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# Part-Time Normals: Embodied Trans Geographies of Homonationalism

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# PART-TIME NORMALS: EMBODIED TRANS GEOGRAPHIES OF HOMONATIONALISM

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THESIS

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the
College of Arts and Sciences
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By

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Lexington, Kentucky

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

PART-TIME NORMALS: EMBODIED TRANS GEOGRAPHIES OF HOMONATIONALISM

Self-understanding of one's gender identity both emerges from, and rearticulates into, the ways one experiences and mediates their personal and social relationships with the geographic worlds they inhabit. Trans geographical literature has, to date, created compelling work on the social geographies of trans people in highly-gendered spaces. This thesis extends the existing literature to research how gender is both experienced and performed in the mundane structures of everyday life. Building from theories of cruel optimism and homonationalism, this research examines how the discursive and spatial epistemologies of gender identity inform attachments to structures of normativity. Through archival research of transvestite periodical magazines and multi-generational fieldwork interviews, this work examines both the seductive temptations of normativity, the cruel optimism of believing if one articulates their trans identity in a "normal" enough way that the privileges of normativity might be re-extended to them, and how one's embodied relations with normativity can resist or reproduce structures of homonationalism. As this research worked with people who do, or have, identified as crossdressers, transvestites, or part-time transgender, the temporal dimensions of one's personal and geographic attachments also became a primary point of research, looking into the embodied relations of part-time normals.

KEYWORDS: Trans Geographies, Cruel Optimism, Homonationalism, Queer Geographies, Trans Theory, Visceral Geographies

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PART-TIME NORMALS: EMBODIED TRANS GEOGRAPHIES OF HOMONATIONALISM

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# INTRODUCTION

*All my life, I've either been crossdressing or, you know, transitioning. One or the other...I've never been an American normal, which I've always wanted to be.*

Kate (they/them), Trans-Generational Coalition Building Workshop, Fantasia Fair 2021

This self-reflective musing came from Kate, a white 78 year old participant in a series of workshops I hosted in Provincetown, Massachusetts at the 2021 Fantasia Fair. This workshop, and my presence at the Fair, were part of the fieldwork I conducted in support of a Masters thesis in geography. Kate's reflection was uniquely informative, as they introduced me to the idea of the "American Normal," a regulatory script of identity that has informed subsequent analysis of the relationships between transgender identity, national imaginaries of "normal" American subjectivities, and the mutually productive discursive and spatial aspects of trans geographies.

At its heart, this is a project about attachment, and about the misalignments that occur in the promises of recognition, normativity, and identity. This is also a research project about trans geographies, and about how discursive, social, and personal relationships of attachment influence the ways one produces and experiences space. Through a combination of archival research and fieldwork methods, I explore this concept of the "American normal" as, in its attachments to hegemonic concepts of normativity, it promises that the privileges of capital might be re-extended to trans subjects who articulate and practice their trans identities in "normal" enough ways. And, in working with people who do, or have, identified as crossdressers, transvestites, or part-time transgender and articulated embodied performances of "normal" trans identity in spatially and temporally mediated ways, I theorize them as Part-Time Normals.

## 0.1 Project Overview

This thesis draws on archival research, participant observation, and group interviews to examine the experiences of trans-feminine people who identify as crossdressers, transvestites, or part-time transgender to better understand how attachments of identity and recognition are mediated and inextricably related with broader uneven geographies of race, class, gender, privilege, nationalism, and normativity. To examine the discursive and spatial production of trans identities that are theoretically compatible with the hegemonic structures of the normal, this project works from, and contributes back to, queer and trans theory as well as work in queer, trans, feminist, and visceral geographies. This builds from understandings of identity and space as mutually coproductive, and draws on theories of cruel optimism, homonationalism, queer failure, and queer and trans theorizations of the body. In examining the tensions between discursive and embodied understandings of gender in the production of trans geographies, I work from archival materials that attempted to discursively define normative trans identities. This is brought together with fieldwork in contemporary trans spaces to locate how archival discourses on "normal" trans identity, logics of homonationalism, and embodied experiences of gender dysphoria and euphoria come together to underpin and inform the production of gendered space.

While anyone may engage in the act of crossdressing, these terms are used here to describe an identity group of trans-feminine people who maintain a male gender expression in the geographies of everyday life while embodying femme gendered selves only in particular spaces and circumstances. Where the archival sources researched for this project primarily made use of the term transvestite, I use the term crossdresser in this

project except when specifically discussing archival discourses and persons, as the word crossdresser best prioritizes embodied gender expression. The term part-time transgender was introduced to me through an interview participant and is used only when discussing individuals who identify with that term. Gender identity, and the language used to describe it, are understood within this project as fluid categories that imperfectly negotiate between one's internal experience of self and the social, cultural, discursive, and political contexts in which one lives. Therefore, while crossdressers or transvestites may not readily fit within contemporary epistemologies of LGBTQ identity, I follow trans scholarship that locates crossdressers within an umbrella of transgender identities that "defy the identity of birth-assigned sex with lived gender" (Gilbert, 2014: 67). Following this understanding, I engage with crossdressers as knowledge holders of unique epistemologies on the spatiality and temporality of gender.

To better understand the spatial and temporal dimensions of crossdresser identity, this project examines both discursive and embodied epistemologies of gender as they co-productively inform the ways that crossdressers and make their gendered selves legible on and through embodied performativities of gender. This brings together archival research with fieldwork to understand how the discursive legacies of archives continue to inform contemporary geographic landscapes and understandings of gender, and to understand how both discursive and embodied knowledges encounter broader structures of race, class, gender, ability, and nationalism. Archival inquiry focused on the discursive production of transvestite identity during the 1960s and 70s in transvestite periodical magazines and social organizations, with particular focus on the periodical

Transvestia (1960-86), Transvestia's attendant social groups the Foundation for Personality Expression (FPE) and the Society for the Second Self (Tri-Ess), and the organizational records of the annual transgender event-space Fantasia Fair (1975-). These archival discourses were examined with fieldwork research on the embodied experiences of crossdressers to understand how these forms of gendered knowledges relate with one another, and examine how historic transvestite discourses continue to underpin the production of some contemporary trans geographies.

While archival research included the entire period from 1960 to 1986, particular focus was given to the period from 1969 to 1980, ranging from the 1969 riots at the Stonewall Inn and symbolic origin of the contemporary gay rights movement to the 1980 retirement of Transvestia founder and longtime editor Virginia Prince. Examining this period is particularly productive as transvestite discourses can be examined in connection with contemporaneous post-Stonewall gay and trans activism. As these movements operated on radically different political agendas and understandings of gender, they developed very different relationships to both structures of normativity and to contemporaneous evolutions in second-wave feminisms, racial and indigenous rights movements, and Cold War era nationalisms. Examining these tensions allows a reading of how the provincialized subject-positions defined through some transvestite discourses reacted to, and attempted to distance from, the emergence of more radical queer activisms that understood trans identity as one axis of difference within multiplicitous and interlocking modes of social differentiation and oppression.

This tension is apparent in archival readings of Transvestia, as the periodical prioritized changing popular conceptions of transvestism from a stigmatized activity to a form of personal expression. Compared with organizations such as the Gay Liberation Front, Third World Gay Revolution, and STAR House which worked towards broad and intersectional goals of human liberation and activism (Ferguson, 2018), the provincialized and monovalent agenda of gendered activism reproduced in such texts stands out in its era. Alongside the shifting politics of 1970s second-wave feminisms that at different moments and degrees embraced or vilified trans women, and the reversion of the more radical gender expression of the counterculture hippie movement into normative denim-mustache masculinities following the 1973 beginning of the wind down of the Vietnam War (Stryker, 2008), transvestite discourses ran parallel to significant changes in American culture. Examining archival materials such as Transvestia, which attempted to define a transvestite subject who was theoretically compatible with broader structures of normativity, is particularly informative as such research produces insight not only into historical trans discourse but also to ways that trans identity exists within broader matrices of identity, culture, normativity, and power.

As the discursive and spatial production of transvestite identity in Transvestia created provincialized understandings of trans identity and monovalent agendas of gendered activism, transvestite identity was actively distanced from other queer identity groups and liberation movements. Therefore, I argue the production of a provincialized transvestite identity relied upon and reproduced logics of homonationalism and heterosexual respectability to produce a trans subject-position theoretically compatible

with the white, middle-class, suburban, and ableist privileges of American normativity. Here, I build from Jasbir Puar's theorization of homonationalism as the logical enfolding of homonormativity and nationalism and pair Puar's scholarship with queer theorizations of the body as a socially and politically mediated ontological assemblage. Using this framework, I explore the relationship between internal gendered experience, social discourse, national identity, and geographic production as they are negotiated in the production of trans identity and space. Archival research into transvestite organizations is particularly informative in this regard, as transvestites' uniquely spatialized and temporalized gender expressions make legible the connections between identity, space, and broader discourses and relations of power.

When referring to "internal gendered experience," I draw on geographic scholarship on viscerality and emotion to theorize gender as an embodied pre-affective sensation that is physiologically experienced along a spectrum of feelings located between poles of gender dysphoria and euphoria. Through critical discourse analysis of archival transvestite discourses, and fieldwork analysis of group interviews designed around participants' lived knowledges of gender, this project theorizes the geographic production of trans space as constituted through complex relationships between embodied gendered experience and historic discourses and spatial imaginaries of trans identity. More broadly, this also speaks to the ways that one's embodied experience of gender, for cis and trans people alike, informs the ways that one both encounters and experiences the world. This research therefore also contributes to literature on queer and trans geographies, visceral and emotional geographies, queer theory, and trans theory.

### 0.1.1 Positionality

My approach to both archives and fieldwork in this project cannot be separated from my personal positionalities as a white queer t4t trans-femme dyke and academic who grew up in a middle-class New England family and has since moved throughout the Eastern time zone, from Pittsburgh to Atlanta and to Lexington, Kentucky where I now reside. As a white American, I exist and have lived at the benefit of unequal systems of race and settler colonialism. This project attempts to work against these systems and towards a politics of radical liberation. I therefore operate from an understanding that activisms which imagine progress as gaining tolerance or acceptance from an oppressive majority, do nothing but reify the power of the oppressor while failing to work towards sovereignty and liberation for all marginalized peoples.

In conducting fieldwork, I adopted a pensive and quiet demeanor and prioritized active listening, a skill informed by my teaching experience and activist work with a peer-support crisis hotline. The benefits and potential shortcomings of this positionality are reflexively explored in Chapter Three in a discussion of this project's interview process and my decision to discontinue said interviews. Working from an embodied analytic approach of relationality and gesture, I explore this abandoned interview process through scholarship on queer failure and gesture.

### 0.1.2 Contributions

To date, queer and trans geographies have primarily focused on the social geographies and interpersonal affective and psychic worlds of queer and trans spaces. This project expands the literature through analysis of how one's attachments, as

structures of relationality, influence how one shows up to these social spaces. Further, through analysis of the attachments formed in relations of identification and recognition, this project also locates how structures of normativity are both made, and experienced, spatially. Through examination of trans geographies in both the mid-20th and early-21st centuries, this project also locates how attachments to identity, community, nation, capital, whiteness, and the "normal" can create attachments of cruel optimism and reify structures of homonationalism. This both extends geographic readings on theories of cruel optimism and homonationalism, and further locates how these structures are reproduced in entanglements of identity, community, and space.

My work also contributes to queer and trans geographies through a discussion of how individual attachments precede and shape the ways in which spaces of trans community are made. This works from, and contributes back to, feminist geographic scholarship on emotional and visceral geographies in locating how geographies of trans community are structured and defined in relations of emotion and care. To do so, I build from contemporary vocabularies of gender euphoria and dysphoria and locate them as visceral sensations that are experienced in relation with the socio-spatial contexts one inhabits. This both interrupts purely psycho-medical definitions of gender dysphoria, and contributes to visceral geographic scholarship through a reading of gender as an embodied sensation. Finally, I hope my work here expands geographic research on cruel optimism, homonationalism, queer failure, and adds to geographic scholarship on the body and embodiment.

## 0.2 Literature Review

### 0.2.1 Queer & Trans Geographies

Trans geographies is a relatively new subfield within geography that to date has produced compelling work on the experiences of trans people in urban (Rosenberg, 2017, 2020), carceral (Rosenberg & Oswin, 2015), planning (Doan, 2010) and digital (Jenzen, 2017) spaces. This geographic literature has built from queer scholarship that locates gender identity and expression as inextricably co-produced with categories of race, class, ability, and nationalism to explore the role of space and geographic imaginaries in the production and experience of gender. Many geographic sites and dimensions of transgender life have not yet been explored in trans geographies, however.

My work expands on existing trans academic scholarship in several ways. This includes bringing transvestites into the literature of trans geographies, contributing to the broader field of trans studies through further writing on late-20th century trans experiences, and exploring how gender is experienced and produced not only in highly gendered spaces but in the mundane geographies of everyday life. This examination of the relationship between trans identity and everyday space builds from Petra Doan's (2010) writing on the gendered tyranny of space. Extending feminist geographic arguments on the inherently gendered nature of space, Doan examines how the geographies of everyday life reinforce normative performativities of gender and argues trans people experience that regulatory script of normativity "as a kind of tyranny." I build from Doan's writing in discussing how, as many trans spaces are produced in opposition to these normative structures, they can be understood as counterpublics that extend from a pluralism of public spheres and relations of power (Warner, 2002; Squires,

2003). Further, as many sites examined in this research relied on geographies of vacation and leisure, these trans counterpublics are understood as queer leisure geographies wherein queer community-making comes into tension with broader structures of normativity (Muller, 2007; Montegary, 2017). And, by examining how the production of these counterpublics intersects with broader structures of inequality, the study of these can elucidate the ways that logics of normativity can factor in the making of trans spaces.

### 0.2.2 Feminist & Visceral Geographies

Feminist geographic literature has argued the mutually constitutive relationship between gendered bodies and space. (Longhurst, 1997) Visceral geographic literature builds from these arguments to locate the body as a relational entity whose internal experiences can be understood as geographically situated visceral sensations (Hayes-Conroy, 2010). In this context, the visceral is defined as "the sensations, moods, and ways of being that emerge from our sensory engagement with the material and discursive environments in which we live" (Longhurst et al., 2009: 334). In this project, I bring together feminist and visceral geographic literature with trans studies epistemologies of the body as a mutable and mediated assemblage to theorize how the production of trans space is mutually constituted with trans bodies. Using this framework, I examine how peoples' gendered embodiments and visceral sensations of gender both contribute to, and emerge from, the production of geographic space.

To discuss gender as a visceral sensation, I work from contemporary languages of gender euphoria and gender dysphoria as terms that respectively describe gendered

experiences that feel good and aligned with one's internal sense of gender, or bad and unaligned. Visceral geographic literature is particularly informative in such an analysis as, in addition to highlighting the role of sensory engagement with the world, it discusses the ways one phenomenologically encounters the discursive environment in which one lives. This includes the ways one encounters those discursive worlds defined in discourses of normativity and the "normal." For trans people, especially, these encounters represent points of tension between one's internal sense and truth of gender and broader discourses and structures which center cisgender existence as an essentialist "normal" from which transness deviates. Therefore, I use an embodied analytic approach that locates the body as a site where gender is both experiences and made legible, to theorize trans geographies - and more broadly all geographies - as sites where people mediate between internal gendered feelings and the broader socio-spatial contexts in which they exist. This builds from geographic responses to Judith Butler's (1990) theorizations of performativity to locate the acts by which people make and unmake their gendered selves through technologies of embodiment and performative actions as reflective of the mutually constitutive relationships of embodied gendered practices and spatial contexts (Nelson, 1999).

### 0.2.3 Theoretical Approach

To examine the relationships between identity and discourse, I work from an understanding of discourse as sets of social meanings signified through speech and text. This also functions on the understanding that, as discourse facilitates the production of meaning, one forms attachments with discourse. Attachment, here, is understood through Lauren Berlant's definition of attachment as "a structure of relationality," where

experiences of emotion and affect are attached to relations with meanings specific to "the contexts of life in which they emerge" (Berlant, 2011: 13). I argue that emotional attachment to discourse produces identity, therefore, as one comes to an understanding or meaning of self in relation with the meanings they read in discourse. As spaces do not pre-exist the people who make them, emerging rather from the relationships of their production, the attachments of identity and discourse can also be understood as spatial relations.

This analysis also extends from scholarship in trans theory and queer theory, as they challenge the presumed fixity of gender and gendered bodies through an understanding that all categories of identity and self emerge from attachments and relations that are situated, changing, and imperfect (Stryker, 1994; Malatino, 2020). More broadly, queer scholarship also speaks to the ways that all identity categories are spatially and temporally specific and situated, emerging from individuals' experiences with the cultural, social, and discursive contexts in which they live (Longhurst, 1997). Brought together with feminist critiques of science that challenge the deterministic and essentialist logics by which patriarchal sciences have historically functioned (Haraway, 1991), this project's approach to theory was developed to respond to the messy realities of lived experience rather than the comfortable facades of "normal" knowledge produced by cis-heteropatriarchy.

I bring this theoretical reading into geography through extension of earlier queer geographies literature that attested to the inseparability of spatial context from sexual and

gendered subjectivities and performativities (Bell et al., 1994; Nelson, 1999). I bring these understandings of discourse and space together with Lauren Berlant's (2011) writing on cruel optimism and Jasbir Puar's (2007, 2017) theorizations of homonationalism in order to develop a critical geographic reading of how broader structures of normativity and realness and belonging are mediated in the relations between identity, space, and self.

## 0.3 Methods

### 0.3.1 Archival Research

This project's primary methodology is archival research, supported and triangulated with group and semi-structured interviews exploring discursive, visceral, and community knowledges of trans experiences. Archival research was conducted with the Transgender Archives at the University of Victoria and the Digital Transgender Archives (DTA). Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and the digital format of the DTA, all archival research was conducted digitally and remotely. From these extensive collections, I selected transvestite periodical magazines and the organizational records of transvestite event-spaces as the primary materials of inquiry, particularly the periodical Transvestia (1960-1986) and the records of the annual transgender event Fantasia Fair (1975-). The periodical Transvestia was selected for both its prominence in the historical canon of trans studies and as a primary source that explored trans identity contemporaneous to the emergence of post-Stonewall queer and trans activisms, second-wave feminisms, and Cold War nationalism. Transvestia was examined alongside other periodicals from the era, such as those from Empathy Press or the IFGE, to better understand the cultural contexts in which the magazine existed and to better identify

what discourses and beliefs were specific to Transvestia and its contributors. This mode of analysis allowed for a reading of these materials internal to their era in addition to facilitating interpretation of how the processes and powers through which provincialized definitions of trans identity assert themselves persist to this day.

