

Gender Experience™

By M Sloth Levine

Commissioned by the Graduate Theatre Department at University of Massachusetts Amherst
for *Visionary Futures*

FRIEND

One day I'm going to rearrange my face. My eyes will refocus and my hair will be curled outwards, and my complexion will become blemish free. I will have a stronger chin and be two inches shorter. My shoulders will be a little wider and my thighs more like tree trunks. I will change my name, and I will enroll in a trade school for community organizing and move to the other side of town. One afternoon my brother will see me in line at the grocery store, and I will tighten up a little, but then I'll remember that he won't know my face anymore, and he won't recognize my voice, which will be a little more gravely, and he will walk past me and not even notice. And I'll pay for my little burrito and go home and have a great night. Then will be the rest of my life.

A lipsync to Body and Soul by Teddy Geiger

In the Merchandise Development office at the alliGn™ headquarters.

CUNEIFORM

Ok team, its the start of a new quarter. Business was ok, but hasn't grown. I need ideas for gender merch. Lascaux, you got anything?

LASCAUX

Yes. Identity ovens. Ovens for every gender.

MCGURK

They're already working on that but for astrology signs. The main office doesn't want us competing with the zodiac branch.

LASCAUX

Oh. Ok.

MCGURK

But it was a good idea.

LASCAUX

What about a new gender?

CUNEIFORM

A new gender?

MCGURK

What do you mean a new gender.

LASCAUX

Let's make a new gender.

MCGURK

We've already got so many.

LASCAUX

Sure, but now that we've got the technology to download gender profiles, we can make new ones.

CUNEIFORM

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Haven't they already made all the genders?

LASCAUX

All the genders so far.

CUNEIFORM

But I

I mean

The profiles have all possible combinations taken care of. Most people use the top several, but you can do whatever you want to yourself with alliGn™. Everything is fully customizable.

LASCAUX

There must be something. It'll be new. We just have to find the market for it. And then the other markets will want to try it. Right McGurk?

MCGURK

There's no room. Our classification system covers it all. And customization gives you any possible option.

LASCAUX

What about... um...

CUNEIFORM

What are you doing

LASCAUX

Trying to think about genders.

MCGURK

We've got to be able to find a hole somewhere in the gender scale.

LASCAUX

In one school of thought, all genders are a mixture of physical traits on varying ends of the masculine-feminine spectrum.

CUNEIFORM

Yikes.

LASCAUX

What? That's what it is.

CUNEIFORM

It just sounds so old fashioned that way. You sound like my grandmother.

LASCAUX

Well it's sort of true isn't it? The alliGn™ tech allows us to emphasize or neutralize different traits along a scale that we once called masculine-feminine. But now that we have access to all of these different scales, it's a lot more free.

CUNEIFORM

Wait what.

LASCAUX

Like this

CUNEIFORM

You're saying that's gender? People don't like to think of their genders as a scrambled railroad map.

LASCAUX

Cuneiform, you founded this department you know what I'm talking about.

MCGURK

OK I see what you mean, everything is fully customizable, they can adjust the sliders however they want. We've made room for every point on the spectrum to be hit.

LASCAUX

But we cant give up. There's got to be some kind of gender that our scale doesn't get to.

MCGURK

We're using a lot of deregulated language today. How are we defining gender right now?

LASCAUX

I suppose... the particular permutation of body traits you choose in order to reflect mental state and personality through physiognomy.

CUNEIFORM

In the past, gender was about defining social roles through body types. Nowadays we think about gender as the physicalization of personality. When Lanvin opened their first Gender Clinic, that's when the fashion industry became involved with how we thought of gender.

LASCAUX

Gender was always about fashion.

CUNEIFORM

Fashion was about gender, but we understand gender to be fashion in a much different way than we used to. But if we open a new style of gender to market to the possibilities are endless. We could even consider Mars.

A completely virtual landscape.

2D Garland

Hi, I'm 2D Garland, and here at Curate™ we understand that identity comes at the intersection of mind and body. After 5 years of publicly available alliGn™ technology and decades of medical advancement, access to your own TruSex™ Gender Experience is higher than any time in human history.

