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**OTHERS OF MY KIND: Transatlantic Transgender Histories**  
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## Visual Medical Rhetorics of Transgender Histories

*Michael Thomas Taylor*

This story begins with a journey across the Atlantic, presented here as another introduction to a history that has no single starting point: the story of a woman who was known at least by some, in private, as Joanna when she lived in San Francisco, whom Hirschfeld names as John O. We do not know what name or names she used in public; in this case, the desire we might have to find a clear declaration of identity or self-naming simply cannot be fulfilled by history. I will thus refer to her here as J. She is the earliest protagonist in *TransTrans* whom we find crossing the Atlantic – first as she emigrated to America in 1882, and then as her photographs were published in Europe in 1912, in the illustrated volume to Magnus Hirschfeld’s book *Die Transvestiten*.

These photos illustrate a life story that Hirschfeld told two years earlier as “Case Study 13” in *Die Transvestiten*.<sup>1</sup> What we know from Hirschfeld is that J. was born in Bavaria in 1862. Her practice of wearing women’s clothing and living as a woman aroused social condemnation, which caused her to flee to Switzerland, to France, and – in 1882 – to New York. She managed to pass as a woman and hold down jobs as an embroiderer, a cook, a maid, and a governess in Jersey City,

*But the mask has transformed into something else: a gesture, a piece of clothing, and a kind of second skin.*

Der amerikanische auf Seite 100 der „Transvestiten“ beschriebene Transvestit.

FIGURE 5.1: John O. in Magnus Hirschfeld's illustrated volume to *Die Transvestiten*, 1912. The captions in the image read: "Figure 1: As a young newspaper boy; Figure 2: In nudo; Figure 3: As a naked transvestite; Figure 4: In his female outfit."



**Fig. 1.** Als junger Zeitungsverkäufer.



**Fig. 2.** In nudo.



**Fig. 3.** Als nackter Transvestit.



**Fig. 4.** In seinem Frauenkostüm.

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Milwaukee, and Montana. But each time she was eventually discovered, and finally in 1885 she fled to San Francisco. In 1905, she began writing letters to Helene Stöcker – founder of the *Bund für Mutterschutz* (League for the Protection of Mothers), and a leader in the radical wing of the German women’s movement who had also publicly advocated for free love – to seek support. Having received no reply, J. turned to Magnus Hirschfeld. She demanded of Hirschfeld that scientists finally take note of those who were “effeminate” rather than paying attention only to homosexuals and categorizing all cross-dressers as homosexual. Pressure from cross-dressers like J. motivated Hirschfeld to rethink his earlier theories and formulate new categories of identity. More recently, Susan Stryker includes J.’s story as told by Hirschfeld in her book *Transgender History*, using it to exemplify Hirschfeld’s work with transgender persons and early transgender histories.<sup>2</sup>

A closer look at these images provides insight into the kinds of stories we have aimed to tell in this book and in the *TransTrans* exhibitions, especially the need we faced to look beyond biography, to the dynamics of seeing and being seen, of self-presentation and recognition or categorization by others, and to the communities that were created through sharing images. This is a shift embedded within the history of sexology itself, which moved around 1900 from its initial reliance on written, often literary, biographies and sources to visual evidence. Hirschfeld’s arrangement of images and text in fact tells several stories – not all of them necessarily

intended. When read sequentially like a text, for instance, J.’s photographs tell a life story that accords with her biography: born and raised as a boy, the “young newspaper boy” took off this male identity like a cloak and then claimed a desire to dress in the clothing of – and in fact to become – a woman. This teleology and Hirschfeld’s arrangement of the images also matters for how we read the naked bodies in the images. On one level, the images reinforce the overall biographical narrative. J. is noticeably younger in the first two of the images; and in the image in the second row in which she is naked, representing a later stage in her life, she poses in ways that make her look more feminine. Yet on another level, the images can be read as clinical demonstrations. Seen thus, the photographs on the top row stage a process of disrobing that reveals a body naked of any clothing or other cultural markers – a body “in nudo” that appears to naturally speak for itself by revealing the apparent biological sex of its subject. Conversely, the images on the bottom row can be read sequentially as a process of cross-dressing that retrospectively transforms this body – with her genitals hidden between her legs – into a paradox: the body of a naked transvestite.