Within the highly gendered culture and landscapes of 20th century America, many trans people, including transvestites, created trans specific event-spaces that provided unique opportunities for gender expression, community building, and existence. Transvestite specific events often advertised in, and imagined themselves in relation to, contemporaneous transvestite periodicals. As such, the organizational records of these events provide a valuable resource in understanding how transvestite discourses were lived and embodied. Of these event-spaces, the annual Fantasia Fair (1975-) in Provincetown, MA is the only one still active, and its records were therefore given particular focus.

Doing archival research with Transvestia and other archival materials presents several unique challenges. While transvestites belong within an umbrella of transgender identities, their identities defy easy categorization within contemporary epistemologies of LGBT identity categories. Furthermore, as the understandings of transvestite identity expressed in archival materials exist within cultural and temporal contexts different from those in which I read them. As such, it is neither appropriate nor easy to attempt and project contemporary understandings of transness back in time to understand these identities. To address this temporal asynchrony, I follow the scholarship of DTA founder

and director, K.J. Rawson that "we must always be mindful of how we are imposing [identity categories] onto pasts in which that identity is anachronistic" while staying attuned to the contexts in which those archival materials were produced (Rawson, 2015: 544-45). The work of trans scholar and archivist, Harrison Apple furthers this latter point, challenging researchers to critically question how the production of archives can flatten complex histories and subjectivities into subject-positions and narratives that are easily codifiable and understood by archival makers and audiences (Apple, 2015).

My archival approach builds from these attunements and follows queer rejections of archival nostalgias that attempt to invent "a specific and locatable past" through archival research (Stryker & Currah, 2015: 539). I therefore engage the archive as a site of active knowledge production, following Martin Manalansan's (2014) call to understand the archive "beyond a repository or storage of information" to consider archives as "messy" sites containing "physical, symbolic, and emotional arrangements of objects, bodies, and spaces." In geographic writing, this also builds from Jack Gieseking's (2018) writing on the Lesbian Herstory Archives as sites of fluid, situated, and imbricated archival data. I therefore engage with archives as sites of partial and unstable knowledges whose meanings are actively understood, re-understood, and contested in projects of queer history and futurity.

This approach to archives also builds from critical discourse analysis scholarship as a method of approaching the meanings and sociohistorical processes signified in discourse with attention to the ways that "inequality [is] enacted, reproduced,

legitimated, and resisted by text…in the social and political context." (Van Dijk, 2015). Combined with writing on archival discourse analysis that reads sociohistorical meanings and processes through the "discursive artifacts" of archives (Wortham & Reyes, 2015), this project approached archival materials with particular attention to situated, relational, and contextual meanings, and the relations of power articulated in those meanings. Through a coding structure that worked inductively from the text to highlight discourses of identity production and differentiation, homonationalism, embodiment, and interactions with systems which enforce the "normal" such as medical doctors and police, this archival analysis worked to find the recurring patterns of meaning and social processes defined in archival discourses.

### 0.3.2 Interviews

My reading of archival materials was triangulated with a series of group interviews at the 2021 Fantasia Fair and semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted with people who identify, or used to identify, as transvestites, crossdressers, or part-time transgender. Interviews were centered around participants' embodied and emotional self-understandings, recollections of where and how they made space for themselves, and discussion of how the organizations and publications now housed in archives touched their lives. This last point builds from Harrison Apple's (2015) writing on the potential of participants to make visible histories, meanings, and archives previously illegible in my archival readings.

A series of group interviews were conducted at the 2021 Fantasia Fair in Provincetown, Massachusetts. Group interviews were conducted as workshops that were

a part of the Fair's official schedule and focused on one of three topics: a presentation and discussion of my ongoing research, using writing as a tool for creatively exploring and discussing gender identity, and a discussion of perceived generational differences and opportunities for coalition building in the trans community. Over 50 participants participated in one or more of these events, with over 30 people present at the Trans-Generational Coalition Building workshop. Participant demographics largely reflected the Fair's demographics, with the majority of participants over the age of 55, almost entirely white, and most from middle-class and upper-class backgrounds. These demographics were not universal, however, with participants ranging from 26 to 83 years old, and with many participants identifying as working class or living on a fixed income. The cooperation and openness of these participants, within the unique event-space of Fantasia Fair made for rich and complex discussions that could not have happened elsewhere.

Where group interviews put participants in discussion with one another to generate dialogue across different and unique experiences, interviews were used to create a more direct analytic between fieldwork and archival materials by discussing the relationship between participants' internal gendered experiences and archival discourses. Interviews were organized using a semi-structured format with four primary questions, each with follow-up questions according to participant responses. As a part of the interview intake form, participants were asked what transvestite organization(s) and/or publication(s) they participated in, with the following four questions organized around their answers:

- How did you first hear about ____ crossdressing organizations and spaces?
- Why did you decide to go to one of these spaces?
- How did it feel to be there? What could you do in these spaces that you could not do in everyday life?
- Were there things you felt you could not do in these spaces or perceived limits to crossdresser identity?

Recruitment priority was given to persons with direct experiences with *Transvestia* and its attendant social organizations such as the Foundation for Personality Expression (FPE) or Sorority for the Second Self (Tri-Ess) but, following Ms. Bob Davis' (2015) writing on the overlap across transvestite organizations, selection criteria included persons who interacted with any transvestite organization between 1960 and 1986. Each interview took approximately two hours, and participants were given the choice to be audio recorded or have me take written notes. All participants elected to not be recorded, citing voice dysphoria. A total of three interviews were conducted before I decided to pause and eventually discontinue interviews. This decision was made due to the emotionally intense and traumatic experiences that participants shared with me, and my desire to protect their privacy and prioritize the mental wellbeing of my community over potential research findings. I will elaborate on this decision later in this Thesis. Follow-up interviews using photo-elicitation exercises were planned for the Spring of 2022, but were not conducted for the same reasons.

## 0.4 Chapter Summary

Chapter One, Transvestia's Girl, builds from archival work with the Transgender Archives at the University of Victoria and Digital Transgender Archives to examine how transvestite periodical magazines, social organizations, and events discursively produced

transvestite identity. Building from Lauren Berlant's (2011) theorization of cruel optimism, this chapter examines how transvestite identity was defined, differentiated from homosexual and transsexual identities, and geographically imagined in ways that at once supported readers in life-preserving ways while setting firm and uncrossable boundaries on what constituted an acceptable transvestite subject. This chapter also contextualizes transvestite identity as an identity category that was defined in response to the discursive and socio-spatial topographies of mid-century America's hyper-polarized gendered culture and uneven landscapes of race, class, and nationalism. This also examines how, as popular gender roles changed through the 1960s and 70s, transvestite identity became walled in by logics of cruel optimism. Cruel optimism provides a theoretical lens by which to examine how the discursive production of transvestite identity created communities and geographies that functioned as life-preserving resources of trans survival even as their definition prevented them from being able to evolve in step with the changing cultural landscapes around them.

Chapter Two, American Normals, works from fieldwork conducted in Provincetown, Massachusetts during the 2021 Fantasia Fair to examine how logics of homonationalism and heterosexual respectability can underpin the reproduction of queer and trans geographies. This chapter extends Jasbir Puar's (2007, 2017) theorizations of homonationalism to examine how archival discourses attempted to produce transvestism as a trans subject position theoretically compatible with the structures of American normativity, and to theorize how homonationalism continues to underpin many queer landscapes through both structural and explicit mechanisms. Working across fieldwork

observations, archival research, and group interviews, this chapter explores the Fair's historical connections to transvestite publications such as *Transvestia*, and locates how the the geographies of the Fair continue to extend these discursive legacies, despite the efforts of many Fair organizers and attendees to make the Fair a more inclusive and accessible place. Building from scholarship on queer leisure geographies, this chapter also explores how the landscapes of Provincetown, as a gaycation hub steeped in settler-colonial pilgrim histories, reproduce geographies of homonationalist exclusion in the making of town's queer landscapes of leisure.

Chapter Three, Emotional Realness, extends trans theory scholarship on the body as an assemblage to theorize the relationships between embodied gendered practices and the production of trans geographies. Working primarily from group interviews and participant observation methods, supported with archival materials, this chapter extends feminist and trans geographic scholarship on the mutually constitutive relationships of gendered bodies and space (Longhurst, 1997) to examine the production of spaces of trans community. This chapter also builds from emotional and visceral geographic scholarship to locate how embodied sensation of gender dysphoria and euphoria function as essential dimensions of the production of trans space. Working from an understanding of bodies as relational entities, I explore how attachments to identity, community, and the "real" function in the production of trans space. I also reflexively examine the process of doing individual interviews through this embodied approach to locate this abandoned methodology within scholarship on the queer art of failure. Finally, this chapter examines how different epistemologies of gender define different definitions of

"true" and "real" trans experiences, and how these structures can operate to create attachments between internal gendered feelings and the structures of normativity.

# CHAPTER 1. TRANSVESTIA'S GIRL: THE DISCURSIVE PRODUCTION OF TRANSVESTITE IDENTITY

Primary among the intentions of the periodical *Transvestia* was to discursively produce a defined subject-position representative of the magazine's imagined and intended readership. The definition of this identity category relied on numerous logical mechanisms including the creation of a delineation between transvestites and other queer identities, a theorization of transvestite identity situated in contemporaneous academic and medical literature, and the definition of the where and how of "proper" transvestite behavior within the hyper-polarized gendered culture and geographies of mid-century America. These mechanisms functioned to produce a provincialized transvestite subject-position that I term here as *Transvestia*'s girl.

To examine the production of *Transvestia*'s girl, I work from Lauren Berlant's (2011) theorizations of cruel optimism and the transactional processes of recognition. Specifically, this chapter explores how *Transvestia* defined and logically reproduced an imagined "proper" transvestite identity through logics of cruel optimism and homonationalism. In their aptly titled book, *Cruel Optimism*, Berlant defines cruel optimism as a relationship between oneself and one's desires, articulating that a relation of cruel optimism "exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing." From the broad theorization of the psychic and social dimensions and implications of cruel optimism, this chapter most builds from Berlant's writing about the cruel optimism of recognition and identity. In the entanglements of cruelly optimistic relations, Berlant operates from a definition of recognition as a transactional dynamic that involves a kind of optimism in believing one can mediate their social belonging and

subjectivity in the recognition that capital grants. As recognition therefore extends the emotional promises of belonging, Berlant notes that "recognition all too often becomes an experiential end in itself, an emotional event that protects what is unconscious, impersonal, and unrelated to anyone's intentions about maintaining political privilege."

Reading *Transvestia* through this lens invites the question of how political privilege and normative recognition were reproduced in the making of *Transvestia*'s girl. It also invites the question of how, as *Transvestia* developed a discursive transvestite identity that attempted to comparatively frame itself as more acceptable than other queer subjects, the discursive production of this identity also created tensions between personal feeling and identification with a defined identity category. Berlant muses on this very question that perhaps, "recognition is the misrecognition you can bear, a transaction that affirms you without, again, necessarily feeling good or being accurate." As these relations of recognition rely upon the misrecognition one can bear, they constitute a relation of cruel optimism in the belief that one can make oneself into an acceptable and recognized subject without something being lost or left behind.

This chapter therefore explores how the periodical magazine *Transvestia* defined and logically reproduced an imagined "proper" transvestite identity through the cruelly optimistic desire for recognition. I read cruel optimism alongside Jasbir Paur's (2007, 2017) theorizations of homonationalism as the production of *Transvestia*'s girl reproduced a regulatory script of identity that created a trans subject-position that, in all dimensions of identity and life other than her transness, might be able to participate in

the exclusive privileges extended to the American "normal." My theorization of the relationships between homonationalism and the reproduction of trans identities will be elaborated upon in Chapter Two, where I bring the archival research explored in this chapter together with my contemporary fieldwork in Provincetown, Massachusetts. This chapter fully focuses, therefore, on my close reading and critical discourse analysis of over 11,000 pages of archival material. Building from Berlant and Puar's theories of cruel optimism and homonationalism, the following sections explore how the discursive production of *Transvestia*'s girl created vital and life-preserving networks of trans community in the very same steps that it limited how transvestite subjects and community would be able to evolve in the rapidly changing cultural landscapes of 1960s and 1970s America.

## 1.1 The History of *Transvestia*

The total range of archival research undertaken for this project spanned from 1960 to 1986, the length of publication of Transvestia, a periodical magazine founded by Virginia Prince, a white, wealthy, California-based pharmacologist and self-identified transgenderist. The 1960 debut of Transvestia began with Prince distributing 25 copies of the magazine to her personal circle of contacts,[1] and was a revival of an earlier 1952 publication Prince had published but discontinued after two issues. The resurrection of the magazine ran concurrent to Prince's fight against a federal obscenity charge for intimate and sexual private mail she had exchanged with an east-coast contact who had represented herself to Prince as a lesbian, and who was also a crossdresser. Prince

[1] Transvestia no.100 "The Life and Times of Virginia" (1980)

ultimately served no jail time, pleading down to a lesser charge, and it should be noted she demonstrated great courage in the face of government harassment and McCarthyist Lavender Scare tactics. The specter of government harassment however, and desire to distance herself and her readership from the persecutions and violence targeted onto homosexual and transsexual people, persistently underpinned what Transvestia and Prince would ultimately become.

Transvestia was closely modeled to the structure and goals of contemporaneous white and middle-class homophile organizations and publications, such as the Mattachine Society and ONE Magazine and the Daughters of Bilitis and The Ladder.[2] Like ONE and The Ladder, Prince designed the magazine to prioritize, "social commentary, educational outreach, self-help advice, and autobiographical vignettes" (Stryker, 2008: 73). In this way, Transvestia's discourses mirrored not only Prince's own subjectivities, but also "the white middle-class outlook of earlier [homophile] groups, which thought everything in America would be fine if only people treated homosexuals better" (Ferguson, 2018: 37). Contextualizing Transvestia with similar queer activist organizations also provides a reading of how the homophobic and transphobic beliefs the magazine distributed did not take issue with queerness itself, but with queerness that interrupted the lives of people who otherwise lived in the privileges of American normativity.

[2] Transvestia no.3 "The Future of Transvestia" (1960)

In the years following its founding, Transvestia grew in membership, spawning multiple short-lived subsidiary magazines such as The Femme Mirror (1961-68) and TV Clipsheet (1961-1974), as well as two social organizations: The Foundation for Personality Expression (FPE, 1962-1976) and the Society for the Second Self (Tri-Ess, 1976-) which in 1976 merged the declining membership of FPE with another similar group, Mamselle, which had been founded and run by Carol Beecroft.[3] These social organizations manifested as vital community resources and, in their meetings, geographic sites which mirrored the discourses of their magazines. These meetings often functioned as critical social spaces for people who otherwise lacked spaces and opportunities to express and be social as themselves. They were also spaces which relied on restrictive membership policies that excluded anyone who was not a heterosexual crossdresser or the wife of a heterosexual crossdresser. As trans scholar Susan Stryker has noted, "in organizing around the one thing that interferes with or complicates their privilege, their organizations tend to reproduce that very privilege" (Stryker, 2008: 77).

Tri-Ess continues to function to this day, but even by Transvestia's end Prince reflected that the "high point…for the cause" had come and gone around issues 50-52, or from April to August of 1968.[4] Notably preceding the 1969 emergence of more radical queer activisms, this "high point" was defined by Prince as the year she petitioned to multiple state police departments to exempt crossdressers from the harassment police targeted onto sex workers, appeared on the Allen Burke television show in New York, and attended the American Psychiatric Convention in Boston. Prince's attendance and

[3] Transvestia no.88 "An Important Announcement to All FPs!" (1976)
[4] Transvestia no.100 "The Life and Times of Virginia" (1980)

behavior at such medical conferences was also indicative of what Transvestia would evolve into in the years to come. Where the early years of the magazine had focused on readers' mental health in dealing with feelings of shame, guilt, and loneliness; the magazine's later years became marked with a zealous provincialism characterized in virulent transphobia towards transsexual women. Even as Prince had begun to live full time as a woman in 1968, she maintained herself as different from transsexual women because she did not desire bottom surgery. Further, she frequently argued that, even within the austere and cruelly gated landscape of 1970s trans medicine, bottom surgery should be even more gatekept by medical professionals.[5]

To evangelize her beliefs, Prince leaned heavily into her privileges, as her race, class, education, and friendships with prominent sexologists such as Harry Benjamin and Vern Bullough afforded access to medical conferences and the ears of innumerable healthcare providers. While her fear of the rise of transsexual activism increased through the 1970s, Prince's concerns with the medicalization of trans identity were a constant feature of the magazine. These fears were also a primary drive to how Prince understood who Transvestia's girl was, and how she was both different from, and more heteronormatively acceptable than, other queer persons.

## 1.2 Who is Transvestia's Girl?

*For my purposes here "TV" refers to a true transvestite, one whose only non-conformist behavior is cross-dressing and whose sex orientation is therefore heterosexual…TVs are social varients only since the problem they have within them is a psycho-social one and their solution for it is in the sociological realm.*

Transvestia no.7, "Virgin Views" (1961)

[5] Transvestia no.60 "Change of Sex or Gender" & "Hormones and Surgery Yes or No" (1969)

Above is Transvestia's self-described intended reader, the trans person whose only identity factor that differentiated them from the white, middle-class, able-bodied, and heterosexual imaginaries of the "American Normal" was their transness. The intended purpose and goal of the magazine was therefore the improvement of life for this subject by attempting to develop transvestism as a form of queerness excused from the persecutions faced by lesbians, gay men, and other trans people. The magazine attempted to do this by inventing a trans subjectivity for its intended readers based on one's ability to navigate, fit into, and "pass" as an acceptable and normal heterosexual subject. This subjectivity, Transvestia's girl, was defined as distinct from other forms of queer identity by the invention of a categorization and vocabulary of trans identity that attempted to make Transvestia's girl compatible with the "American Normal".

Central to the invention of this subjectivity was Virginia Prince's definition of the "true transvestite" subject referenced in this section's opening quote. The "truth" implied in this subject was reserved only for those who fit Prince's conservative, homophobic, and Christian moralities of womanhood. While the "true" transvestite subject began the invention of Transvestia's girl through the obverse implication that other queer subjects were "false" and lesser subjects, this rhetoric quickly found its teleological eventuality in Prince's invention of a vocabulary of transness that "will have implications and connotations that are true and descriptive of the [normal] way of life instead of that of "gayville's" denizens."[6] Prince developed this desire to distance Transvestia's girl from

[6] Transvestia no.12 "Targets, Titles, and Terminology" (1961)

homosexuals into a vocabulary of transvestism based entirely around trying to "take the homosexual taint away from [crossdressing]"[7] by using the abbreviation "FP" to refer to the magazine's "true" subjects as "femmepersonators."[8] I do not use this vocabulary in this writing both because it has died out from whatever popular use it once had and because it was a language born only of base fear and homophobia. Regardless of the words used, Transvestia's girl was from the magazine's very beginnings defined in the ways that she could hopefully fit into the cis-heteropatriarchical structures that would continue to oppress others.