Thanks to subsidies from the Venusian Solar Mining Coalition, anyone can receive alliGn™ therapy and Gender Affirmative Care to build the body that works for them.

Try any of our Default Genders, downloadable from the Curate Social Profile™ Server. Popular Genders Include:

Classic Adam or Eve

Birth Goddess

He-Man Warrior Hunk

Masc, Femme, and Andro Queen

Drag Goblin

Blue Stonebutch

Machismo

High Femme Elf

1930's-Style Debutante (with or without Slouch)

Kardashianesque Venus Form

Bear

Otter

Twink

Faggot

Dyke

Lunar Priestess

Jessica Lipstick von Teese™

Plus Size Barbie

Marathon Runner

Asexual in Smooth or Rough

Cinderella with or without Minuscule Feet

Samson-to-Delilah Fluid Forms

Bird Boned Boy Toy

Mermaid (comes in Atlantic, Pacific, and Arctic models) High Heat Resistant SurvivalFist™

Swamp Crone

Yellowstone Wolf

Prehensile Toed Stretch Champion

High Necked Carpenter

Millenium Heroin Bitch

E-Boy

Scene Queen
Rough Trade Father Figure
Brick House
Landlady
Blue Commune Faerie
Earth Mother
Sun Hero
Floral Print Lumberjack

Or Customize your own Gender with the TruSex™ Consult Service.

A park bench

Friend

I think to be perfectly happy would be to stop being able to perceive time. I think the perfectly happy moment would never be able to end, because if it ended it wouldn't be perfect. So once you reach that level of happiness, something else happens to you and that's where you go, and maybe the rest of us who are only sometimes happy see people who become perfectly happy die.

And so mourning is actually jealousy. I mourn my sister, who is gone because wherever she is, she is happier than me. I mourn my childhood, because it was not as happy as I would have liked. I mourn the ice cream that fell on the floor, because the floor gets to enjoy something I wanted and the way the floor enjoys it is inaccessible to me. It is not a happy thing. I am not a happy thing.

At a TruSex™ Consultation

PS BLOSSOM

How can we help you today?

MUSTARDSEED

Hello, I would like to turn my skin

PS BLOSSOM

We don't do ethnicity tone shifts here.

MUSTARDSEED

No, I want to turn my skin blue.

PS BLOSSOM

Like Avatar?

MUSTARDSEED

No, more like a very pale blue.

PS BLOSSOM

We can do that. It's very retro. It was a fad in the 50's. They did it with temporary ink.

MUSTARDSEED

I know all about it. I want to be blue. I think I'd be happier blue.

PS BLOSSOM

It's a very permanent shift.

MUSTARDSEED

Well, none of this is all that permanent anymore.

PS BLOSSOM

We could change it back, but it's harder to regrow your skin a third time, and it takes a while.

MUSTARDSEED

I know. I've already been allIGn™'d a few times.

PS BLOSSOM

Full skin shifts are becoming more popular again, but fantasy tones can be tricky. Since it's genetic, the precise color may not be precise. There's some variance based on other factors, including the healing process, your sun exposure, and other genetic factors.

MUSTARDSEED

That's ok. I just want to make sure it's not accidentally like, indigo or navy.

PS BLOSSOM

Yes, we can do a scan and develop some projections before we proceed. Lighter colors are usually more realistic goals for most, so I'm sure we will be able to help you reach your truSex™ experience.

MUSTARDSEED

I do have a phallus which was tone shifted blue a few years ago, so I'd like it to match.

PS BLOSSOM

Oh great. That will make it easier.

MUSTARDSEED

Thanks. I'm in a commune with some of my lovers, and we've all been having blue dreams the past year. It feels like time to bring that into my daily life. It's all I can think of when I'm at the office. For my skin to be blue.

PS BLOSSOM

Are your partners encouraging this decision?

MUSTARDSEED

Oh of course super supportive. Wait, it was my idea. They're not pressuring me, at all. We're not matching. Our wife Elissa has had blue-green hands and feet for a few years now, and our boyfriend Connor has all his tattoos in indigo. So it's always been our color. Even before I knew any of them, I painted all my bedrooms I ever lived in pale blue. It just makes me feel safe. And I want to be able to bring that feeling of safety to everyone who I know.