In Hirschfeld’s sense, however, this term is not a paradox, because Hirschfeld defined transvestitism as a *desire* or *drive* to dress in the clothing of the opposite gender/sex (the German word *Geschlecht* means both, although any history concerned with this category will be about changes in its meaning; we discuss this in more detail in our chapter on terminology). In *Die*

*Transvestiten*, Hirschfeld introduces this newly coined category as designating

the powerful urge to live in the clothing of the *Geschlecht* to which the person concerned does *not* belong according to the form of their body. For the sake of brevity, we will call this drive transvestitic (from trans = opposite and vestis = clothing). But in using this term, we must emphasize that clothing does not appear here “as a *dead thing*,” that the kind of clothing a person wears is no arbitrary expression of a capricious whim but a *form of expressing one’s inner personality*, a *sign* of one’s disposition.<sup>3</sup>

Hirschfeld’s arrangement of J.’s photographs reflects a dilemma or double bind in this definition. For it is only by dressing and undressing an individual that Hirschfeld can present them as a transvestite on his definition, i.e., that he can present a conflict between a desired gender expressed in clothing and a sex that is ostensibly visible on the body. And this procedure itself does violence to a part of their personality by forcing them to dress against their desires, robbing them of a living part of who they are.

The arrangement of J.’s images also reflects Hirschfeld’s practice of representing individuals as examples of “sexual intermediary stages” (or *sexuelle Zwischenstufen*) by showing them naked with supposedly androgynous bodies and also dressed as a man and a woman. But there is a crucial difference: here, we do not have one ostensibly sexually ambiguous

body presenting, when clothed, as male and female. We have, rather, two naked bodies, which function in different ways on each row. We have a transition, in other words, instead of something that is suspended as “either/or” and “in-between.” This is one aspect of the arrangement that distinguishes it from other medical images of the period. There are others.

In analyzing medicalized photographs of nonbinary bodies from this period, for instance, Kathrin Peters has pointed especially to the staging and elicitation of shame that comes with a focus on subjects’ genitals.<sup>4</sup> I will return to Peters’s arguments below, but here I simply want to note that these photos of J. stand out if viewed in that context, because at least the clothed photographs were not obviously or definitively made for clinical purposes, and it is not clear to me that the naked photos were either. (They were manifestly made in a studio, but we cannot say with or by or for whom.) Moreover, the unclothed photos stand out as being the only photographic representation of nudity in Hirschfeld’s book, and unlike other clinical images that Hirschfeld himself produced and used, one could argue that they are *not* focused on sexually ambiguous genitals.<sup>5</sup> They are presented as photographs of a *transvestite*, concerned with *clothing* and how clothing represents an inner sense of *Geschlecht*. Indeed, even in the nude images, and in contrast to other nude images that Hirschfeld used in medical contexts, I find there is modest dignity reflected in J.’s posture here – a kind of propriety, or even seemliness. The posing does not strike me as a coerced or forced exposure, or as

marked by shame at all. Just as J. hides her genitals so too, one might say, does the photograph – but confidently, self-assuredly. Hirschfeld wants us to see one thing – a demonstration of a sexual type, the transvestite – stripped down to its nude physical form.<sup>6</sup> But J. perhaps wants us to see another – perhaps *not* to focus on this nudity and her genitals at all. She is showing her body, and asking Hirschfeld, at least, to look at *all of it*, together with her clothing, as an expression of who she is.

Finally, it is worth noting that Hirschfeld comes to his “analytical” definition of transvestitism only after recounting 158 pages of life stories. This is characteristic of his use of images in that he separates out case studies from photographs and other visual materials. Such a practice likely reflected conditions of how his works were published, but it also continued sexual scientific methods from the late nineteenth century. By contrast, for instance, as Annette discusses, Bernard S. Talmey integrated life stories and his own diagnoses with the photographs in his 1914 article, which directly responded to Hirschfeld’s work. While Hirschfeld intimately knew many of his patients, he tried to carefully separate out his personal relationships from his scientific and medical arguments, in part to guard against charges of being biased and against the common assumption – often used as an attack – that he was homosexual. Talmey’s article is much more upfront about the fact that his friendship with his “first patient,” Otto Spengler, changed his views about transvestites and motivated him to advocate on their behalf. Hirschfeld’s shift from written life stories to

photography is thus to be read as another strategy to achieve objectivity apart from the subjective framework of biography. Yet in the arrangement of these images of J., biography reasserts itself only to take on a new and subversive shape. The images stage a linear story and the gender conflict around which it pivots. But they also undermine this construct by showing how various selves, genders, and identities can exist simultaneously, as depictions of the same person.