Establishing Transvestia's girl as the only positive outcome of exploring one's transness defined a cruelly optimistic futurity where only "true" trans subjects remained and which imagined, if one could practice their trans identity in a "normal" enough way, the privileges of normativity might be re-extended to them. This regulatory script took many forms as an amorphous set of logics that developed in parallel to evolving trans and gay rights movements to try and maintain Transvestia's readers as a more normal and acceptable group than those who embraced more radical politics. These logics also functioned internally to the magazine, in the invention of a series of "stages" of transness that supposed FPism as the inevitable outcome for "true" trans subjects. These stages translated the "coming-out" of these trans subjects into a socio-spatial language that supposed the evolution of transvestite subjects through stages including "(1) the locked door…stage; (2) the full wardrobe-once around the block at night stage; (3) the social integration stage of shopping, trying on clothes, eating in restaurants, etc., stage" towards

[7] Transvestia no.46 "Announcement" (1967)
[8] Transvestia no.13 "'Phi Pi Epsilon' Our National Sorority" (1962)

an inevitable identification and practice of "proper" transness aligned with Prince's values. Prince defined two possible outcomes to these stages of evolution: assimilation of the trans person into the social groups she founded and sponsored such as FPE and Tri-Ess, or development into a "completely mixed-up kid…blocked in all directions."[9] As I will elaborate in Chapter Two, the definition of this transvestite subject readily made use of homonationalism and heterosexual respectability in both its differentiation from other queer subjects and in a regulatory script of "acceptable" queerness.

The extreme policing of the boundaries of the subjectivity of Transvestia's girl as a "sexually normal" subject can, in part, be understood by the intention for Transvestia to function as a heuristic device for the magazine's intended readers. As the assumed reader was the married and heterosexual transvestite, one of Prince's desired purposes for the magazine was to be an evidentiary tool that readers could show to their spouses as evidence that they were neither homosexual nor alone in their gendered needs.[10] The desire to create a resource for married transvestites coming out to their wives underpinned many aspects of the magazine, from attempts to exclude all content and readers that could be considered homosexual, to arguments that those who could not effectively "pass" as heterosexual women should never go in public,[11, 12] to the stated intention of those represented on the magazine's cover and opening article as "Cover Girls" should model themselves to "create a good impression for the non-TV reader"[13] of

[9] Transvestia no.14 "Phi Pi Epsilon News" (1962)
[10] Transvestia no.40 "Commentary on This Issue" (1966)
[11] Transvestia no.24 "Observations by Virginia" (1963)
[12] Transvestia no.28 "You Too Can Have a Rich Life" (1964)
[13] Tranesvestia no.51 "Transvestia Comes of Age" (1968)

transvestites as queer subjects who represented a kind of "authentic" womanhood.[14] The limitations built into the very definition of Transvestia's girl will be elaborated on at length in Chapter 2 through an analysis of the logics of homonationalism that underpinned the regulatory scripts that readers should "be discreet and keep those pretty skirts clean."[15] As a marriage resource, numerous letters to the editor from both transvestites and spouses testify to the magazine's helpfulness, as does the publishing deal Prince secured with the Argyle Books subsidiary of Sherbourne Press for her 1967 book on the subject, *The Transvestite and His Wife*.[16] The good that Transvestia's marriage heuristics did in helping transvestites navigate the coming-out process is undeniable, but it is also inseparable from the exclusions and limitations built into the very definition of who Transvestia's reader was meant to be.

Beyond the homophobic underpinnings of the stated purposes of Transvestia and associated publications and social groups, these organizations cannot be isolated from the other structural systems of inequality. The pricepoint of Transvestia ($5 per issue in 1969), and costs of organizations such as FPE ($12 annual in addition to having bought 5 or more issues of Transvestia), recommended costs of a "proper" wardrobe in the hundreds of dollars, and other financial costs present one set of structural issues. The hosting of all social events in urban centers for groups spread across large regions of the United States presumed a capital-enabled mobility for the magazine's readers, as well as a presumed white reader who could navigate the country's uneven geographies of race

[14] Transvestia no.40 "Commentary on This Issue" (1966)
[15] Transvestia no.8 "Susanna Says" (1961)
[16] Transvestia no.47 "Wive's Book Now Available" (1967)

without concern. These more direct barriers only explicitly enforced the implicit underpinnings of the magazine, however, as the very definition of Transvestia's subject located the "where" of transness outside the geographies of everyday life. This exteriorizing "where" thus located "proper" transness where it could not interfere with the privileges experienced in white and male-presenting daily life.

It is this presumption that scholar Susan Stryker refers to when describing how such organizations "tend to reproduce that very privilege" when participants organize around the very things which complicate their privilege (Stryker, 2008: 77). In the context of Transvestia, as with many organizations which hinge on politics of respectability, the reproduction of privilege relied on the reification of white and middle-class American fantasies, and a belief that gender and sexual identity and activisms could be understood distinct from other dimensions of identity and intersecting struggles for justice. Therefore, the definition of "true" transvestism, or FPism, or "sexually normal" transness, or whatever other regulatory script that the magazine attempted to wall itself in with, all served at their heart to invent a form of transness that would not mitigate the privileges they experienced as "normal" Americans. The following sections will further discuss the ways that this definition of transness attempted to distance itself from other forms of queerness, produced the "where" of transvestism separate from the geographies of everyday life, and how the provincial definition of Transvestia's girl ultimately reproduced the gendered inequalities from which it sought to exempt Transvestia's "true" readers.

## 1.3 She's Not Like Other Girls

*TRANSVESTIA is dedicated to the needs of those heterosexual persons who have become aware of their "other side" and seek to express it.*
Transvestia no.49-111, "Purpose of Transvestia" (1968-1986)

From its origins, the inside cover of every issue of Transvestia opened with a full-page statement of purpose for the publication. This statement articulated the alliterative goals of the magazine as to provide its readership with education, entertainment, and expression in hopes of helping them to achieve understanding, self-acceptance, and peace of mind. This statement also articulated the intended readership for whom these goals were created: the heterosexual crossdresser and "those interested persons in the medical, legal counseling and scientific professions to further their knowledge about this little understood field."[17]

The delimitation of Transvestia's intended readership was a constant feature from the magazine's origins throughout its entire run. The language surrounding this distinction shifted through the years, at first for "transvestites," later for "the sexually normal individual", finally for the "heterosexual person" or "heterosexual crossdresser." Consistent across this shifting vocabulary, however, was the exclusion of "the fields of homosexuality, bondage, domination…[and] fetishism."[18] While this statement purported to neither "condemn nor judge" homosexuality or any of these other groups, the imagined distinctions between these categories operated by circuitous and homophobic logics that hierarchized these imagined coherent models of queerness and

[17] Transvestia no.49-111 "Purpose of Transvestia" (1968-1986)
[18] Transvestia no.49-111 "Purpose of Transvestia" (1968-1986)

inevitably located Transvestia's girl at the apex. The distinctions between these groups were modeled on Prince's interpretations of earlier psycho-analytic frameworks of identity, queerness, and womanhood, and the hierarchization of these categories was developed through logics of heteronormative respectability and homonationalism. While not explicitly mentioned, transsexual women were grouped with homosexuals in this categorization. Transsexual men and other trans-masculine persons were alternatively imagined to either not exist at all, or exist in such rarity as to be unworthy of exclusion.

Understanding these logics requires an understanding of the intended meaning of "the other side" described in the magazine's purpose statement. Transvestia's girl was imagined as a figure whose "only non-conformist behavior is cross-dressing"[19] and who otherwise embodied a passable performance of heterosexual masculinity and maleness in most parts of life, including work, marriage, and parenting. Theorizing this "other side" also required a definition of what being trans was beyond the object-oriented practices of wearing clothing socially designated to the opposite gender. Transvestia therefore circulated a conceptualization of transness as a latent "second self" who one expressed through the act of crossdressing. It is this "second-self" from which Tri-Ess took its name. To manifest these gendered needs without interfering with one's public and masculine life, the recommendation was to cultivate one's "woman-self" or "femme personality" in distinct geographies and social contexts from one's everyday life.[20]

[19] Transvestia no.7 "Virgin Views" (1961)
[20] Transvestia no.48 "Virgin Views" (1967)

This "woman-self" was imagined to always-already be part of oneself, and to embody the feminine polarity of heterosexual womanhood opposite the male-self one embodied in everyday life. The expression of these two selves was therefore not imagined as fluid or free movement between or across masculinity or femininity, but as the development of a second-self separate from one's male life, "leaving the male personality to be masculine without interference and thus to avoid any implications of gayness."[21] Transvestites were therefore imagined, at an internal level, to simultaneously be "complete persons both masculine and feminine,"[22] as well as comprised of two distinct and polarized gendered selves. The goal of Transvestia, therefore was not to transition and manifest one's internal gendered truth or realness, but to achieve a survivable balance between the demands of one's work and family life and one's transgendered needs.

From it's very first issue, Transvestia signified this goal by the inclusion of a Bible quote in its opening statement of purpose, reading:

*When you make the two into one…and when you make the MALE AND FEMALE INTO A SINGLE ONE…then shall you enter the kingdom.*
Transvestia no.1-111, "Purpose of Transvestia" from Gospel of Thomas

The citation of the Bible is telling in the ways that the ideas of womanhood imagined within Transvestia reflected white, American, Christian models of "proper" femininity, but the logical defense of the simultaneous monism and dualism embodied in Transvestia's girl was further built in the magazine's self-circular logics and citation and

[21] Transvestia no.2 "Virgin Views" (1960)
[22] Transvestia no.29 "The Secrets of Dr. Caravelle" (1964)

inspiration from sexological and psycho-medical writing. The work of many prominent sexologists was reprinted in Transvestia, including theorized typologies of transness from Harry Benjamin,[23] Havelock Ellis,[24] and Magnus Hirschfeld[25] that were interpreted to reify the imagined differences between transvestites and other trans subjects. These differentiations were further theorized through the citations of psychoanalytic concepts that could be interpreted to support a transvestite reading, including citation of Jungian concepts of "animus" and "anima"[26, 27] and Freudian logics of "identification."[28]

The Biblical dualism/monism of Transvestia's girl found its secular medical counterpart in Jung's concepts of animus and anima, as the latent gendered unconsciousnesses possessed by all individuals. Within this conceptualization, every woman possessed a masculine "animus" and every man an "anima" as abstract symbolic and anthropomorphic archetypes of self. It is not my intention here to debate the academic or psychological validity or usefulness of such concepts, but to analyze how such texts were used in the development of a definition of gendered self predicated on the "truth" loaned by academic citation. In the definition of Transvestia's girl, therefore, their trans needs were imagined as manifestations of an internal "anima" and the goal of crossdressing was for each transvestite to develop their femme personality to the point

[23] Transvestia no.6 "Transsexualism and Transvestism as Psycho-Somatic and Somato-Psychic Syndromes" (1960)
[24] Transvestia no.97 "Out of the Past" (1979)
[25] Transvestia no.3 "Survey of Various Aspects of Transvestism in the Light of Present Knowledge" (1960)
[26] Transvestia no.27 "Psychiatry…Psychology…or..Philosophy…" (1964)
[27] Transvestia no.76 "The Girl Within, Yet Again" (1973)
[28] Transvestia no.2 "Homosexuality, Transvestism, and Transsexualism" (1960)

that one would "see himself in the mirror as a woman…an integration of his Animus and Anima."[29]

Where Jung loaned a theory to the internal experience of transness, the differentiation of transvestites from other forms of queerness came through extensions of Freudian logics of "identification" into a classification and hierarchization of queerness. First articulated in the second issue of Transvestia, this logic built out from a model of transness not as inherent to one's nature, but activated or inherited in one's formative years or experiences within the "nurture" experiences of one's life. This model of identification relied upon a reductive model of womanhood as comprised by three discrete "aspects" of womanhood. These aspects were the "sexual woman," the "psychological woman," and the "social woman." It was imagined that for the young transvestite "the particular aspect of womanliness which impresses him...determines his development into one of three behavioral patterns" of homosexuality, transsexuality, or transvestism.[30]

The reductive nature of such an argument is readily apparent to anyone who understands women, cis or trans, as whole people in themselves whose sexuality is not a negative dimension of their being. It should be noted, however, that Prince, and the other authors of Transvestia, did not invent these misogynistic concepts of womanhood, they simply reprinted the accepted "truths" of patriarchal formulations of masculinist and positivist sciences for the credibility such academic texts loaned to their arguments. The

[29] Transvestia no.27 "Psychiatry…Psychology…or..Philosophy…" (1964)
[30] Transvestia no.2 "Homosexuality, Transvestism, and Transsexualism" (1960)

misogyny of these concepts extended from the biases of Freud's writing, as he operated by masculinist academic practices wherein "man served as his point of departure and model…[to view] women as only symmetrical to man…[and] to subordinate woman to man hierarchically, to think of woman, as far as her sex is concerned, as a lesser man." (Kofman, 1985: 37-38)

The extension of these logics into the classification of transness, therefore, led to an idea of womanhood that only operated as a series of symbolic criteria that young and impressionable male children might "identify" with in some way that would shape their future development. Here, these sexual and psychological "aspects" were defined through biologically essentialist understandings of womanhood, as women, in being "anatomically different from…man," was imagined to intrinsically possess different "sexual behavior" as well as biologically determined psychological "attitudes and capacities of mind" that were fundamentally different from those of men. Transvestites were understood as aligned with a "social" aspect of womanhood in transvestites' "desires…to dress like a woman, act like a woman, go about in public as a woman and be accepted by society as a woman."[31] This tripartite model of trans identity not only implicitly defined transsexual women and homosexual men as subjects with no place in society, but also hierarchized these three "identification" identities in alignment with hegemonic ideas of which aspects of womanhood were most socially acceptable. Therefore, as Transvestia's model of womanhood least diverged from sexual and gendered norms, the "social woman" transvestite was placed at the top of this hierarchy

[31] Transvestia no.2 "Homosexuality, Transvestism, and Transsexualism" (1960)

of gender difference, followed by the "psychological woman" transsexual, and finally the "sexual woman" homosexual male who Prince believed only took male lovers out of some confused attempt to "expressed opposite genderal feelings without reproach."[32]

As time progressed, and the social and political contexts of sexual and gender liberation around the magazine changed, Transvestia's logical distinction between modes of queerness also changed: towards ever greater provincialization and violent hatred towards transsexual women. As the 1970s progressed, increasingly more radical political and activist organizations emerged in both gay liberation and women's lib movements. Prince, however, regarded both these new activist groups and the increasing accessibility of trans medicine as a threat. As a part of this effort, Prince pushed back against the inclusion of transvestite within the efforts of more intersectional organizations like the Gay Liberation Front[33] or in the work of more progressive trans activists such as Angela Douglas,[34] as Prince thought such inclusion would "muddy the waters"[35] of the "clean" models of transness she desired her magazine to represent. This pushback against broader inclusion and inward turn towards a provincialized transvestism built on the "defensible" protections of heterosexual respectability is regrettable, but it was in Prince's increasing hatred of transsexual women that she undertook the most violent and damaging project of her life.

[32] Transvestia no.36 "Virgin Views" (1965)
[33] Transvestia no.62 "Semantics - Identity or Confusion" (1970)
[34] Transvestia no.62 "Semantics - Identity or Confusion" (1970)
[35] Transvestia no.54 "Observations by Virginia" (1968)

The landscape of trans medicine in the United States in the 1970s, despite some improvements from previous decades, remained austere and gatekept behind high cost barriers and cruel "tests" of lived experience. Within this barren medical landscape, Prince undertook a campaign to argue that bottom surgery and trans medical care should be even less accessible and locked behind even more stringent impossibilities. Leveraging her class, racial, and educational privileges, Prince spent a significant portion of the 1970s attending psychological and medical conferences on trans medicine to argue that many of the people seeking medical care did not, in her reductive models of transness and womanhood, "deserve" gender affirming surgery or medical care.

While Prince's campaign against transsexual women functioned to attack every aspect of their being, it should be noted that the only medical procedure she argued against was bottom surgery for trans-feminine people. Prince herself had taken estrogen for several years of her life and spoken pleasantly of her experiences with it. Susanna Valenti, the longtime east-coast contributor and editor of Transvestia, had also pursued other gender-affirming procedures such as electrolysis and rhinoplasty without drawing the condemnation of Prince or any others in the magazine's pages. Both Prince and Valenti, however, argued vehemently against bottom surgery for trans-feminine people, going so far as to dedicate the 60th issue of Transvestia to describing their account of the differences between transvestites and transsexuals. Both Prince and Valenti created reductive portraits transsexual women and attempted to characterize trans-feminine people who pursued bottom surgery as misguided homosexuals, people exploited by

greedy medical providers, or as regressive and self-destructive figures holding back gendered liberation.[36]

Prince herself described this in a (possibly fictional) recounting of a conversation she had with a former reader, saying "here was a classical case of the Freudian idea of the personification of the self, the male self, in the penis…[and] when the penis was gone the [male] self was dead."[37] By following the psycho-medical invention of Transvestia's girl as simultaneously one whole person and two distinct selves, masculine and feminine, Prince attempted to frame surgery as a form of self "destruction"[38] and a "deathless suicide"[39, 40] of one's male self. Both the Freudian locating of the "male self" in the penis, and the interpretation of surgery as a process that somehow "destroys" or "maims" the body, rely on cis-heteropatriarchal and biologically essentialist formulations of the body as somehow possessing an innate or "natural" gendered coherency. Such logics have long been used to justify the persecution of trans people because of the ways that transness destabilizes the presumption of gender and sex as binary and unchangeable aspects of being.