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In front of a stained glass window depicting Amanda Lepore

MOTHER SCHUMACHER

Welcome, my good judys. It's another bright Friday night and THE HIGH FEMME CHURCH OF

THE RAZOR SHARP WOMAN welcomes you.

I urge us to remember: In the beginning there was a kid.
And the Divine Feminine Entered Her, and The Fire Destroyed Her Birth and she was Amanda Lepore.

The Nimrod said “we will build a tower here, and we will reach the heavens. We will reach such heights that none shall lose sight of it. From any floor we can look out and see those who live within the domain of the earth and we will honor them and they will be safe under our sight. They will look up and see that their human family has unlocked Achievement. And we will be Happy for It.

But a Cis Straight White Man With Money came and said “No-many people will be this happy and together in their multiplicity and that which binds you will be scattered, and there will be words left to divide you rather than recognize that which is singular & all shall be confused & tongues shall wag & dogs shall bark & cats shall shriek & birds shall call.”

And the Great Tower was struck and came tumbling down in a Cataclysmic Circumcision. Some rejoiced and some were distraught and some didn't know anything different, as they never came near to it and could not see so far and were not told about it either being built nor coming down.

And Amanda Lepore said unto the Masses:
“I don't know much about Clothes
But my Hair looks Fierce.” And she turned the Old Church into a dazzling Limelight and had a Great Time Anyway.

And she brought us on the Path to Femme Glory
To Fun and Fucking and Lipstick and Latex. We party in the wake of destruction, for we've been aligned with the Truth.

We are Made in His Image
But We Make Ourselves in Hers.

At Pollyannelope's house, on a carpet.

ORLA-JEAN

I'm so glad my family stayed on Earth, because the Martians literally do not have alliGn™ . Like they do not have it. You can't get it up there.

POLLYANNELOPE

That can't be true. It's alliGn™ . It's like... how do you not have alliGn™ ? That's like saying “we don't have washing machines.”

ORLA-JEAN

It's not up there. They just don't do it.

POLLYANNELOPE

Why not?

ORLA-JEAN

I heard they're all cis on Mars.

POLLYANNELOPE

Statistically that's impossible. Nobody is born with all the gender they want.

ORLA-JEAN

They don't do it. They don't transition.

POLLYANNELOPE

Everyone's in transition. Like all the time.

ORLA-JEAN

On Mars you just like... wear your clothes and like, idunno. You deal with it.

POLLYANNELOPE

What do people with periods do?

ORLA-JEAN

They have birth control!

POLLYANNELOPE

I don't know! You say they don't have alliGn™, they might not even have fire!

ORLA-JEAN

They don't have alliGn™ in Restoration Colorado either.

POLLYANNELOPE

That's not surprising, they don't have internet in Restoration Colorado. It's a cult.

ORLA-JEAN

I don't think it's a cult. It's a whole country.

POLLYANNELOPE

Orla-Jean it is still a cult. Didn't you see the documentary?

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ORLA-JEAN

I have my first Consult this weekend.

POLLYANNELOPE

Really?

ORLA-JEAN

Yeah.

POLLYANNELOPE

Did you find out your gender?

ORLA-JEAN

Yes. I'm a Twink.

POLLYANNELOPE

O'Cool.

ORLA-JEAN

Yeah. They're gonna up my metabolism and straighten my hair, and I think I'm going to ask to be taller, and just like, maybe take out some of my ribs.

POLLYANNELOPE

That's a lot for your first Consult.

ORLA-JEAN

Yeah, but I think I'll be happier. Like, why wait? I'm just like, sick of having to watch what I eat so much and I just feel like, I don't want to be so short. Have you used alliGn™ yet?

POLLYANNELOPE

Not yet. My sibling Lana, the Mermaid, they didn't get one until college, so I might just wait.

ORLA-JEAN

If you know what you want you should just do it. It's really easy to schedule.

POLLYANNELOPE

Yeah, I think my mom said it was a little complicated with our doctor, because we'd need a referral or something.

ORLA-JEAN

No you can just call, it's really easy.

