde Park,

N.Y., 1964).

19. Crowley, op. cit., p. 15.

20. S. Angus, The Mystery Religions: A Study in the Religious Background of Early Christianity (N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1975), p. 101.

21. Op. cit. Angus further cites Proclus speaking of men "going out of themselves to be wholly established in the Divine and to be enraptured." The leader of one modern occult order claims that in the West, even heterosexual tantra is nigh impossible, there being no worthy female partners, or Shakti, for the workings. It seems to me that a XI^o working employing anal penetration either with an artificial phallus or a real one, might reach Tantric "highs" if the cross-dressed male, the Shakti, were in good control of his sphincter muscles. Indeed, the Sakhibhava sect in India is characterized by worshippers of the transsexual Vishnu, the male sectarians dressing as women and affecting female movements and behavior calculated to please the God. These devotees offer themselves as Vishnu's sexual partner. Tantra has been described as "a cult of ecstasy focused on a vision of cosmic sexuality...." Philip Rawson, The Art of Tantra (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, 1973) p. 9.

22. Angus, op. cit., p. 102.

DO WHAT THOU WILT
SHALL BE THE WHOLE
OF THE LAW!

Office of the Preceptor
Temple of Pan



O.T.B.
Box 1219
Corpus Christi, Texas 78403
U.S.A.

Letter!
write
2-B 84

2 Die Lunae, Feb., 87, e.v.

Dear Friends,

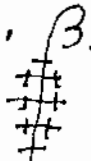
Enclosed please find Liber Dionysia: Ritual Uses of Transvestism, for inclusion in the Archives as O.T.B. "MS CO" No. 2 (or is it 3?). I hope that it makes a worthy contribution to occult writing in the best Archives tradition.

We have not received an Archives list since No. 3. Has there been a No. 4, and, if so, could you please send us a copy (and a No. 5 if that has come to pass as well -- we've been out of touch for quite some time, so long, in fact, that during the interim the IRS has granted our "parent" organization (in quotation marks because the OTB came first!), the American Gnostic Church, tax exempt status.

Is there any sentiment there regarding monthly receipt of the Aurea Flamma, the Order's "Journal of Practical Magick and the Occult Sciences"? We could add your name to the comp list if you would like. I have stated in the past that we prefer that you not advertise the A/F as an Archives release, as we make what little money we can to keep publishing by selling the back issues exclusively. However, there's no reason why you people should not have access to each issue for your own enjoyment.

Let me know.

Fraternally, *B.*



Belarion Israfael EL SHADDAI, 370
LOVE IS THE LAW, LOVE UNDER WILL

p.s. Liber Dionysia is scheduled to be published this year in England by Ganymede magazine. I wanted it to have wider circulation in America, where Ganymede is relatively unknown.

① 2000 Temple Baphometis, 1987