Were Transvestia's versions of these fearful sentiments circulated only within the magazine's pages and readership, they would simply represent sad and violent pieces of archival ephemera attesting to the historical presence of contemporary truscum

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[36] Transvestia no.66 "Virgin Views - Me, Myself and I or What Are You?" (1971)
[37] Transvestia no.66 "Virgin Views - Me, Myself and I or What Are You?" (1971)
[38] Transvestia no.50 "You Can't Add by Subtraction" (1968)
[39] Transvestia no.50 "Susanna Says" (1968)
[40] Transvestia no.77 "Observations by Virginia - The Lure of Surgery" (1973)

arguments that gatekeep "true" transness behind barriers of medicalization and suffering. These beliefs did not exist only within the sphere of transvestite discourse, however, as Prince ensured through the cultivation of a readership of professionals and evangelization of her beliefs to medical providers.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, Prince occupied a position of significant privilege and institutional access as a white middle-class scientist with a PhD, and both personal and professional relationships with many prominent figures in trans medicine including Harry Benjamin and Richard Green.[41, 42] Through the institutional accesses granted by her degrees, and personal friendships with such figures, Prince was able to leverage her privileges to gain access to numerous academic conferences on trans medicine, including 1965, 1968, and 1970 American Psychiatric Conferences,[43, 44, 45] 1969 Seminar on Gender Identity in London,[46] and 1975 Harry Benjamin International Symposium on Gender Identity.[47] Prince used such opportunities to evangelize her vitriol against transsexual women, and to argue that medical providers should gatekeep surgical transition resources even more than they already did.[48, 49] Such conference presentations were also paired with individual lectures Prince gave at numerous universities, gender identity clinics, and to unaffiliated trans medical providers across the country.

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[41] Transvestia no.12 "Wonderful Weekend" (1961)
[42] Transvestia no.62 "Travelling Saleslady" (1970)
[43] Transvestia no.35 "Virgin Views" (1965)
[44] Transvestia no.51 "Travelogue" (1968)
[45] Transvestia no.62 "Travelling Saleslady" (1970)
[46] Transvestia no.71 "Here and There with Virginia" (1972)
[47] Transvestia no.83 "Transexuals and Pseudo-Transexuals" (1974)
[48] Transvestia no.72 "Here and There with Virginia" (1972)
[49] Transvestia no.95 "The 'Transcendents' or 'Trans' People" (1978)

Prince's personal evangelizations were also formalized into the structure of Transvestia's attendant social groups, the Foundation for Personality Expression (FPE) and Society for the Second Self (Tri-Ess). Modeled after homophile organizations and sorority organizations with distinct geographic chapters, the standard structure of an FPE or Tri-Ess meeting was to gather at a motel or private home of a member for socializing, attending to organizational matters, and a talk from an invited speaker. In addition to talks from guest speakers, who were often medical professionals or police officers, there were also several "professional seminars" hosted through FPE and Tri-Ess where a specific chapter would invite professionals including "psychiatrists, psychologists, marriage and family counsellors, attorneys, ministers, social workers, and even…the [local] Vice Squad" to attempt and educate them on transvestism.[50] In the case of invited medical providers and police officials, this education also attempted to argue why transvestites should be exempt from the persecutions targeted onto homosexuals and transsexuals, especially those who did sex work.

The logical differentiation of transvestites from other queer identities, and the rhetoric targeted against transsexual women, built from the provincialized invention of the subjectivities of Transvestia's girl and represent a sad and deplorable moment in trans history. It is unknown how many medical providers and other professionals were persuaded through these attempts to be even more persecutory towards the most vulnerable members of the trans community. It can be observed, however, how these

[50] Transvestia no.54 "Talk to Professional Seminar"

logics evolved through the 1970s and into the hatespeech of today in the sorts of TERF logics that claim trans people to be the product of "destructive" medicine, misguided victims of profiteering doctors, or regressive figures holding back gendered progress.[51] Prince goes so far as to anticipate the transphobic rhetoric that would emerge from certain circles of women's liberation in the late 1970s, saying "the real SELF resides in your head not your loins…this is exactly what Women's Lib complains so about - that men consider women just as sex objects."[52] The only observable distinction, in fact, between the violent writings of Prince and TERFs such as Janice Raymond is that where Raymond considered transsexual women as desecraters of womens bodies, Prince considered them the destroyers of mens'.

Prince's homophobia, transphobia, classism, and extreme antagonism towards transsexual women has been documented by other scholars (Stryker, 2008; Davis, 2015) and accurately characterized as inexcusable and condemnable beliefs held by one of the significant figures of modern trans history. The likely causes of her desire for a provincial and defensible trans subjectivity have been recounted in Transvestia's founding amidst Prince's battle against federal obscenity charges. This was likely also furthered by the proceedings of her first divorce, predating the magazine's publication, wherein Prince's ex-wife was granted grounds for divorce due to Prince being characterized by a psychiatrist as a homosexual.[53] While neither of the trial nor divorce

[51] Transvestia no.66 "Virgin Views - Me, Myself and I or What Are You?" (1971)
[52] Transvestia no.77 "Observations by Virginia - The Lure of Surgery" (1973)
[53] Transvestia no.17 "The How and Why of Virginia" (1962)

excuse Prince's efforts, they perhaps provide insight to the empathetic origins of unempathetic beliefs.

While Transvestia cannot be divorced from the prejudices built into the magazine's structure and identity, there is evidence that these beliefs were not universal among readers, or at least did not surpass many readers' needs for a more inclusive community. Throughout the 1960s and 70s, many rival publications were founded to Transvestia in direct opposition to the exclusive definition of Transvestia's girl, including Empathy Press' publications such as the aptly named Empathy which opened, "I am not going to tell you that you cannot be a part of my club…as my Competitor Charles Prince might say."[54] Furthermore, the work of Ms. Bob Davis (2015) demonstrates that many people subscribed and contributed to multiple trans publications, including those of diametrically opposed stances on trans inclusivity such as Empathy and Transvestia. As I will recount in Chapter 2, some events which were founded in more exclusive terms, such as Fantasia Fair, have significantly changed over the years to be more inclusive and progressive and to try and become resources for all trans people.

## 1.4 Where in the World is *Transvestia*'s Girl?

*Humans are gregarious animals. We do not like to live isolated or alone, we like to be with people and part of groups, to say our piece, to be heard and seen…the [transvestite] wants just that--to be his feminine self to such a public degree as may be possible under various circumstances of his own physique, his family, his reputation and social position etc. This is rarely possible in a completely public way…To fill this need Phi Pi Epsilon was formed.*[55]

Transvestia no.48, "Virgin Views" (1967)

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[54] Empathy no.28 "A Note from Cathy" (1970)

[55] Phi Pi Epsilon is the Greek letter name for FPE

The discursive production of transvestite identity relied upon defining the geographic "where" of transvestites' femme gendered selves to spaces separate from the geographies of everyday life. As other scholars have noted, locating transness outside one's daily life mitigates the effects one's queerness will have on the privileges and realities one faces in business, family, and public life. Obversely, these definitions of transvestite geographies create significant limitations on where and with whom one can honestly express a critical part of one's identity and self. The ways that many transvestites made space and community within these limitations was at once brilliant and tragic, creating both life-preserving sites of trans survival in the same moment that their homonationalist reification of the "normal" limited their ability to create trans geographies beyond those sites. Put another way, in an expression of cruel optimism, in the ways that transvestite geographies relied upon and reproduced presumptions of capital-enabled mobility and structural accesses enabled by whiteness they simultaneously created much-needed spaces of trans survival and prevented transvestite spaces from becoming a part of the broader geographies of life. By discursively limiting the geographies of everyday life to those trans subjects who could effectively "pass" as heteronormative subjects, the definition of Transvestia's girl worked against a broader trans liberation of freedom for all trans people, while also obversely justifying the invention of transvestite-specific community spaces.

This is not a condemnation of transvestite spaces, nor of trans spaces more broadly. The invention of nation-wide (and to some extent international) social

organizations through Transvestia in the form of FPE and Tri-Ess, in fact, represents a brilliant and life-preserving move to create spaces of trans survival for people where they could be themselves without fear of persecution or violence. The need and desire for such spaces persists to this day, as trans people continue to face persecution through legal, medical, and interpersonal violence. As the scholarship of transgender planning scholar Petra Doan attests, the geographies of everyday American life, through their heteronormative underpinnings, continue to reinforce normative performativities of gender that are experienced as a kind of tyranny by those who transgress the hegemonic standards of "normal" gendered performance (Doan, 2010). The need for trans space naturally extends therefore, from the need for community and spaces free from the harassment and violence so often targeted onto trans people.

Among Transvestia's founding intentions was the desire to create and facilitate trans spaces, to facilitate trans community-making, and to have spaces free from police harassment and violence.[56] The need for freedom from police was also mirrored by many readers who recounted their embarrassing, dehumanizing, and violent encounters with the "neanderthals in blue"[57] with one reader even recounting that her experience of being baselessly arrested and humiliated was the event which inspired her to seek FPE membership in order to "perhaps regain the feeling of acceptance without the risk of repeating my nightmare."[58]

[56] Transvestia no.100 "The Life and Times of Virginia" (1980)
[57] Transvestia no.81 "An Interesting Day" (1974)
[58] Transvestia no.93 "The Worst Night of my Life" (1977)

My argument, therefore, is not against trans spaces at all. I believe them to be necessary and vital community resources that provide an irreplaceable resource of resilience and love that pushes against the hegemonic systems that oppress. More broadly, however, I believe that the cruelly optimistic goals of palliative activisms, such as Transvestia's, that seek to fight for the tolerance and inclusion of a marginalized group into the very systems which oppress them will never achieve any form of justice that truly liberates the marginalized.

Returning to Transvestia, many vital spaces of transvestite community were described and advertised throughout its run, including the benefits provided in FPE and Tri-Ess meetings, in the relationships established through the magazine's Personals section, and in trans-specific resort event-spaces. Marie, the Cover Girl of Transvestia no.29, testified to the power of FPE spaces in her opening article to the issue, writing "being able to attend these meetings, discuss various aspects, etc, of feminine expression, and of course to be dressed along with the other members is truly wonderful. To feel accepted as a woman and to return this feeling is the most natural feeling in the world at these gatherings."[59] As spaces where trans people could experience acceptance for a part of themselves they had rarely or never had the opportunity to express, these spaces provided unique moments of joy and love. As another reader reflected in an article title "Weekend Women" about an FPE meeting at the Idaho home of a reader, "there were these two wonderful [transvestites] approaching the sunset years of their life. Each had spent a lifetime of total solitude in the TV realm. This was their first time in semi-

[59] Transvestia no.29 "Since You Asked" (1964)

public…FPE had opened the door."[60] Beautiful moments and sentiments like these make it all the more tragic that such spaces functioned through exclusion. As Prince wrote in a 1974 advertisement for FPE, "unlike other "open door" organizations which exist, FPE is limited specifically to heterosexual male cross dressers. Homosexuals and transsexuals must look elsewhere."[61] The exclusion of non-transvestite queer people from transvestite spaces created both spatial and social divisions between these groups, divisions further mirrored in recommendations that transvestites distance themselves from homosexuality, as association would only "muddy the waters."[62]

In addition to the organizational event-spaces created through the magazine, numerous event-spaces and resort geographies were advertised and recounted in Transvestia. As Chapter Two will recount at length, many of these spaces, including the annual Fantasia Fair in Provincetown, Massachusetts or events like the DREAM resort series which was held on the Oregon coast in the late 1970s, functioned as trans-specific spaces of vacation that promised geographies free from the gendered tyrannies of everyday life. The following chapter will elaborate on these sites through both Doan's (2010) theories and theories of such sites as counterpublics (Warner, 2002; Squires, 2003) defined by their reactive opposition to the oppressions enacted upon trans people in most contexts.

[60] Transvestia no.63 "Weekend Women" (1970)
[61] Transvestia no.81 "What is Phi Pi Epsilon (FPE)?" (1974)
[62] Transvestia no.54 "Observations by Virginia" (1968)

The prevailing script of Transvestia was that a transvestite who did not pass should not "go out in public and flaunt her skirts and petticoats all over the place," an argument which framed public spaces as a "privilege…reserved for just a very few."[63] This was paired with the sentiment that it was not "wise for two TVs to be together "dressed" on the street."[64] Despite such limiting directives, many transvestites expressed themselves in many places and parts of life beyond trans-specific spaces. Many transvestites demonstrated great resourcefulness and courage in finding ways to cut up the material structure of ordinary and everyday life to create moments and spaces of joy and freedom to express themselves. The strategies outlined by reader submissions to the magazine were varied and often specific to the unique situations of the individual, but some specific spaces and strategies did recur with enough frequency to emerge as patterns in the archives. Among these recurring spatial strategies were: creating space within the one's single-family home in either a second bedroom, garage, attic, or other cloistered space; dressing up for a drive around in one's car for a few hours en femme; collectively renting a second apartment with other transvestites or contributing to rent for another transvestite's apartment where one could visit when they needed; or renting a motel or hotel room whenever possible for an evening, weekend, or week of femininity. The reliance of such strategies on racial and capital-enabled mobilities structurally limited the accessibility of such geographies to primarily white and middle- or upper-class transvestites, creating another structural limitation on who and where Transvestia's Girl could be.

[63] Transvestia no.28 "You Too Can Have a Rich Life" (1964)
[64] Transvestia no.6 "Editorial Emanations" (1960)

As has been noted, the logics which located the "where" of transvestism outside the geographies of everyday life, as well as the recommendations that transvestites should not go in public together, functioned on logics of cruel optimism that both created life-preserving trans spaces but also created limitations on the ways that transvestism could ever exist within the mundane. This logic was also furthered by the need for privacy articulated by many readers who feared that being known as trans would result in loss of job, marriage, social status, or invite persecution onto one's spouse or children. Particularly in this last regard, these motivations deserve considerable empathy and were felt to be all the more needed in the suburbanizing United States, where community surveillance was feared "in the average small town or suburban community" where "a husband and father who goes about dressed in women's clothes" might attract neighborhood or police attention.[65] The wife of a reader expressed her thoughts on the topic in an article titled "Thoughts of a TV Wife" in the magazine's 32nd issue, writing "of necessity, most of his dressing must be done in the privacy of the home, and preferably without the knowledge of his children."[66]

The geographies of transvestites were thus built around the demands of family life that many readers contended with, as well as the "9 to 5 prison"[67] of one's work life. These restrictions were even greater for the many readers and people whose spouses or families were unaccepting or unaware of their loved one's transness. One reader, who wrote numerous Letters to the Editor over the magazine's run seeking advice on

[65] Transvestia no.32 "Thoughts of a TV Wife" (1965)
[66] Transvestia no.32 "Thoughts of a TV Wife" (1965)
[67] Transvestia no.94 "Book Review" (1978)

communicating with her unaccepting wife expressed how this had manifested in a situation where "my [wife] lets me go to a motel about once a month"[68] as the only time she had to express herself. The common nature of such situations was attested to by many similar contributions from readers, and were formalized into recommended geographic practices in articles such as "The Sport of TV Motel Hunting."[69] These contributions collectively made Transvestia a collective resource for knowledge-sharing and creative resilience. In the same note, the magazine also operated to try and help readers creatively brainstorm on finding ways to explore their trans identity in public or semi-public ways with minimal risk by both connecting readers through Personal Ads or the spaces advertised in the magazine including the upstate New York Casa Susanna memorialized in the 2005 book of the same name and 2014 Harvey Fierstein play Casa Valentina, as well as the event-spaces that will discussed in the following chapter.

The "where" of Transvestia's girl was also defined in a series of geographic metaphors that attempted to both describe the spatial experience of navigating the world as a trans subject and functioned to reinforce the boundaries between transvestism and other forms of queer identity. Primary among these metaphors was that of dressing up as a practice by which one "entered femmeworld." It followed that, by presenting as one's femme self, one was enabled entry into a latent parallel world that both changed the person's perceptions and embodied relationships with the world around them due to the changed conditions of their embodiment. Prince described the phenomenological experience of this shift as, through the act of crossdressing, "one gets out of the

[68] Transvestia no.53 "Letters to the Editor" (1968)
[69] Transvestia no.38 "The Sport of TV Motel Hunting" (1966)

masculine clothing and feelings and expectations and limitations…and goes into an entirely different psychic world in which feelings, motives, and expressed present in one's psyche but unexpressable in the masculine world can now surface and be experienced and enjoyed."[70] As this experience also followed the "getting out of" masculine expectations, it was closely paired with the analogy of crossdressing as a "vacation" or "escape" by "leaving masculand for a while and taking our ease in femmeland."[71] In locating transness in dichotomy to the psychic world of "masculand," Prince also critically noted the demands of compulsory masculinity which the geographies of everyday life enforce onto trans-feminine people, mirroring Doan's (2010) writing. And, as Chapter Three will examine, locating the pre-social feelings of gender as a primary factor in the production of gendered space.

Even as the joys of this "femmeworld" on the other side of the crossdressing looking glass were recounted in Transvestia's pages, it was also theorized that all magic would be lost if one forever entered that world, recounted by one reader in the sentiment "its a nice place to visit, but I don't want to live there."[72] Paired with metaphors of transsexual women as "fugitives" from the male world from which transvestites only vacationed,[73] the geographic imagination of Transvestia further reified the discursive borders between transvestites and transsexual women. The idea of transvestites as part-time inhabitants of femmeworld who "vacationed" or "traveled" to this parallel world was also furthered in the metaphorical locating of one's femme gendered self in the site

[70] Transvestia no.65 "Eroticism and Femmiphilia" (1971)
[71] Transvestia no.34 "Virgin Views" (1965)
[72] Transvestia no.77 "'It's a Nice Place to Visit, but I Don't Want to Live There'" (1973)
[73] Transvestia no.34 "Virgin Views" (1965)

where one would become her. Writing about her femme gendered self in the third person, one reader shared "my wife does not approve and so Nancy has been kept in suitcases except for the few one-night stands when travelling, when she would go to a movie, or out to dinner,"[74] a sentiment mirrored by another reader who wrote of her apartment building's storeroom, "in it are the locked storage cabinets in which Kay maintains her residence."[75] The specific "home" of one's femmeself varied from reader to reader, sometimes being a suitcase, an attic, a storeroom, or a quite literal closet, but the metaphor of one's "second self" living in a location to which one must travel represents a decidedly geographic interpretation of trans identity.

The locating of the transvestite's femmeself in this other place found its transsexual dialectic in the metaphorical locating of bottom surgery in a perpetual "elsewhere" beyond the familiar geographic world and beyond practical access. Even as surgery became somewhat more accessible in America through the 1970s, the pages of Transvestia remained populated with jokes of "going to Casablanca" or "going to Copenhagen" as punchlines to stand in for bottom surgery as a geographic horizon forever beyond reach. Particularly in the case of Casablanca, trans studies scholar Aren Aizura has noted how such travels also reproduce Orientalist narratives of Western subjects traveling to an inherently feminine East where the trans subject, "simply by being in this locale…undergoes feminization" (Aizura, 2018: 42). Prince's repeated sentiment that bottom surgery existed only for the purposes of reproducing

[74] Transvestia no.93 "Fascinating Journey" (1977)
[75] Transvestia no.28 "Kay for Kathryn" (1964)

heteronormative sex[76, 77, 78, 79] and that bottom surgery would cause one to "become sexually promiscuous…[in] their continuing restless and unsatisfied condition"[80] also further reproduced such Orientalist imaginaries of the East as an inherently feminine and hypersexual locale. However, even as such metaphors of travel mirrored the "vacation" logics of Transvestia's girl, and reified the magazine's American-centric worldview, the geographies of bottom surgery were defined as distant horizons whose luring siren songs transvestites should beware.