POLLYANNELOPE

And I think my mom like, doesn't have the savings for it right now. Are you gonna change your name?

ORLA-JEAN

No I'm going to stick with Orla. I like it.

POLLYANNELOPE

I'm fine waiting for alliGn™ . I want to make sure I make the right decision.

ORLA-JEAN

I didn't mean to embarrass you.

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POLLYANNELOPE

I'm not embarrassed.

ORLA-JEAN

So did um, we should work on this presentation, right?

POLLYANNELOPE

Yeah. I thought I could handle the history portion and then you do the current events, and we can split the debate?

At a bus stop.

MCGURK

Honestly it pissed me off at first when people who used to be cis started using alliGn™ and the stuff like it. Like, it happened in parallel. First the Real Housewife rich socialite kind of people were using it for Perfection Tech, and the trans people were using it for like actual healthcare, and then JVN did that streaming special about his Gender Experience™ and everyone wanted it to prove how much they loved themselves and it blew up from then and now it's just expected that you'll use it somehow to define your gender. It's like so old fashioned to be cis.

At an ice cream store.

FRIEND

I didn't like my body before. I felt hollow and withered, even at 16.

I love the way my hair grows now.

I love the way I feel my stomach spin with me.

I love my ribs and my belly.

I have the exact body that I want to have. I take up exactly the amount of space I deserve. I love walking around with my body and feeling us travel in space.

When I feel my feet on the ground, there is power that runs up through the mass of my form and out the top of my head and an invisible golden cloud bubbles out of me, making me strong and influencing those who come near me.

I can bring an atmosphere of power wherever I go.

I feel the mass of my body and I feel heavy enough to keep the world together. I am strong enough to do everything I want to do.

I am as gorgeous as I could imagine myself to be.

I love this body.

And my mind feels more in tune with my body, but there is still a kind of longing. Not that I'm longing for something else, but that there is a longing for me. From some unseen realm, I can hear myself being longed for.

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In a workroom.

LASCAUX

I did a little research

MCGURK

Thats our job

LASCAUX

Sí

MCGURK

And?

LASCAUX

There's some people who have started hacking alliGn™ in secret.

MCGURK

Furries aren't doing anything illegal.

LASCAUX

Not the Furries. That's not secret. No, these folk aren't doing anything technically illegal either, other than misaiming the resequencers. They call themselves "_____."

MCGURK

What?

LASCAUX

"_____." It's silent.

MCGURK

They can't really pronounce it that way.

LASCAUX

I guess only they can hear it. Or sense it. The name.

MCGURK

What the hell are you talking about stop being this way that you are.

LASCAUX

They basically scramble the sensory receptors to grow new sensory organs that they claim allows them to tap into another level of perception they've felt but couldn't access previously.

MCGURK

I don't.... Believe in this.

LASCAUX

No it's a thing!

MCGURK

So they basically mess up their sensory organs to like, not work?

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LASCAUX

They say they just work in a different way.

MCGURK

I think that's dangerous.

LASCAUX

They once said that about transgenders before alliGn™ .

MCGURK

Don't do that, don't make me sound like that. You're not doing your job anymore. We sell gender accessories.

LASCAUX

I think we might be able to get ahead of this and help them out, figure out a way to do it safely and stuff. Do I really want to get rid of gender?

Idunno

I dont really care what other people make of their gender

I want to just go about my business and not starve and not have to spend all my time doing something I hate.

I feel insecure about this.

Because our job is to sell things that give people their gender.

But gender is so many things, and I don't really actively care about most of those things. Don't you think gender can be selfish, when it's not prescriptive? And I've got my gender and I don't actually care that much what other people do with theirs.

On a train.

MUSTARDSEED

My sibling is raising their child without gender. I know a lot of people do it, and I think that's so great, but for some reason I was surprised by it? Maybe in a jealous way? It hasn't even happened yet, but they're going to start taking hormone blockers before puberty begins so they never have to go through puberty at all, and their genes have been altered already to make sure they don't become vitamin deficient. They'll get to choose completely. We've come such a long way from traumatic puberties and then self-discovery and now accessible (to the well off) healthcare and normalization of reaffirmation, but now they won't even have to go through the hard part? They'll never have to find out what feels wrong? How do you know your gender if you don't have to experience a wrong gender? My skin is blue because I knew what it was like to be blue without it. But my young cousin will get to be whatever color they want whenever they want, because they were given skin tint receptors in the womb. So whenever they want, they'll be able to have the alliGn™ activate different colors.