Viewed from the perspective of contemporary scholarship, the dynamic staged by these photographs represents one example of the “before-and-after” genre of photography that Jordan Bear and Kate Palmer Albers have called “a strategy so commonplace that virtually every disparate photographic discourse has enlisted it.”<sup>7</sup> Bear and Albers argue that before-and-after collages relate both to what the images depict and to a third “unseen event” that renders duration visible and thus relies on a viewer’s imagination of what happens outside the frame; in this way, they argue, the genre also offers “a critique of common assumptions about photographic indexicality” that interrogates the conditions governing all photographs.<sup>8</sup> These photographs of J. can be read in this light, because the “truth” they aim to depict escapes the index of any single photograph, or perhaps of what photography as a medium can reveal. In coining the term “transvestite,” Hirschfeld attempted to give such an “unseen event” a name. But its status as an epistemic object remained uncertain: is it a story of transition, conflict, or resolution? A drive or an identity? A



misrepresentation of J., or a revelation of her truth?

These uncertainties are particularly significant when read within the wider history of how photography was used in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Complicating earlier interpretations of photography as a democratizing technology, recent scholars have emphasized two main trends in these histories: on the one hand, the use of photography to construct typologies of character and bodily difference centred on categories of race, class, gender, and nationality; and on the other hand, its use as a medium for self-expression, for depicting and disseminating styles and fashions, and for building community. To cite the terms of Alan Sekula's seminal essay "The Body and the Archive," photography developed both as an archive of bourgeois portraiture and as a "shadow archive" of marginal figures, of zones of deviance and respectability.<sup>9</sup> Subsequent work building on this insight has continued to examine how photography has been used in various contexts (medicine, science, anthropology, and ethnography, as well as popular culture) to categorize limits of respectability and representability.<sup>10</sup> Shawn Michelle Smith's work on photography and race, for instance, contrasts photography's use as a technology of knowledge, categorization, and surveillance with the ways in which mostly middle-class individuals became photographic practitioners in fashioning their own identities, exploiting both photography's claims of indexicality or objectivity as well as its power to construct reality, or even to lie.<sup>11</sup>

Smith's work reflects a perspective taken by many contemporary scholars who point attention beyond photographic images themselves to the contexts that shape how photographs have been used, viewed, and produced. As Donna West Brett writes: the "re-uses and interpretations of photographic images unsettles the self-evident reality of their visual field or historical location."<sup>12</sup> And in exploring the function of ethnographic or anthropological images in museums, specifically, Elizabeth Edwards argues that we view photographs as objects that "re-acquir[e] a living context instead of being arrested moments" and are thus "active" in performing their own meaning.<sup>13</sup> These perspectives, too, are significant for *TransTrans*. As historians and curators, we felt an obligation to tell the life stories of the individuals we encountered as faithfully as possible and to make visible the complex, contradictory, or fragmented qualities of these images. Yet we are also situating these images within *transgender* history, which we understand as a genealogy that is marked by the concerns of our present point of view, and that is attentive to moments of rupture and friction rather than one that seeks out linear progression.<sup>14</sup>

We were also keenly aware of another aspect of photography that many scholars have emphasized (following the work of Roland Barthes and Susan Sontag): the power photographs have to evoke feelings or affect.<sup>15</sup> In the introduction to this book, we already pointed toward the issue of viewing "difficult photographs." As we noted there, the images we discuss in this book encompass power relations inherent to medical or scientific situations, normative

judgements and framings, and – in the context of sexuality – evocations of shame or sexual excitement, as well as scenes of voyeurism or exhibitionism. But beyond the ethical stance these difficulties imply for us as beholders and witnesses, such emotions have played a constitutive part in the history of photography. Looking specifically at photography in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for instance, Elspeth Brown and Thy Phu have emphasized the role that affect played in arguments about the medium, as well as the tensions in the medium itself that these debates reflected.<sup>16</sup> Brown and Phu argue that these understandings of photography developed in relation to discourses of intimacy and sentiment, as well as to norms of beauty and respectability, and that the medium's power to document and/or reveal shocking realities (as one sees in the photographs of Jacob Riis) reflects widespread concern at the time with the political efficacy of feeling. At the same time, they argue, the focus on "effect" rather than "affect" in these photographs has "effectively marginalized its shadow subjects."<sup>17</sup> They suggest a new critical focus on feeling that is not limited by these bourgeois values and might support a different kind of history – a queer history with a deeper awareness of how photographic archives function to mediate both absence *and* presence, remembrance *and* forgetting.<sup>18</sup>