## 1.5 The Cruel Optimism of the Normal

**What If…**

*…recognition is the misrecognition you can bear, a transaction that affirms you without, again, necessarily feeling good or being accurate.*

Lauren Berlant, Cruel Optimism

*…the smartest thing you could have done in that no-win situation was be like, Okay, I'll play your game until I'm old enough to run away from it and figure out my own stupid game. The problem wasn't the coping mechanism, the problem is that the coping mechanism became a pattern of behavior, and it is really hard to just up and end a pattern of behavior.*

Imogen Binnie, Nevada

Reading across Transvestia, the benefits that having a definable identity and community is readily apparent in the contributions of many readers as they, often for the first time in their lives, had a place and group of people with whom they could completely be themselves. However, as the definition of this transvestite identity existed at the inseparable intersection of the definition of an identity and the limitation of how

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[76] Transvestia no.50 "You Can't Add by Subtraction" (1968)
[77] Transvestia no.56 "Observations by Virginia" (1969)
[78] Transvestia no.59 "Susanna Says" (1969)
[79] Transvestia no.89 "Woman by Choice or Woman by Default" (1976)
[80] Transvestia no.36 "Virgin Views" (1965)

those who participated in that identity could grow, the question bears asking: what happens when an identity stops serving you in the ways you needed it in order to survive, and when does it start holding you back from further growing and living? What happens when the misrecognition one can bear becomes unbearable? And what do you do when the walls you built to defend yourself start to pen you in and the coping mechanism which kept you alive becomes the pattern impeding your growth?

As early as the 7th year of Transvestia's 27 year run, Virginia Prince began to reflect on her understanding of gender in the context of the changing gender dynamics of the 1960s, and her perception that younger generations were increasingly rejecting the hyper-polarized gender roles of earlier American culture. Musing on this changing cultural landscape, Prince wrote "I'm not at all sure but that TVism as such is not on the way out," elaborating that she saw her understanding of transvestite identity as the inevitable product of its cultural context, writing "In the highly polarized society that we have had in the U.S. in the past it was inevitable that there should be those that rebelled against it and whose own polarized psyche sought and found [crossdressing] as a means of integrating a divided personality."[81] By 1970, this musing had been furthered by a regular contributor into the belief that because "TVism is a product of a extremely gender divided society…the poor [transvestite]...is becoming obsolescent and in due course will possibly become extinct – at least in the way we have known her."[82] The pathos of this situation demands empathy, but also requires deeper analysis. As transvestite identity had been defined and delimited in response to the polarized culture

[81] Transvestia no.37 "Virgin Views - Our Changing Times" (1966)
[82] Transvestia no.67 "Virgin Views - An Editorial on Homosexuality" (1971)

of mid-century America, many readers found themselves adrift in changing cultural waters as the popular culture they had dichotomized their transness with similarly rejected the gender roles of mid-century America. And it was cruel optimism that had defined transvestite identity in such a way that the achievement of progress which liberated them also left them lost and without the gendered poles by which they had so long charted their identities.

Examining these questions therefore builds from Berlant's writing on recognition, as a transactional process in the exchange value of identity where, in naming oneself to a codifiable identity, one is acknowledged in recognition from the hegemonies of power. Put another way, a transaction that affirms one in the misrecognition one can bear "without, again, necessarily feeling good or being accurate" (Berlant, 2011: 26). Berlant characterizes this as optimism as, "even amid the racial mediations entrenched in capitalist inequalities in the United States, optimism involves thinking that in exchange one can achieve recognition" (Berlant, 2011: 43). This same cruel optimism is mirrored in the discursive production of Transvestia's girl in the belief that if one embodied a "normal" enough performance of transness, the privileges of capital might be re-extended to them.

Prince's characterization of transness through the logics and vocabulary of sexological and psychoanalytic academic writing worked towards this optimism, using the very language of the institutions which pathologized trans people to try and argue why transvestites should be exempt from the oppressions targeted onto other queer

bodies and populations. Both in the definition of Transvestia's readers as "true" trans subjects, and through the analytic hierarchization of such "true" transvestites as more acceptable manifestations of queerness than homosexual men and transsexual women, the prouction of the transvestite subject-position traded in the currency of cruel optimism and recognition. As this discursive and spatial production of transvestite identity reified the very structures which oppressed transvestites, it becomes apparent how, in the challenging and decentering of transphobic institutions, transvestism would face an inevitable identity crisis of becoming "obsolete."

The logics of biological essentialism which underpinned Transvestia's understandings of womanhood and which framed gender affirming surgery as "deathless suicide" also created a uncrossable horizon of the ways that "true" transvestite subjects could explore and actualize their gender transitions. From the vantage of early 2022, the legacies of such essentialist logics can continue to be seen in contemporary campaigns of transphobic legislation that trans historian Jules Gill-Peterson has characterized as a targeted immiseration of trans people through the denial of gender-affirming and life-saving care (Gill-Peterson, 2022).

As gender and identity operate at such a personal level as to defy common definitions of what transition or gender-affirmation will look like from any one person to the next, it becomes critical to understand how discursive limits are placed upon one's options and to liberate gender from prescriptive expectations that reinforce cis-heteronormative embodiments of gender. Such limits can be seen in both the very

definition of Transvestia's girl, and in pyrrhic framings of transness that reflexively mused "our fantasy is both pathetic and heroic…we cannot be women, but can become [transvestites]; in that is our victory, the only one we can win."[83] Such formulations of transness as the only "victory" to be won limit the possibilities of transition for transvestites and also repathologize trans people as victims of an inherent pathos and hubris of gender, rather than questioning why trans people are pathologized and oppressed in the first place.

Pushing back against such tragic and cruelly optimistic formulations of trans people requires both a rejection of the belief that playing by the rules of the people who pathologize transness can produce liberatory change and a reconceptualization of gender-affirming expression as something that all people, cis and trans, must navigate. Chapter Three will elaborate on this second point, and build from the writing of scholars such Devon Price who argue for a broader understanding of gender-affirming procedures that includes both surgical and medical transition soma-technologies, but also argues that "tattoos…butt lifts…a weird little rat boy haircut" can all be gender affirming procedures (Price, 2022). On the first point, on the necessity of rejecting understandings of transness that repathologize trans people, Imogen Binnie's heart wrenching novel Nevada provides a useful line of inquiry: of what happens when the coping mechanisms one used to survive and identify with a recognizable and recognized identity begin to no longer serve one in the ways they need and even begin to hold one back?

[83] Transvestia no.63 "Reflections in a Damaged Mirror" (1970)

At its core, this question extends from a deep respect for the immense resilience and resourcefulness so many trans people have displayed, and continue to exhibit, in finding and inventing ways to survive within cruel and transphobic cultural contexts. In the context of Transvestia's girl, this becomes a question of what happened when the definition of identity that the magazine discursively produced, as the simultaneous monism/dualism of two gendered selves inhabiting the gendered polarities of mid-century gender roles, came into the changing cultural contexts of the 1960s and 70s as many youth and gay activist movements destabilized those very polarities. As an identity category, the FP identity defined by Prince, and circulated through Transvestia, FPE, Tri-Ess, and the other attendant publications and organizations, was a critical resource in creating a common identity and community for many readers who previously and otherwise were made lonely and isolated by as culture set on invisibilizing and immiserating transness. It also operated at the exclusion of many trans people and potential allies. The good and evil thus enacted in the discursive production of Transvestia's girl are inseparable, and thus defy any easy verdict. The collision of the inherent limitations of this identity category with a changing world, however, invites an analysis of the cruel optimisms that can underpin identity categories and to question how the coping mechanisms which once kept one alive need change to continue and support one's growth.

# CHAPTER 2. AMERICAN NORMALS: TRANS GEOGRAPHIES OF HOMONATIONALISM

Building from Chapter One's analysis of the cruelly optimistic attachments that underpinned the discursive and spatial production of a "proper" transvestite subject in the periodical magazine *Transvestia*, this chapter explores how the discursive legacies of publications like *Transvestia* continue to underpin the geographies of some contemporary trans spaces. Through analysis of my fieldwork at the 2021 Fantasia Fair in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and its connections with *Transvestia* in both history and discourse, I theorize how logics of homonationalism and heterosexual respectability underpin both the historical and contemporary makings of a trans identity theoretically compatible with the regulatory structures of the "American Normal." This analysis critically builds from Jasbir Puar's (2007, 2017) theorizations of homonationalism and analysis of fieldwork observations and group interviews with Fair attendees.

Through the early years of the twenty-first century, the mechanisms and politics of American nationalism developed in step with the violence of the American "war on terror." Within this moment of imperial crisis, recognition of, and inclusion to, American identity was "contingent upon the segregation and disqualification of racial and sexual others from the national imaginary" (Puar, 2007: 2). A new development to this moment, however, was the selective inclusion of certain queer subjects within the national imaginary of belonging. Building from Lisa Duggan's (2002) writings on "homonormativity," Jasbir Puar theorized the emergence of a national homosexuality and homonormative nationalism, or *homonationalism*. As homonationalism functions through both the exclusion of sexual and racial others, and as a regulatory script of

sexual normativity, Puar noted that homonationalist logics undergird national and racial norms that re-privilege an "ascendancy of whiteness" (Puar, 2007, 2017).

While Puar theorized homonationalism in response to the contemporary apparatuses of militarized American imperialism, the regulatory logics of homonationalism can be read more broadly to understand how the embodied production and experiencing of gender are inextricably related with social and national discourses and identities. Queer scholars have begun to build from Puar's work, theorizing and identifying the historical presence of homonationalist logics. To date, this has included locating how queer consumerist practices reinforce claims to national belonging (Montegary, 2017), and in the colonial violences of European settler-colonization of North America as many indigenous queer identities were suppressed in favor of those identities codifiable within nationalist imaginaries of "modernity" (Morgensen, 2010). I build from these theories to explore how the discursive production of transvestite identity in periodical magazines can be theorized through homonationalism as they asserted these identities as a form of transness theoretically compatible with national imaginaries of American normativity.

Within queer theory, Puar's writing notably builds from and extends Lisa Duggan's work on homonormativity, as defined as a politics that upholds dominant heteronormative institutions, "while promising the possibility of…a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption" (Duggan, 2003: 50). By locating how the production of a "normal" trans identity reified and venerated the

"normal" American institutions of marriage, domesticity, and depoliticized consumerism, the reproduction of homonationalism can be located within the mundane practices of transvestite life.

To theorize the connections between normative practices and historical and contemporary trans geographies, I build from Petra Doan's (2010) writing on the tyranny of gendered space and Michael Warner's (2002) theory of counterpublics. Warner defines counterpublics as places defined by their tension with a larger public, constituted in the social dynamics and collective identities of the people who produce them. Warner's reading of space, as a binary of public or counterpublic, both overlooks the pluralism of space and reproduces a false binary logic. A trans theorization of counterpublics is supported therefore in the work of Catherine R. Squires (2003) as she argues the existence of a pluralism of coexisting public spheres and counterpublics.

Theorizing Fantasia Fair as a counterpublic builds from an understanding of bodies and space as mutually constitutive (Longhurst, 1997) where the geographies of the Fair are defined in attendees' collective embodied expressions of gender in ways that feel uniquely possible in the event-space of the Fair. And, as the Fair relies upon the gaycation geographies of Provincetown to reproduce itself, this extends scholarship on queer leisure geographies (Muller, 2007; Montegary, 2017). This chapter brings fieldwork together with archival research to also theorize how such spaces are underpinned in the legacies of publications like *Transvestia* that attempted to produce a "normal" trans identity. This examines the history of the Fair alongside the current work

of many Fair organizers and attendees to make Fantasia Fair a more inclusive space. I also explore the relationships between discursive and spatial production trans identity, geographies, and, in a reliance on principles of market virility (Nast, 2002), the structural obstacles produced by homonationalism against the production of more radically accessible trans spaces.

While this chapter often focuses on attachments to the structures of normativity, and the exclusions such attachments produce, it also examines trans spaces as sites of community and joy. In this capacity, spaces like the Fair, even when reproduced in cruelly optimistic attachments to the "normal," function as resources of trans life as they push back against broader structures of transphobia and transmisogyny. Further, as such spaces can alternately reproduce or resist the structures of normativity, they also become sites in which projects of queer futurity are contested.

## 2.1 Fantasia Fair

The primary site of fieldwork for this project was the 2021 Fantasia Fair, an annual week long transgender event held in the Cape Cod gaycation hub of Provincetown (PTown). Held from October 17th to 24th in 2021, the Fair has run since the mid 1970s and often emblazons promotional materials with this history as "The Longest-Running Annual Event In the Transgender World!" The Fair's history also critically intersects with my archival research, as Fantasia Fair was originally designed as an event specifically for male-to-female transsexuals and transvestites, and as the Fair bought several full-page advertisement in *Transvestia* in the late 1970s and hosted

Virginia Prince as the keynote speaker of the 1977 Fair.[84] The Fair's contemporary existence has significantly evolved from its origins, and now proudly invites people of all gender identities and backgrounds, but this history was still tangible in workshops such as one scholar's recounting of past fieldwork in "Oral Interviews with Virginia Prince and Ariadne Kane, Activists Extraordinaire" and in the presence of a couples event track at the Fair designed and held for couples with only one trans partner, with half the events marked in the schedule with quiet green text reading "(For cisgender partners only)." As an event, the Fair makes use of the unique geographies and queerness of Provincetown, hosting events at buildings all up and down the main tourist drag of Commercial Street and encouraging attendees to explore the town. As this chapter will discuss, however, the unique geographies of the Fair and PTown, where attendees feel safe to be themselves, are inextricable from financial, discursive, and social structures of homonationalism upon which they rely.

I first contacted the Fair in early 2021 to inquire if I might attend the Fair in a research capacity. I was quickly encouraged to not only attend, but also host workshops of my own design at the Fair. With the gracious support of the Fair's Director and Organizing Committee, I planned and hosted three workshops. The first was a presentation of my research and discussion with attendees about their personal experiences with historical transgender publications and organizations. This workshop was repeated on two separate days. The second focused on journaling as a creative exercise in exploring identity, where I provided participants with materials for journaling

[84] Transvestia no.93 "East is East and West is West!" (1977)

and led a guided self-reflective journaling exercise. The journaling workshop was not part of this research, but did help introduce me to many attendees, many of whom shared that the workshop was helpful and provided a quiet moment among a busy week. The final workshop was titled "Trans-Generational Coalition Building" and spawned evocative and generative discussions that will be discussed at length in this chapter.

Throughout the Fair's 8 days, I spent an average of 14 hours a day in PTown, either at Fair events, interviewing participants, talking with people who worked as bartenders, servers, and in other service industry jobs in PTown, or doing participant observation. In translating this fieldwork to writing much will be left out to protect the anonymity of participants, prioritize participants' voices, and due to the sheer volume of interactions, moments, and observations from my time in Provincetown. Though this chapter will often discuss disagreements between participants and locate the homonationalist underpinnings of both Provincetown and the Fair, I also want to emphasize that I met truly incredible people during my time in Provincetown and was met with an inspiring compassion and kindness.

Doing fieldwork also changed the course of this project as it deepened my empathy and appreciation for the brilliance that so many trans people have, and continue to, exhibit in finding and making ways to survive and find joy in a transphobic society. Listening to participants' recount their lived experiences and wisdom was inspiring and has led me to a more nuanced understanding and appreciation of transgender identity and experience. The Fair is also a unique site of multi-generational trans community,

something that attendees both young and old reflected was both rare and wonderful. It also presented me with the opportunity to speak with many trans elders with decades of experience in trans community-making and activism. And across these generations, there was a shared intention and focus on trans liberation and freedom.

As the Fair takes place in many locations across Provincetown, the geographies and culture of town also become part of the Fair's experience. Provincetown is a famous gaycation hub, home to numerous gay bars, popular cruising spots, LGBT themed stores, restaurants and events such as the Fair, an annual Bear Week, and gay circuit parties. Provincetown is also expensive. Dinner entrees at any restaurant along the main tourist drag tended to start at $20 and only skyrocket from there. Further, although the Fair is held the week after ferries stop running between Boston and Provincetown, during the interim between the ferry-supported "on-season" and official "off-season" which begins in November, I still stayed over 31 miles down the Cape to have a hotel room under $100 per night. The population of Provincetown is over 87% white per the latest census, a racial demographic mirrored in the Fairs attendees. As a queer white woman raised in New England, I was able to easily fit into this landscape, which undoubtedly influenced the access and interactions I had with participants and others. And as this chapter will reflect, many nonwhite participants spoke to how these accesses were not available to all.

## 2.2 Trans-Generational Coalition Building

The most informative findings from fieldwork came from the hour workshop and group interview I hosted on October 21st, the 5th day of Fantasia Fair, titled "Trans-

Generational Coalition Building" in which the workshop's discussion was structured to try and find common ground and goals for trans people of all generations. Framing the conversation around a register of generational difference carried the risk of masking the differences in beliefs, experiences, and perceptions among people of a similar age group and generation, but given the average age of Fair attendees in comparison to my age and experiences, I believed it to be an effective framework. During the workshop, conversation quickly moved to address these perceived generational disagreements and misaligned perceptions that trans communities are by no means exempt from. Participants in this workshop did not shy away from difficult topics of conversation. They also usually found common ground, and the workshop concluded with many participants hugging one another and coming together to laugh after some heated disagreements. This analysis extends, therefore, from the generosity, openness, and vulnerability participants exhibited here and throughout the Fair.

The workshop was attended by approximately 30 people, with some fluctuation in attendance throughout the session. Participants were polled at the beginning of the session for age demographics according to the following decade categories:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| <25: 0 attendees | 25-34: 5 attendees | 35-44: 2 attendees |
| 45-54: 4 attendees | 55-64: 10+ attendees | 65-74: 10+ attendees |
| 75+: 3 attendees | | |

This workshop, along with the others I hosted, were convened in the Cabaret Room of the Crown & Anchor Hotel, the hotel which provided the social center of the Fair. The Cabaret Room is a small, low-ceilinged room behind a humble set of doors on one side of the hotel's plaza, wherein the dim lighting and small space of the room made for an

intimate space of discussion. Participants were not polled for gender identity, so as to not put pressure on attendees to need to define or label themselves in a space that was otherwise curated towards trans freedom. From my experiences at the Fair, and other interactions with many attendees of the workshop, I would reflect that the majority of participants were of trans-feminine experience, although many did not identify as crossdressers, transvestites, or part-time transgender. This also means many of the participants are likely affected by the structures of transmisogyny. All participants have been assigned pseudonyms to maintain anonymity and protect their privacy, and significant identifying information has been excluded or redacted.