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In the workroom.

2D GARLAND

An exciting announcement from all of us at Curate! We've been gathering feedback over the past several years from our users, and are delighted to announce a new program in the alliGn™ family.

Curate recognizes our history as a company based in the cultural remnants of the American Empire, with a historical pattern of white leadership. As such, we have mostly refrained from providing default genders that come from cultures colonized by European and American forces.

We recognize that this has indirectly made it more difficult for people of color to access gender affirmative care, and have begun assembling alliGn™™ development teams made up of trans people of wide gender experiences across the globe from a wide array of ethnic and racial backgrounds. We look forward to sharing their work with you in the near future!

Stay updated on all of the alliGn™ news by following our social media accounts @alliGnXCurate (*pronounced "at align by curate"*) on all platforms.

LASCAUX
GENDER
GENDER

GENDER
I MADE HER OUT OF CLAY
AND WHEN MY GENOMES RENDER
THEN GENDER WE SHALL PLAY

Elsewhere.

FRIEND
Ok I got everything I wanted and now I'm dying.
I guess that's what happens when you get everything you want.
You die.
I'm not dead.
I'm dissatisfied then.

At the dinner table.

POLLYANNELOPE
Imagine
You're existing in space
And something happens
And you know about it
Because you felt it
And nobody else felt it
And you thought you felt something
And then
You get a few nerve endings realigned and the organ above your stomach a little
fermented And that thing you felt
It's everywhere
And it's not one feeling
It little specks of thoughts and images and sounds and smells and textures and temperatures
and its none of those things
And its all making sense
You understand everything
Everything that felt off before
Or not off
But
Incomplete
And now you feel "_____."
And it makes sense
Being alive makes sense
You can move through it again.
Because you're not stopping to wonder.

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A lipsync to Babylon by Lady Gaga.

LASCAUX
I'm doing it. I'm gonna unlock the feeling. I want gender euphoria, and that's what I'm going to
get out this. When they take my stomach brain and enhance it to become a dimensional brain I

will be able to transcend time, space, and gender. People are doing it all over.

CUNEIFORM

We don't do that. People die doing that.

LASCAUX

No, they don't die, they transgend.

CUNEIFORM

And for all practical purposes they're dead. We have to deal with their bodies.

LASCAUX

That's only some people. And that happens less and less often. Most people are able to live side by side other people. We can perceive more but we're still human beings.

CUNEIFORM

This is dangerous. People could be hurt irrevocably. We're merchandisers here. We change people's bodies so they're more comfortable. We're not here to turn people into psychedelic mushrooms.

MCGURK

I remember back in 6th grade Health and Wellness class, one day we all took one of those gender identity quizzes. Mr. Carlson said it was just a way for us to get thinking about how gender is socialized and all that, but I remember being so so so excited when my quiz said "More Feminine Than Most." I didn't really know why I wanted to be feminine, but I liked it. I wouldn't say I even ended up all that feminine. Later that week, I got called to the nurse's office on my lunch break and she told me about hormone blockers and hormone replacement, the old fashioned way before alliGn™, and she started helping me figure out if I wanted to talk to my parents. And I was a little embarrassed but she helped me figure it all out, and really Mrs. Ahmed was the first one who helped me out, like really gave me tools. I was so thrilled back then. I felt like I was getting closer to the truth. That's what we're doing here, right? Getting closer to the truth?

On the rocket.

FRIEND

All I want to Know is that My Physical Form is Compatible with Living, Being Alive, and Life. My mind, my body, my pursuit of happiness, my expressions of joy and sorrow and anger and fear, are not at odds with one or the other or another.

Is there peace within reach of the way my brain and my bones and my blood must take steps through the universe?

Maybe on Mars. Maybe we have to go further.

Perhaps I go so fast that I am faster than light, and so ahead forge I into the dark. A thousand lifetimes before one even blinks.