Following the opening polling of age group demographics, I asked for someone from the 25-35 age group, as one of the two poles of age range in attendance, to share their views of what they perceive to be the biggest issues facing their age group when it comes to trans experiences and issues. Hedwig (they/she), a white, 26 year old participant shared their experiences, and in their answer introduced several themes which would carry through the entire workshop, highlighted below:

> **Hedwig:** I think of my generation as a generation that feels more empowered to express ourselves and like I see a lot of privileges, but…I think **we're still fighting for trans people of color, black trans women**…it's a lot of **the same issues that I think all of our generations have been fighting for** and need to pay attention to, so I think it's still being loud and carrying this torch and…I think a lot of people in my generation are trying to like **MAKE IT HAPPEN NOW**. (emphasis mine)

From their opening response, Hedwig introduced 3 of the 4 themes I identified in my post-fieldwork transcription and analysis: the need to account for the relations of both race and gender in understanding transgender experiences, the continuity of activism and

activist goals across generations, and the 2021 moment in which this workshop was hosted as a charged moment of urgency in trans activism. The final theme, which emerged later in the discussion, was the idea of the Normal. The following sections are structured around these four themes, prioritizing participants' voices, and reserving analysis for this Chapter's discussion sections where fieldwork notes and transcripts will be brought together and triangulated with archival findings.

### 2.2.1 "All Scholarships for Everybody" Race at Fantasia Fair

While group interview participants were not polled for race, both Fantasia Fair and the majority of the population I observed along the main tourist stretch of Provincetown appeared to be and/or identified as white. In the context of fieldwork, my positionality as a white transgender woman therefore granted me geographic and participant accesses uniquely facilitated by my whiteness, gender, class, and position as a researcher from a major American university. The racial demographics of the Fair were consistent with the demographics of attendees to the workshops I hosted, although several non-white people were present and active in the Trans-Generational Coalition Building workshop. In sharing their personal experiences at the Fair, these participants also critically brought the overwhelming whiteness of the space into active discussion. From Hedwig's opening call for the continuing struggle for the rights of trans people of color and Black trans women, the topic of race was discussed several more times during the workshop. The first of these moments came about when a younger participant questioned why the Fair does not host scholarships specifically for racial minorities, asking:

> **Olivia** (she/her), 35-45: Like, why doesn't this place have scholarships? Or, it does? Good, good. What about like more minority scholarships?
>
> **Patti** (she/her), 65-75: All scholarships for everybody.

> **Christine** (she/her), 75+: That's right, we do across the whole spectrum here. We want everybody to come, but all we get is what you see right now. But we do reach out to everybody. I would love to see more trans men come, I would love to see more gender-fluid people come, we're open to everyone.

Patti's deflection from the topic of racial minorities to "all scholarships" and Christine's recentering of the "whole spectrum" of gender as the "everybody" the Fair invites marks a notable representation in how the topic of race was discussed, or rather avoided, in the Fair's discursive environment. Furthermore, as Christine's "being open to everyone" comment naturalizes the Fair as the geographic site to which people should travel, it recenters the geographies of whiteness and wealth through which the Fair is reproduced. This exchange reached its conclusion in the contribution of a white 36 year old attendee who pushed back against the redirection from the topic of racial minorities, challenging:

> **Willow** (she/they), 35-45: Being open is not enough…it's not enough to say that you are welcome at my table, you actually have to go to other peoples' table and say 'what do you need, how can I be a part of your group? What can I do to sit at your table and earn peoples' respect?'

Willow's challenge confronts the privileged notion that marginalized communities should come to the Fair's "open table," asking why those who live at the privileges of whiteness and capital do not make use of their resources to reach out. She also questions the presumption of the Fair as an event-space and resource that is accessible and desirable to all. Following Willow's reflections, Violet, an Asian-American participant, volunteered and shared her personal experiences at the Fair. Reflecting on her experiences at the Fair, she further challenged the Fair as a space of universal belonging and desirability, particularly as a trans woman of color, sharing:

> **Violet** (she/her), 25-35: The reality for me is that I don't think I could ever come back to Fantasia Fair. Not because I don't want to, but because I simply cannot afford it. The cost of registration here is more than half of what I make in a month[85]…it's not enough to just invite to the table, a seat at the table doesn't mitigate what a lot of people have faced for decades. And the anger that we are talking about among younger generations now, you know, that's only one specific kind of anger that is being focused on. The anger of, you know, what street queens were doing in the 60s and 70s, of what sex workers were doing, of what people who were criminalized for trying to survive, right? And that isn't historical, it is ongoing right now.

Violet's words were met with silence, which I interpreted as a moment of self-reflection as somebody had spoken truth to the financial inaccessibility of the Fair that many had perhaps never had to consciously consider. Further, in drawing connections between her personal experiences and the historical struggles of other trans women, Violet also critically connected the Fair's history to the contemporaneous and contemporary fights of less privileged and usually non-white trans people doing survival sex work. In the silence following her words, Violet continued in a call to action for Fair attendees, asking them to donate to trans housing organizations[86] and concluding:

> …the invitation to Fantasia Fair is not going to survive the girls who need homes and food. Who need support. Who need a space of their own. Sometimes we don't want to be at the table. Sometimes we just want to have a kitchen that we can return to for our home, that we can invite others to. So, thank you.

### 2.2.2 "What a Lot of People Have Faced for Decades" Trans-Generational Activism

Violet's words also critically connected her personal experiences with historical transgender figures and activisms, reflecting a broader theme throughout the workshop

[85] The 2021 cost of registration at Fantasia Fair was $600

[86] In the weeks after the Fair, I stayed in contact with several Fair attendees and became aware that at least one attendee had donated several hundred dollars to the housing organization with which Reverend Sophia works

and Fair. Transgender history, and its inseverable connections with living transgender experience, recurred throughout my work at the Fair. This interest was observable in several workshops, including one scholar's recounting of 1995 fieldwork in "Oral Interviews with Virginia Prince and Ariadne Kane, Activists Extraordinaire" and a cisgender medical doctor's workshop "Some Issues When Writing About Transgender History: A Lively Discussion." Paired with my own sessions advertising my research, my observations were inevitably influenced by a both confirmation bias in looking for historical connection, the research flyers I had printed in the Fair's promotional and marketing materials, and shaped by the ways that consistent historical interest across the Fair influenced how others interacted with me as a researcher.

It was in this discursive context that discussion participants drew connections between their personal experiences and the words and work of past trans activists and historical figures. This trans-generational interest was expressed by one participant who cited Virginia Prince in her rebuttal to Willow's earlier comment that "being open is not enough," saying:

> **Helen** (she/her), 75+: The reason why we're not coming to you like you'd like to see us coming to you and the reason why we don't have diversity in a lot of transgender groups historically is because it's very difficult to gather ten or twenty transgender people together in any meeting and then bring up a new concept that might endanger the safety of their anonymity. That's what we've grown up with, in this community. All through these years, right from the beginning…the first meetings were when people went to a Virginia Prince meeting and carried their hose and a pair of shoes-high heels in a paper bag-lunch bag and met at her house and got dressed in those. Those were the first support group meetings. The danger that this community has always labored under is being found out. You're-you're being secret to your-your own family, and various people like that. And in the long run, we-we really couldn't in those beginning days come to you and ask-we ask like people to join transgender groups all of the time who never came.

Significantly, Helen's comments locate the primary danger of trans experience in "being found out" and therefore locate the origins of contemporary networks of trans care and support in Virginia Prince's privacy-centered organizations. The Virginia Prince meetings Helen cites here reference the Hose and Heels club Prince hosted in L.A. in 1961 and which, in 1962, became the Alpha chapter of the FPE.[87] Paired with Helen's reframing of Willow's comments into an "us" and "you" dialectic in saying "we really couldn't in those beginning days come to you," the recounting of Prince's organizations as an origin to contemporary spaces of trans community naturalizes the socio-spatial divisions upon which Prince's organizations relied. This also creates an ahistorical account which overlooks decades and centuries of less formal practices by which trans people have made community and cared for one another, and reinforces the idea that formal organizations are the primary means by which community is made. Later comments from Helen mirrored this sentiment, arguing young people should join into existing trans organizations rather than create their own. Helen did conclude her thoughts, however, by recentering trans unity:

> …there [are] ways that ways we can push and we can prod and we can help each other. But make no mistake about it, together, together we will prevail. Together we will continue this community. And it will grow. And it will be more accepted. And it will become better every year that you come to something like this, or you don't. If you're working in the street, it'll still get better. It always has. That's the history.

Moments such as Helen's recentering of unity recurred through the workshop, as participants often concluded their contributions with reaffirmations of community,

[87] Transvestia no.13 "'Phi Pi Epsilon' Our National Sorority" (1962)

shared experience, and love. I draw attention to these moments as they articulate that the disagreements in this workshop came secondary to a shared solidarity. Kate, the participant who invoked the American normal, reflected this in concluding one of her thoughts by sharing "and so I love where people are going now. Like we're one group…and that's wonderful."

Virginia Prince was cited two other times in the conversation, once to mention her as a deceased trans trailblazer and once to quote her views on "sex is between the legs, gender is in our head." The support of Prince's legacy, and belief that organizational structures are the only means of progress, however, were not universally held in the room. One of Violet's challenges critically included that "501c3s cannot be the answer to housing for trans people," as they work too slowly for such immediate needs and naturalize that money alone can solve the problems of systemic racism, classism, and transphobia. Violet's sentiments were further echoed in drawing connections between the need for radical contemporary activism and the work of ACT UP, with one participant citing Larry Kramer as the origins of their radicalism, sharing:

> **Finn** (they/them), 45-55: I feel like we still need radicals…I came out in 1987 or 86 and the first time I went to a meeting with other LGBT people…Larry Kramer spoke at Faneuil Hall…he like YELLED at us. "You're dying! And the government is doing NOTHING! And you need to yell. You need to be angry, you need to act up!"

Such calls for radical politics were echoed elsewhere in the discussion, including the call to push back against the temptation to "become part of the establishment, turn around and forget everyone because their problems are no longer your problems," and to reject matriculation into the privileges of capital through financial access. Citing the

provincialization of queer activism into monovalent forms of sexual activism that actively excluded trans people and people of color, these calls connected the needs and struggles of contemporary trans activism with the history and future of trans life. As one participant, a Black trans woman and reverend who works to provide housing to houseless transgender adults, expressed:

> **Sophia** (she/her), 55-65: I have, in my journey as a trans woman of color, been able to listen to not only our elders, but our younger generations, especially the generation of today. So of their cries and messages that they continue to advocate and continue to express in their path to freedom…I'm listening to the voice, because I hear the cries, I hear all of the screams, I hear all of the discord that's going on. And it's imperative that voices are in state legislation and…give us all that freedom that we so seek and desire. And so I continue to keep dumbo ears when I'm listening to my youth of the community because they're still saying things that – even though they're walking with a more freedom of boldness and pride – they're still being handcuffed by a system that is controlled by lawmakers…and so I'm-I'm excited for what I'm hearing. I'm excited for what is going to happen going forward. And there's always hope for the things that we continue to do.

### 2.2.3 "MAKE IT HAPPEN NOW" An Urgent Moment

Palpable throughout the discussions of the continuing needs and fights for trans rights was an urgency and desire to, as Hedwig put it, "MAKE IT HAPPEN NOW." While there were some comments that this urgency was a symptom of youthful impatience where "you know change needs to happen, but you don't understand why it hasn't happened yet," the conversation was largely consistent in feeling the need for urgent and significant change. Helen reflected that such comments of urgency from younger people "about the work that was done before you is greatly appreciated and noted," and made her believe "that we have done the right thing and exposed you to a lot of things that are helping you now, and that you appreciate us now." The feeling of shared purpose, history, and goals created a generative and intentional conversation, but as the previous

section touched upon, the point of debate among participants was in how to achieve this future and who this future would include. The need for urgency that Hedwig had opened with was first recalled in the discussion by Helen:

> **Helen** (she/her), 75+: The transgender community is entering a very critical period right now. We have a lot of enemies sniping at us. Powerful people. We have to be more powerful than them. One of the ways I see that is the younger people of today…have to find a place in the community. And they have to join the groups that are in existence now for transgender people and they have to bring them into the future. Otherwise, people like Trump are going to make us invisible again, and we can't tolerate that. We already see what they're doing to the children, which is not here. And a generation before the youngest person here that's being affected.

Helen's call for young people to join the organizations already in existence makes sense in context as she holds a leadership position in a national LGBTQ organization, but as the previous section touched upon and this section will expand, such views were also met with resistance and the belief that "joining the establishment" would not produce true liberation. Helen also significantly brought trans children into the discussion. This expanded the generational context of the discussion beyond the population into the room to include younger generations. The invocation of the trans child is especially significant here because, as trans scholar Jules Gill-Peterson has noted, the discursive figure of the trans child holds great symbolic power as a "powerful emblem of futurity…either reassuring that the so-called trans tipping point heralds a new generation of liberal progress and acceptance or, to the transphobic agitators…acting as proof that trans life deserves to be repressed in its incipient forms for the threat to the social order that its future would represent" (Gill-Peterson, 2018: 2). Every person I met at the Fair would readily agree that the violence being leveraged against trans youth is disgusting and regressive. Helen's words can be read through Gill-Peterson's writing, though, to make

apparent the subtext of the discussion's calls for urgency as invocations of the futurity symbolized in the trans child as a driving need for change. Also running through the subtext of this urgency, however, were fear and feelings of being left behind, as well as fears that such urgency would overlook and leave behind those most vulnerable.

Amid the past decades rapidly changing cultural landscape and popular attitudes towards transgender existence, many older participants expressed a feeling of having been left behind and unable to connect with younger generations of transgender people. One participant expressed this in discussing her experiences in recovery communities in sharing:

> **Patti** (she/her), 65-75: The problems I've had have all come from younger transgender people who say in various ways that I'm not trans enough, okay? Or my politics is wrong. I don't happen to be a Republican, but I say a few words that they don't happen to like and suddenly they're all over me.

Echoed several other times throughout the discussion, Patti's fears of being viewed as not enough by younger generations also speak to some people's latent fear in discussions of urgency that over-focus on the future had left some feeling as though their experiences no longer aligned with the world around them. This led some to argue for the need to normalize transness into the familiar structures of America. It also inspired a call to work towards a future where the idea of normal is discarded, and to work for a future where nobody is left behind:

> **Willow** (she/they), 35-45: I'm hearing a lot of desires for normalization here. Most millennial trans people I know don't want to be normal. Normal's a bad concept. Because as soon as you're normal, you do what cis white gay men did, you know, you become part of the establishment, turn around and you forget everyone because their problems are no longer your problems. We need to be working to kill the concept of normal, so that everyone, every single person is-no

one's left behind. Everyone just gets to live and there are no questions about why aren't you normal. Like, we need to destroy normal as a concept and that's all.

### 2.2.4 "Normal's a Bad Concept" Undoing the American Normal

Echoed repeatedly in this discussion was the idea of the normal, either in calling for the destruction of normal as a concept, or in calling for the normalization of transness. Consistent across this discussion, however, was a shared implicit understanding of the political meaning and power that attachment to the "normal" holds. As one participant argued:

> **Tina** (she/her), 55-65: I don't want to speak too long but I do want to say that normalization is something we have to focus on as much as we can. Among people who are under 25 there's a greater feeling that what we're doing is part of a normal community. That normalization is there. And that acceptance is there. And that knowledge is there. We're looking at, you know, political enemies and community enemies and voting blocs that are against this, but those things can be whittled down through normalization…How can we get smart and achieve a level of normalization so that there are fewer and fewer and fewer people who are able to come out and say these things and do these things to us without receiving a lot of negative social response from their own community. That's my perspective.

Tina, who has been active in libertarian political movements, spoke elsewhere in the week to the political power that financial wealth can buy and the ways affiliation to the normal can function as protection against transphobic political and social enemies. While the desire to develop strategies that work against transphobia are both understandable and necessary, the inclusion of certain trans subjects into the privileges of homonormativity inherently functions at the exclusion of others. As Puar's (2007, 2017) theories of homonationalism critically build from Duggan's (2003) work on homonormativity and Nast's (2002) concept of a market virility that promises queer subjects can repurchase the privileges of normativity through wealth, the financial and class inequalities at the heart of normalization come into focus. This inherent inequality

was spoken to in Willow's earlier comments that only in "working to kill the concept of normal" can a future be created where "no one's left behind."

As Tina and Willow both reflect, attachments to the Normal function in projects of futurity in the ways that queer subjects relate with broader unequal systems and geographies of race, class, ability, and nationalism. These comments also extend from the discursive legacies of past queer activisms. As Chapter One explored, the making of transvestite identity hinged upon the production of a trans subject compatible with the privileges of white and middle-class American culture. While Tina does not identify as a transvestite or crossdresser, her comments speak to the ways that the discursive legacies of such periodicals continue to reproduce themselves in the changing interpersonal and social dynamics of the Fair. Willow's comments, however, recall the legacies of more radical trans activisms, such as those of drag queens at the riots at Stonewall. As Roderick Ferguson has noted, these queens built their political subjectivities and radical politics from their exclusion from the normal because, as they "were denied the privileges of normativity, they could not be seduced by those structures that held out normativity as a reward" (Ferguson, 2018: 39-40).

Ferguson's writing both critically locates the histories of American normativity, and invites us to remember activist histories that did not consider trans activism as a provincialized and monovalent activism discrete from other liberation movements. As such, both Willow and Ferguson invite one to consider the ways in which the partial inclusion of wealthy trans subjects to the structures of privilege through normalization

simultaneously rearticulate the unequal hegemonies and geographies of race, class, and homonationalism.

### 2.2.5 "I Belong" Concluding the Workshop

The Trans-Generational Coalition Building workshop discussed complex and emotional discussion topics that led to numerous disagreements, including and beyond those articulated above. I think it is important, therefore, to emphasize that the workshop ended on a note of love and community. Towards the end of the discussion, while another participant was sharing, I quietly asked Reverend Sophia if she could conclude the workshop with some words of unity. She agreed, and after ending the discussion, I handed the mic to Sophia, who led us in a call and response that affirmed our beauty, humanity, and belonging. The workshop thus ended for everyone with the reaffirmation that "I belong. I belong. *I Belong.*"

In the moments following the workshop, as I arranged my notes, I observed that several people who had been disagreeing with one another went on to approach each other and talk, laugh, and often embrace one another in hugs. These moments, perhaps more than any words that were said, embody the truth I saw in this workshop: that love supersedes political disagreements and that ultimately we all shared common experiences and goals. Throughout the rest of the week of the Fair, many people I spoke with mentioned this workshop to me and inquired about the conversation as they had heard it had been intense. In those discussions, I recentered the moments I witnessed just after the workshop as the most telling moments of the experience. On the last night of the

Fair, I spoke with the Fair's Director who also mentioned this workshop and shared that she thought it was an important discussion and happy it happened.

## 2.3 The Hard and Soft Geographies of Homonationalist Exclusion

The opening reception of Fantasia Fair was held in the main ballroom of the Crown & Anchor Hotel, a high-ceilinged room entered from the side - a stage to one's right, a bar and patio overlooking Cape Cod Bay to one's left. Midway through this reception the doors slammed open, revealing a man dressed in stereotypical pilgrim garb and yelling "Oyez! Oyez!" I would later be told this was the Town Crier, a Provincetown Chamber of Commerce appointed mascot and herald of town news and fun facts. Campy as his costume was, still campier was the ringing handbell in his right hand and his repeated proclamation, "God save the Queens!" The Town Crier disappeared as quickly as he left. His presence and colonial costume however, as camp as they were, invite one to question how settler-colonial legacies and homonationalist structures continue and underpin the geographies of Provincetown and Fantasia Fair.

Looming over Provincetown, and featured in innumerable postcards, refrigerator magnets, photographs, paintings, and other tourist-trap paraphernalia, is the town's Pilgrim Monument. A 252' tall granite tower sitting atop the high bluff overlooking the town's main tourist drags, the monument was erected between 1907 and 1910 to commemorate the Pilgrims' 1620 landing in Provincetown and signing of the Mayflower Compact. This quite literally towering monument to settler colonialism has another function, too, as a material reminder that the iconography and projects of American nationalism are not mutually exclusive from PTown's contemporary existence as a

gaycation hub and queer leisure geography. It also stands as a constant testament that the queer geographies of the town and the Fair exist on land stolen from indigenous peoples including the Nauset and Wampanoag and serves as a stark symbol of homonationalism.

Such hard signifiers of homonationalism were not made only in the geographic memories of Provincetown's histories of settler colonialism, but also in smaller and more contemporary references that speak to the homonationalist inclusion of selective white queer identities into the projects of American imperialism. The entire week I was in town, outside one of the t-shirt tourist trap shops along Commercial Street hung a vertical triptych of t-shirts. All three shirts were made of black fabric and together created a material installation of homonationalism. The bottom t-shirt's print simply read WIFE in a rounded rainbow font. The middle shirt screamed SUPERGAY in a 3D font mimicking the lettering of the Superman logo. The top shirt featured a vertical United States flag, stars in the top left with seven stripes running down, each a different color and pattern. The far right stripe was a green camouflage and bore the word MILITARY in white font running down its line. The other six lines mirrored this design and from right to left read: FIRE POLICE NURSE DISPATCH EMS CORRECTIONS. Above this flag, in white font, were the words: WE STAND WITH YOU.

While both the Pilgrim Monument and these t-shirts were unaffiliated with the Fair, they present acute symbolism of the ways in which normative queer identity has become compatible with pillars of American imperialism including settler colonialism, military imperialism, police violence, and the prison industrial complex. The discursive

messages of these shirts found their Fair counterpart in a workshop presented by a Provincetown police officer titled “Policing in Provincetown and Beyond.” I attended this workshop, which was sparsely attended, and which discussed why trans people need not fear their safety in Provincetown due to extensive police presence.

While trans safety is of the greatest importance, the idea that ever-greater amounts of police will create safety, however, overlooks the ongoing anti-Black and structural racisms of American policing. As Puar has noted, police function as a domestic militarized force which is central to the reproduction of global American imperialism and homonationalism (Puar, 2007). The presenting officer, a cisgender woman sporting a top-knot haircut, discussed the Black Lives Matter movements and protests of 2020, but went on to argue the police as victims as she reflected that some people were rude to her and other officers in the wake of these protests, and had even given them the middle finger. Ignoring the murders of Black people including George Floyd and Breonna Taylor which precipitated these calls for justice, the officer’s words speak to the “ascendancy of whiteness” that Puar locates at the center of homonationalism and reflect that police promises of safety are always racially contingent.

This presentation reflects the presences of homonationalism at the Fair and also speaks volumes to the ways that the structures of American imperialism work to logically justify their continued reproduction. These hard significations of homonationalism were not exceptional, however, but were also mirrored in innumerable other soft enforcements. This includes the Fair’s persisting “For Cisgender Partners

Only" couples track as well as many other presentations including a presentation from a cisgender male medical doctor who asserted many misogynistic, bio-essentialist, and cis-normative beliefs in his talk. These included the assertion that trans men on T are inherently smarter than trans women because scans showed they "have more gray matter on their brains," fearmongering about "Black Market hormones," and assertions that most "trans men are straight" and "most trans men are gynephilic" without either proof or consideration that being a woman and having a vagina are not the same. As such moments work together to reify normative gender subjectivities and the institutions of the nuclear family and American medical industry, they also represent moments in which structures of homonationalism are signified.

The structural underpinnings of Provincetown's geographic landscape also works to reproduce logics of homonationalism as the physical monuments to settler colonialism are paired with subtler ingrained financial and class inequalities. Astronomical housing prices and costs of living, the constant and immense labor required to maintain the town as a gaycation destination, and the persisting "on-season" and "off-season" labor dichotomy in which many who work in the service industry are left with few to no employment options in winter months; all these systems function to reproduce the inequalities at the heart of capitalism. And, as these inequalities function to create a geographic landscape in which queer people can purchase into the privileges of normativity through wealth (Nast, 2003) and participate in a "privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption," (Duggan, 2003: 50) the Provincetown landscape functions as a geography of homonationalist leisure that speaks

to the plurality of structures which come together to consistently reify the inequalities of American normativity.

## 2.4 Homonationalist Legacies of the Normal

*Be discreet and keep those pretty skirts clean.*
Transvestia, no.8, "Susanna Says" p.55 (1961)

*All my life, I've either been crossdressing or, you know, transitioning. One or the other...I've never been an American Normal, which I've always wanted to be.*
Kate (they/them), Trans-Generational Coalition Building Workshop

The mechanisms by which archival discourses and participants created attachments between trans identity and normativity were remarkably consistent across my research findings. As Chapter One explored, these attachments were reflected in Transvestia's cruelly optimistic definition of "True" transvestites as a trans identity group that might perform transness in a "normal" enough way that the privileges of normativity might be extended back to them. As the seductive temptations of normativity, and need to therefore destroy the concept of the normal, were also echoed by group interview participants, the homonationalist legacies of the normal become apparent.

Petra Doan's (2010) writing on the tyranny of gendered space provides a critical line of analysis here, as she analyzes the spatial dimensions of the normal, and locates how transgender people experience transgressing the normal. Doan also brings into focus the empathetic temptations of being within the privileges of normativity, citing the ways in which being openly queer and transgender opens one to potential experiences of violence or humiliation. Producing trans spaces represents a critical method in creating

spaces of safety, community, and those possibilities which emerge when one need not fear transphobic violence. This production also, therefore, demands conscious consideration of how and where these spaces are made and maintained, and to thoughtfully consider the ways in which these spaces may resist, reproduce, reify, or recreate the unequal structures of normativity. In reading these spaces as counterpublics through Warner's (2002) and Squires (2003) writing, the internal gendered experiences of space can be theorized through a social perspective, too, as intersubjective attachments of community and identity come together in creating the shared understandings of counterpublic space. And in reading both the "where" of Transvestia's girl and in the homonationalist underpinnings of the Fair's geographies, the ways that these productions of space relate with the "normal" becomes visible.

As participants also attached the production of these spaces to projects of futurity, the production of trans counterpublics can be read as exercises of optimistic attachment. Berlant defines optimistic attachments as an attachment "invested in one's own or the world's continuity," and which is produced contextually with the life-worlds and experiences from which they emerge (Berlant, 2011: 13). In the invocation of trans children and transgender history, and in the discussions of generational change, there was a recurring theme of futurity, and of the hope for a future where transgender people might live free from police harassment and violence, and with freedom of bodily autonomy and life. It was in the discussions of the means by which these futures should be pursued that attachments with the "normal" came into discussion, and in which their temptations came into focus. Puar's work locates the the inextricability of the "normal"

from the projects of Nationalism which reify American imperialism in the reproduction of an "ascendancy of whiteness" and regulatory scripts of queer identity. Puar also, therefore, provides a line of analysis that, in looking to the financial and structural inequalities of Provincetown and the Fair, also links these sites with the broader unequal geographies of race, class, ability, nationalism, and normativity that function to regulate who could and does have access to those queer spaces whuch function in the re-extended privileges of capital-enabled normativity.

As Chapter Three will elaborate, these geographies can also be understood as being produced through, and supporting, the pre-social gendered sensations of gender euphoria or dysphoria. The production of spaces of trans community can also therefore be understood as spaces made in radical acts of self-care that can be read through Hil Malatino's aptly named Trans Care (2020) as the production of community spaces, built through collective relations of attachment, can be understood as creating spaces that care for parts of one's self that cannot be expressed within the broader transphobic geographies of the American landscape.

To conclude, I believe that trans spaces, even ones like Fantasia Fair which reproduce themselves through cruelly optimistic attachments to the "normal," should exist; they provide critical sites of community and joy that function as life-preserving sites of trans survival and life. It becomes a critical exercise, however, to think through both how these spaces can rely upon and reproduce broader uneven geographies in their making and to consider the limitations that attachments with the normal place on what,

and how, these spaces can be. As this chapter has argued, the making of these spaces is not just a geographic project, but a political one wherein projects of queer futurity are contested. These sites can alternately reproduce palliative activisms which work towards the limited inclusion of white and wealthy trans people into the structures of oppression. They equally can become sites that reject the seductions of normativity and work towards radical politics of liberation. Either way, I would like to draw one more quote from Reverend Sophia, from a discussion I had with her in the closing days of the Fair:

*If it's a choice between one week a year at Fantasia Fair or death, who are we to say no?*

# CHAPTER 3. EMOTIONAL REALNESS: GEOGRAPHIES OF GENDER EUPHORIA AND DYSPHORIA

Where Chapter One discussed the attachments of cruel optimism formed in attempts to produce a trans subject compatible with the structures of the "normal" and Chapter Two explored the spatial dimensions of logics of homonationalism and normativity, this chapter explores the ways that the emotional dimensions of trans spaces can be theorized through a reading of the ways embodied sensations of gender mutually inform and emerge from the geographic production of space. Working across archival research and fieldwork, I build from feminist and visceral geographic literature, as well as theorizations of the body from trans scholars, to locate how gendered sensations, such as experiences of gendered euphoria and dysphoria, are informed through the socio-spatial contexts one inhabits. In describing embodied gendered experiences through a vocabulary of dysphoria and euphoria, this approach runs the risk of producing a binary reading of gendered experiences as discretely good or bad, rather than accounting for their existence within a pluralism of embodied sensations and relations. Aware of these risks, I follow this approach for the vocabulary it lends in locating two nodes in which gender is experienced. Working from trans theory scholarship on the body as a mediated technological assemblage, and from feminist geographic understandings of bodies and space as mutually productive entities in the production of space, this chapter examines the unique and geographically situated emotions and worlds that emerge within trans spaces.

Building from feminist constructionist thought and queer theory, trans scholars have theorized the body as an ontological assemblage mediated through technology,

embodied practices, performance, and institutional and medical regimes (Stryker, 1994, 2006; Rosenberg & Oswin, 2014; Malatino, 2019, 2020). An assemblage reading of the trans body brings the social and political dimensions of trans being into focus. Hil Malatino's writing, in particular, speaks to assemblage thinking, as he writes that, in being trans, one often lacks the privileges of "maximal agency, atomistic selfhood, and radical self-possession," and equally knows these concepts for the fantasies they are (Malatino, 2020: 35). Writing on care, Malatino locates the trans body as one which lacks the privileges of an uncomplicated sense of self or "uncomplicated "I"" and exists in awareness that there is no apolitical being. As the previous chapters have explored, attachments to the "normal" can be understood as attempts to articulate oneself in such a way that the privileges of normativity might be re-extended to them. Working from both Puar's (2007) extension of Heidi Nast's (2002) concepts of market virility and Kimberly Kay Hoang's (2015) writings on technologies of embodiment, I locate how emotion, embodiment, and intersubjective articulations of identity, come together in trans spaces to create sensations, identities, and possibilities unique to those geographic sites.

Assemblage theories of the body build from Deleuze and Guattari's (1980) writing, and from later feminist scholarship, most notably Donna Haraway's writing on cyborg ontologies. Queer scholars have written on the importance of community in the definition and rearticulation of identity for decades, but in describing the intersubjective modes of self-making that inform the assemblages of the trans body, Malatino again provides a beautiful and insightful musing, writing on queer community "we were both becoming genders we were never supposed to be, and we found home together. We built

these homes, first, in each other…we kept each other alive…making space for one another's becoming" (Malatino, 2020: 71). As trans relationships and care become central to the making of home, of life, and of other trans people, this invites us to consider community, and therefore social community spaces, as a vital component of the assemblages that constitute trans being.

To create a geographic reading of the intersubjectivity of trans assemblages, I work from feminist geographic understandings of the mutually constitutive relationship between gendered bodies and space (Longhurst, 1997), gendered practice and spatial context (Nelson, 1999), and visceral geographic understandings of the body as a relational entity whose visceral experiences extend from "sensory engagement with the material and discursive environments in which we live" (Longhurst 1997; Longhurst et al, 2009: 334). Longhurst's connecting the visceral to both discursive and material environments provides a useful line of inquiry in working across findings from both archives and fieldwork. This also invites a reading of the visceral that works backwards to read what spatially-mediated sensations of gender euphoria and dysphoria can tell us about the spatial and discursive production of identity.

Working from an understanding of the body as a site where gender is both experienced and made legible through performance (Butler, 1990) and technologies of embodiment (Hoang, 2015), I theorize trans geographies as sites wherein visceral experiences of gender are mediated with broader socio-spatial and discursive contexts. I also extend this line of inquiry to examine the ways that embodiment and gesture

impacted the process of conducting individual interviews and, through Halberstam's (2011) writing on the queer art of failure, explore how embodiment shifted the emotional space of the interview towards one that led to "failed" outcomes. While this analysis focuses on the embodied and emotional attachments of trans spaces, it has broader implications in understanding all gendered space. As trans geographies are constituted in the embodiments, attachments, and social practices of people whose collectivity is produced through gendered practice, trans geographies represent a particularly informative site of analysis. Finally, these experiences are interpreted through their relationship to epistemologies of "realness" as the "real" represents a category through which structures of normativity assert themselves as "true" and "real," while designating those trans experiences which defy them as mere fantasy.

## 3.1 "A Wound on my Chest" Archival Visceralities

*You asked your readers, Virginia, to try to come up with some answers as to what really gives us our satisfaction in cross dressing…I close my eyes and ask myself what it is I feel. The physical feeling is similar to what I might feel if I were wearing a bandage over a wound on my chest.*

Transvestia no. 42, "Letters to the Editor" (1966)

To describe the ways in which trans people experience gender through embodied experiences of feeling and visceral sensation, a contemporary vocabulary has been developed around experiences of gender euphoria and gender dysphoria. Respectively, these sensations are understood as internal experiences of feeling good and aligned with one's gender identity and expression or bad and misaligned. Contemporarily these sensations are most commonly framed through psychological terms as experiences of self that presuppose affect and are found within one's relationship to self and gender.

The most famous, and perhaps most influential, codification of this epistemology of gender is in the update of the DSM-V criteria to use gender dysphoria as the official diagnosis of trans people within medical terminology as the "psychological distress that results from an incongruence between one's sex assigned at birth and one's gender identity." This diagnostic definition was an improvement over the earlier gender identity disorder diagnosis, but still operates through the epistemologies of patriarchal medical sciences that understand transness as a sickness or condition to be treated, rather than an experience to be loved or celebrated. In reading transvestite experiences, using a framework of gender euphoria and dysphoria can assist in the analysis of why transvestites expressed their femme-gendered selves, even in the face of social and legal persecution, and to better understand what crossdressing did for them. Reading the visceral in discourse also builds from discourse analysis literature on indexical signs as it facilitates an approach to language wherein words and meanings describing visceral sensations can be read within the text, and in relevant contexts and meanings.

As the opening quote reflects, understanding what dressing and altering their gender expressions did for transvestites can be done through discourse analysis of the ways that transvestites described the visceral sensations and embodied experiences of dressing, and how it differed from their embodied experiences when presenting as men. In this framework, the act of dressing can be understood as an act of self-care and love to both mitigate the dysphoria one might feel in a masculine presentation or male social role and to experience a kind of gendered joy at expressing one's femininity and

transness. Readers express these sentiments through any number of sentiments, from explicitly saying "I am miserable when dressed as a man, immediately comfortable and relaxed in the clothes of a female"[88] to describing the visceral sensations of gendered pain or joy as a "wound" on one's chest or in "tingling with goosebumps of ecstasy."[89] Beyond a purely internal sensation, however, readers also relayed the joy they experienced in being socially regarded and treated as a woman, describing "the thrill that comes when a waitress says "would you girls like more coffee?" or a saleslady says "may I help you, Miss?""[90] The uniquely spatial and temporal relations through which many of Transvestia's readers expressed their gendered selves makes such moments all the more impactful, and makes apparent the ways in which socio-spatial context and the role that interpersonal interactions can play in one's experience of their own gender.

In addition to individual descriptions of what dressing did for them, many contributors to Transvestia also noted the unique emotions and sensations which relationally emerged in spaces of trans community. As Chapter One noted, the cruelly optimistic attachments of Transvestia's girl with structures of normativity necessitated the production of transvestite spaces external from the geographies of everyday life. While the dichotomization of transvestite space and the geographies of everyday life reified the discursive and spatial structures of the "normal," it also created a high-contrast portrait between the emotional possibilities of the everyday and those provided

[88] Transvestia no.46 "Confessing" (1967)
[89] Transvestia no.41 "Better Late than Never" (1966)
[90] Transvestia no.30 "Cover Story - Femme Highlights" (1964)

in trans geographies. This contrast informs analysis as it makes apparent the unique attachments which emerge from spaces of trans community.

Susanna Valenti, the longtime east coast editor of Transvestia paints a vivid portrait of these potentials in recounting another transvestite's visit to her resort house in the Catskills, Casa Susanna. Through the changed articulation of their embodiment through dressing, and through the emotional possibilities generated in being with another person of shared experience, Susanna recounts that the simple act of sitting on some playground swings became a moment of joy, reflecting "every type of activity, no matter how trivial it may seem, takes on a fascinating quality when we allow our "girl-selves" to perform them."[91] Valenti further noted this as a moment of healing in "catching up" in a part of girlhood that had been denied to them both in their upbringing. These situated emotional potentialities also became a mode by which some transvestite leisure geographies and event-spaces, such as Fantasia Fair, came to advertise themselves. As an advertisement for the 1979 Fantasia Fair printed in Transvestia articulated, "every aspect of [the Fair] has been planned to give you the unique opportunity to express yourself in a tolerant, understanding, and positive atmosphere…social events–from talent shows to formal dinners, from swimming to shopping, from bicycling to get-togethers–all are provided to make living en femme an exciting and natural experience."[92]

As this advertisement frames the excitement of being at the Fair through both living "en femme" (i.e. femme-presenting) and through the Fair's social events, the

[91] Transvestia no.11 "Susanna Says" (1961)
[92] Transvestia no.99 "5th Annual Fantasia Fair" (1979)

emotions such spaces provide are defined through the intersubjective relationality of these spaces. Contrasted with the characterization of the everyday as a "9 to 5 prison"[93] that one contributor to Transvestia shared, the definition of the emotional geographies of the trans spaces through freedom and possibility becomes apparent. As later sections will elaborate, these geographies can also be read as spaces that enacted a kind of care. Being in a space with people who validate and celebrate one's existence and experiences of transness, and being able to reciprocate that recognition in kind, can be understood as a defining relationality that underpins the beauty of trans spaces.

## 3.2 Interviews and the Queer Art of Failure

In addition to group interviews, I planned a series of one-on-one interviews with people who do, or have, identified as crossdressers, transvestites, or part-time transgender. My fieldwork at Fantasia Fair served as a primary site of interviewee recruitment. I conducted three interviews during the Fair. After these first three interviews, however, I decided to stop the process of individual interviews as I felt that it had, and may continue, to cause undue stress to participants. Where archival research had been designed to focus on the discursive production of transvestite identities and group interviews were structured to put participants in discussion with one another about their experiences and beliefs, individual interviews were designed to discuss the embodied and emotional experiences of participants, particularly in spaces of trans community. Interviews were therefore structured around four primary questions, each with follow-up questions responding to participants' answers. These four primary questions were:

- How did you first hear about ____ crossdressing organizations and spaces?

[93] Transvestia no.94 "Book Review" (1978)

- Why did you decide to go to one of these spaces?
- How did it feel to be there? What could you do in these spaces that you could not do in everyday life?
- Were there things you felt you could not do in these spaces or perceived limits to crossdresser identity?

While these interviews were designed to focus on participants' emotional experiences as they connected with their personal histories and trans-specific geographies, two of the three participants I interviewed quickly expanded beyond the scope of the questions and recounted additional experiences, including some of a traumatic nature. Once participants began to discuss such events, I signaled that I was halting the interview process by putting down my pen, shifting my body position, telling interviewees that I was pausing the interview. I also provided support resources to these participants at the end of our talk.

It was not until reflecting on the fieldwork process that I also realized that, in those moments, I had instinctively shifted into an active listening and support role similar to that I had formerly performed as a hotline operator with the peer-support crisis hotline Trans Lifeline. With the benefit of hindsight, I believe I may have unconsciously been performing a listening role more similar to hotline operator than academic interviewer for much of the interview process. Paired with the unique and emotionally powerful event-space of the Fair, I believe this led to the responses that participants shared. After these three interviews, I also made the decision to pause and later stop the interview process - a decision I stand by as I believe it unconscionable and unethical to conduct an interview process which may cause people to relive trauma for the purposes of research that offers no means of treating or alleviating their pain.

While these interviews may not represent a usable dataset for this project, I believe the "failure" of this interview process presents potentials and insights for future social scientific research made in failure's crucible of potential to "in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world" (Halberstam, 2011: 2-3). Understanding failure as a generative process builds from Jack Halberstam's 2011 writing on the subject of queer failure, as he articulates failure for the queer artist as "an opportunity rather than a dead end" in queer aesthetic practice. I consider queer academic writing to be a part of queer aesthetics, and therefore a potential site to incorporate and work with failure itself as a generative condition in queer aesthetic practice. Attempting to learn from these failures is not meant to reduce the pain of my research participants nor would these generative potentials have justified continuing the interview process. And while the same two participants who shared traumatic experiences also shared that the interview process was cathartic, I do not believe that academic research is the place to have such conversations. It is my hope only that this failure might translate to something which bears potential in the design of future research.

All participants I interviewed declined to be audio recorded, citing voice dysphoria. And while I personally experience vocal dysphoria, in the desire to have the most documented and regimented research process possible, I failed to consider dysphoria in the design of the research process. I also failed to consider these interviews might be one of the first times that participants were able to talk at length with another

trans person about their life and that I might be meeting participants during one of the first times they were able to express that part of themselves. One participant recounted both of these experiences to me. Furthermore, in the embodied and interpersonal process of actually *doing* interviews, somewhere, without my realizing, I believe I re-articulated my previous role of crisis support worker and shifted the emotional space of the interview. This speaks to the importance of embodiment in the process of doing interviews and to the potential ways gestures, as relational rearticulations of meaning (Rodríguez, 2014), play an important role in the ways that body and voice can shift the emotional space of an interview.

And while I regard all these moments as failures in the research process, these failures also critically push back against the academic epistemologies of disciplinary "success" as they reproduce themselves in the legitimation of research processes which create expected and desired outcomes through the reproduction of discipline. As Halberstam notes, "disciplines qualify and disqualify, legitimate and delegitimate, reward and punish," and, quoting Foucault, Halberstam also links disciplinarity with the reproduction of the "Normal" as "disciplines will define not a code of law, but a code of normalization" (Halberstam, 2011: 10; Foucault, 2003: 38). Therefore, just as this project pushes back against the homonationalist tendency to make queer subjects compatible to American normativity, so too does it push back against any urge to turn productive sites of queer failure into the "successful" reproductions of disciplinary knowledge.

## 3.3 The Pink Fog

*The pink fog is a term historically used by Fantasia Fair to describe a state of exuberance exhibited by many first-time attendees. Being free to be the person you have always wanted to be, for an entire week and in complete freedom, is empowering and exhilarating. Many attendees, and especially first-timers, return home in a state of rapture. Our Pink Fog workshops discuss this state of bliss and suggest a cooling-off period before making life-altering personal decisions.*

Fantasia Fair website, "A Guide for First-Timers"

This description of the "Pink Fog," taken from the Fantasia Fair website, provides a useful line of analysis in understanding the emotional geographies of the Fair as it defines the Fog as an emotional state explicitly tied to the space of the Fair and what the Fair means, and does, for its attendees at an emotional level. During the 2021 Fair, a workshop was hosted about the Fog, titled "Lost in the Pink Fog" which was advertised as "highly recommended for first timers" and which defined the Fog as both a "state of euphoria we experience…[and] a dangerous time to make decisions." Locating the Fog as a state of euphoria speaks to the ways that the emotional geographies of the Fair might be analyzed through the lens of a spectrum of gender dysphoria and euphoria. Simultaneously, in framing the Fog as "dangerous" this also invites consideration of the misalignments that occur between the unique event-space of the Fair and the everyday spaces against which the Fair defines itself.

Contemporary writing on experiences of gender dysphoria and euphoria provide a starting point for this theorization as they respectively describe internal experiences of feeling misaligned and aligned within one's gender. From a geographic perspective, these feelings can begin to be located as having a spatial dimension through visceral geographic literature that defines the body as a relational entity whose internal sensations

are coproduced with specific geographic sites and experiences (Hayes-Conroy, 2010). Theorizing experiences of gender euphoria and dysphoria through a geographic lens diverges from psychological and medical epistemologies which exclusively locate these sensations in pre-social and internal experiences of the self. Rather, this follows feminist geographic scholarship that locates the visceral through "the sensations, moods, and ways of being that emerge from our sensory engagement with the material and discursive environments in which we live" (Longhurst, et al, 2009: 334). The Fog, therefore can be understood as a visceral sensation and emotional state that emerges from the social geographies and interpersonal relations of the Fair.

This critically differs from purely internal theories of dysphoria and euphoria through consideration of the ways that interpersonal, social, and spatial attachments, as structures of relationality, mutually inform the internal feelings and affects that emerge from social being. While I was not able to attend the Pink Fog workshop at the Fair, this analysis extends this project's archival work and builds from participants' contributions in group interviews and from participant observation methods. As the previous section explored, archival texts discussed these visceral sensations in the unique sensations that emerged through the embodied articulations of expressing one's gendered selves. This is mirrored in the description of the Fog, as it emerges from the unique possibilities of the Fair of "being free to be the person you have always wanted to be, for an entire week and in complete freedom." Building from these reflections, I locate the collective emotional space of the Fair as one of possibility, specifically gendered possibilities that are articulated within the counterpublic geographies of the Fair, but are impossible in the

broader geographies of everyday life. As one attendee of the Fair reflected to me in my asking if there are things she feels are not possible at Fantasia Fair, she simply responded that she had never thought of the Fair as a space of "can't," only as a place where one "can."

Through the lens of Malatino's (2020) writing on the intersubjectivity of trans care as it mutually produces and cares for trans peoples' gendered selves, the emotional space created by the Fair for its attendees can be understood in the freedom of possibility. As the geographies of the Fair are produced as counterpublics in tension with the normative structures of everyday life, the emotional space of the Fair can therefore also be read as a counterpublic that facilitates feelings and sensations precluded by the structures of heteronormativity. These structures of normativity, Malatino notes, are often experienced by trans people as a kind of refusal. Refusals take many forms in this reading. They can be refusals of freedom of expression, of bodily autonomy, of security, safety, and other privileges which are denied to trans people due to the nature of our embodiments. I theorize the emotional space of the Fair, therefore, emerges from relations to these refusals in the production of a geographic space in which participants can exist in the states of possibility that are elsewhere denied. At an internal level, I also theorize this operates to both mitigate and alleviate the gendered misalignments of dysphoria that the geographies of everyday life produce, and to create the space in which people can come closer to the feelings of gendered euphoria that emerge when one finds their way closer to their own truth of gendered realness.

## 3.4 The "Real" and the Embodied Spatial Production of Identity

Understanding how the socio-spatial sensations of gender relate with the attachments to the "normal" explored in Chapters One and Two can be informed through analysis of how some experiences and understandings of gender were defined as more "real" or "true" than others. As Chapter One explored, *Transvestia*'s girl was often produced through regulatory scripts of "true" transvestism that both valorized conservative and one-dimensional ideas of trans womanhood, while excluding all persons who did not fit within this provincial category of identity. Chapter Two explored the persisting legacies and temptations of the "normal" in its homonationalist promises that the privileges of capital might be re-extended to "normal" queer subjects. Building from Puar's (2007, 2017) extensions of Nast's (2002) writing on market virility as a means by which capital and purchasing power mediate one's relationships of national belonging, this chapter examines how embodiment, structures of normativity, and internal gendered experiences interact in contesting the "real."

To locate the relationships between embodiment and national belonging, I follow Kimberly Kay Hoang's (2015) writing on technologies of embodiment as the "processes through which [people] produce, transform or manipulate their bodies through particular kinds of body work that signify…perceptions of national progress" (Hoang, 2015: 129). While Hoang was writing on the signifiers of national identity embodied by Vietnamese sex workers, the ways in which the nation is re-articulated and embodied through individual gendered performance and embodiment holds true in reading the relationships between homonationalist discourse and the individual trans body. Here, the body becomes a site where different national projects can be alternately reproduced or resisted

in the articulations of gender and self. And, through an understanding that systems of normativity reproduce themselves through the privileging of those structures and embodiments that align with the regulatory scripts of the "normal," gendered embodiment can therefore be read as a means by which one mediates relations of national belonging.

To examine how the "real" is discursively produced through different epistemologies of gender and self, Grace Lavery's (2020) writing explores the ways that psychoanalytic practice and contemporary trans thought differently locate the "real." Working from a critical reading of the rhetorical overlap between the writing of English novelist George Eliot[94] and Sigmund Freud, Lavery examines how in both literary realism and psychoanalytic writing, the "real" became a rhetorical project of rejecting the Romantics' attempts to "make the desirable possible" in favor of attempting to "persuade their patients and readers to relinquish a beautiful fantasy and face a discomforting truth about the inadequacy of their own material existence" (Lavery, 2020: 721). Here, as realness is framed as both desirable and located in the material world, it is critically located away from one's internal sense of self and gender and within the material territory of heteronormative society. As *Transvestia*'s girl was discursively constructed as "true" through the "truth" loaned by contemporaneous psychoanalytic writing, and the Fair continues to host medical doctors who uncritically reproduce heteronormative logics, the legacies of these early 20th century turns towards the "real" can continue to be seen.

[94] George Eliot was the pen name of Mary Ann Evans

Theories of the real which locate "truth" in the hegemonic structures of heteronormativity have not gone unchallenged, however. Lavery works towards this very point in citing to the Janet Mock's aptly named 2014 memoir *Redefining Realness* as Mock challenges ideas of transness that locate "realness" in "the ability to be seen as heteronormative, to assimilate" (Mock, 116) and these definitions of realness that Mock redefines. Lavery notes that Mock's locating of the real in her journey inwards towards "a truth, beauty, and peace that was already mine," refuses ideas of realness as a "type of socialization (that is, realness as passing)" which rely upon and reproduce legacies of the "real" that reify heteronormative socio-material structures. Mock also invites a reading of the emotional geographies of trans spaces, through the ways in which they provide a space for trans people to explore and experience their own gendered self and to come closer to the "truth, beauty, and peace" that are already theirs.

In this potential, trans spaces also therefore critically push back against the projects of the "normal" that reproduce the legacies of psychoanalytic "realness" that, through medical and legal systems, create barriers that trans people "prove" their transness (or at least prove themselves trans *enough*) to access necessary and life-saving care and services. Therefore, as trans spaces create alternate socio-spatial modes of relation, they also form new emotional attachments and ways of relating that decenter and resist normativity.

Across a combined reading of the emotional and visceral dimensions of trans geographies and a reading of the relations of gendered embodiment with the structures of normativity, the construction of the "real" comes into focus as a primary logic by which the "normal" is reproduced. These different epistemologies and locatings of the "real" also provide a means of analyzing the ways that internal and embodied experiences were related with, or excluded from, the discursive constructions of "normal" trans identities, geographies and structures of homonationalism, and in the relations between emotion, viscerality, and community. All these moments point to the persisting lures of normativity that conditionally proffer its privileges if one could only be "normal" or "real" enough. And, this again points to the need to center the internal truths of self and joy over the cruelly optimistic and homonationalist seductions of the "normal," and to work towards a politics that finds realness in the liberation of all people.

The "real," therefore, represents a critical regulatory power in the hegemonic reading of whose internal truths of self are valid and whose, by the challenges they pose to the structures of normativity, are excluded. Centering one's truths of self and joy are also rendered as the political and radical acts that they are. Coming into one's own truth, gendered or otherwise, therefore recalls us to remember that the privileges of the "normal" are always conditional seductions that reify the very powers that create the hegemonic structures of normativity. This also rearticulates that trans existence, in the radical acceptance of self, is a radical act of liberatory change and potential. And, that at its visceral heart, transness is incompatible with the oppressive structures of the "true," the "normal," and the "real."

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

All participant names are pseudonyms, and significant identifying information has been excluded or redacted.

**Kate** (they/them) - 78 years old, white, lives in the American Southwest, identifies as working class, has experienced homelessness.

**Hedwig** (they/she) - 26 years old, white, lives in California, is a queer artist and performer who was in Provincetown working on a documentary film project.

**Olivia** (she/her) - 36 years old, white, lives in California, is an actress who was in Provincetown working on a documentary film project.

**Patti** (she/her) - between 65 and 75 years old, white, living in New England.

**Christine** (she/her) - 83 years old, white, living in New England, lives on a fixed-income and spoke openly about being in recovery.

**Willow** (she/they) - 36 years old, white, living in New York, is a filmmaker and artist who was in Provincetown working on a documentary film project.

**Violet** (she/her) - 26 years old, Asian-American, living in New England, identifies as working class, is an active performer and poet.

**Helen** (she/her) - 75+ years old, living in the American South, is a veteran, has been an active transgender activist for decades and holds a leadership position with a nationwide LGBTQ organization.

**Finn** (they/them) - 45-55 years old, white, living in New York, is a filmmaker who was in Provincetown working on a documentary film project.

**Sophia** (she/her) - 63 years old, Black, living in the American South, and is a reverend who works with transgender people experiencing homelessness.

**Tina** (she/her) - 63 years old, white, living in Hawaii, identifies as wealthy and is a retired office professional.

## APPENDIX 2: CODING CRITERIA

A coding structure was developed for this project to create a structured approach to archival materials. The following are the primary coding criteria used for archival research and are a combination of pre-determined coding criteria and codes which emerged from a close reading of the archives according to recurring themes.

**Definition of Transvestite Identity:** A coding criteria used to follow the internal logic of archival materials in defining transvestite identity.
**Differentiation between Transvestite and Transsexual Identities:** Parallel with the coding the definition of transvestite identity, this code examined how transvestism was differentiated from other queer identities, especially transsexual women.
**Homonationalisms:** Building from Puar's writing, this code was used to identify logics and structures that can be read through theories of homonationalism.
**Geography:** Through a reading of how archival contributors articulated where they made space for their transness, and where they felt they could not, this code located the geographic realities and imaginaries defined in archives.
**Medical Interaction:** A coding criteria used to document when, and in what contexts, archival subjects encountered medical professionals and systems.
**Police Interaction:** Similarly, interactions with police and the law enforcement was coded.
**Community:** A coding criteria used to follow where, with who, and in what ways community was made both between trans people and with others who supported them.
**Class:** This coding criteria read the ways that class was described and discussed in archives.
**Race:** As mentions of non-white readers and people were so sparse in *Transvestia*'s pages, every instance of such mentions was coded.
**Mental Health:** This criteria read for both explicit mentions of mental health experiences such as loneliness, shame, or guilt and for vocabulary registers of emotion.
**Viscerality:** Coding through an indexicality of words and meanings that describe experiences of mental health, this criteria explored how embodied experiences of gender were articulated.
**Generational Differences:** Mentions of perceived or actual generational difference and misalignment were coded for.
**Substance Use/Addiction:** Emerging from archival comparisons between FPE and Tri-Ess and harm reduction organizations like AA, substance use and addiction were coded for.
**Homophobia:** This criteria coded for moments where homophobia was articulated, particularly towards gay men as lesbians were less often mentioned in this materials.
**Transphobia:** Parallel to coding for homophobia, transphobia was also coded for but also coded how many transvestites both experienced and rearticulated transphobia.
**Misogyny:** Similar to coding for homophobia and transphobia, misogyny was coded for with particular attention to essentialist and determinist ideas of womanhood.

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