And finally, our approach to these photographs was also shaped by work – such as that of Sabine Kriebel and Andrés Mario Zervigón – that emphasizes "doubt" as an epistemic category for thinking about photography. Doubt in this sense means

a "set of experiences including ambiguity, ambivalence, confusion, paradox, enigma."<sup>19</sup>

For photographs of "uncertain sex" around 1900, these issues come together in what Kathrin Peters discusses as "*Rätselbilder des Geschlechts*," or "riddle images of gender/sex."<sup>20</sup> As medicine came to hold "interpretational sovereignty" over matters of sex, Peters argues, medical photographs came to play a crucial part in this discourse by "producing visibilities and representations." She outlines a dual movement in this history. On the one hand, she writes, the sciences concerned with sex used these images to

arrest what had not been captured, make visible what was invisible, and to disambiguate what was ambiguous. But precisely when it became possible to look more and more closely, increasingly large areas of nonknowledge or not-yet-knowledge, of nonvisibility, simultaneously opened up; and these, in turn, were meant to be made accessible with new techniques of visualization. In this process, sexual ambiguities represented cases of precedence, as it were, on the basis of which it should be possible to make general statements about the "essence" of sex.<sup>21</sup>

As I noted above, Peters focuses on the production of shame in analyzing images in which subjects are prompted by medical authority to show their genitals to have their sex diagnosed.<sup>22</sup> Her intention is to push back against work that has focused

on an inherently “voyeuristic structure” of the technology or apparatus of the camera, realized in an objectifying gaze that is seen as congruent with the authoritative gaze of medicine or science. Instead, she emphasizes the “conditions under which the images were made”: scenes of examination defined by acts of exposure and uncovering, of photographing and being photographed.<sup>23</sup> She thus contrasts shame to voyeurism as a moment of subjectivity, as a scene characterized specifically by power relations between subjects: “One who is ashamed knows quite precisely that he or she is being seen, which is different than the voyeur, who assumes that his gaze is not being returned, that he himself is not visible (or perhaps he is after all?).”<sup>24</sup>

This perspective is crucial for many of the photographs we are discussing here, especially the medical photographs. Peters’ approach prompts us to move beyond blanket assertions of how photography replicates an objectifying, authoritative gaze to ask about the complex interplay of subjectivity – and the scenes that produced it – that is reflected in these images. Indeed, as the other essays in this book make clear, photography has always offered transgender individuals a medium to represent themselves as they would like to be seen, and to share those images with others to create supportive communities. Photographs were and still are used to represent how one should or would like to dress, how to comport and hold oneself or do makeup, or in order to gain recognition and understanding.<sup>25</sup> They also enact socially recognizable styles and ideals. For instance, the magazine *Das 3. Geschlecht*

is evidence of the fact that in Berlin and other large cities during the 1920s, studios emerged that catered to the needs and desires of individuals who called themselves transvestites. Trans individuals often modelled themselves after historical images or fashion photos, just as publications drew images from historical sources, fashion photography, and the theatre. Photographs were also important tools for self-advocacy with doctors and other authorities, and for gaining access to medical treatment.

And yet as Jay Prosser emphasized some twenty years ago, as transgender identities were emerging and transgender studies was just taking shape as a discipline, the truths depicted in these photographs were ephemeral and fleeting – moments captured that often stand at odds with how individuals most often presented themselves or were perceived by others.<sup>26</sup> At least until the 1990s, transgender history was in large part a history of passing or desiring to pass – a history of individuals who wanted to live and be perceived as a particular sex. This fact invests many transgender photographs with the intention of hiding their history of transition, which also complicates our work as historians.<sup>27</sup> For instance, the only reason that Annette and I suspected that first slide she found among Benjamin’s vacation photos (figure 1.1) might be a picture of a trans woman is because we were looking for pictures of trans women. When it comes to photography, as Jennifer Blessing also argued in the 1990s, the medium’s “strong aura of realism and objectivity promotes a fantasy of total gender transformation, or, conversely, allows the articulation of

incongruity between the posing body and its assumed costume.”<sup>28</sup>

We hope the many images we have discussed in this book have already begun to communicate a picture of the life stories at the centre of *TransTrans*, and of how they have been told, archived, or made public. We have also provided some clear indications of how we approached these images as historians and curators. Here, I now turn to the visual consequences of the medical framings that underpin so much of this history: to the categories of transvestite and transsexual introduced by Hirschfeld and Benjamin and to depictions of cross-dressing that these men drew from in their publications. I will examine how Hirschfeld and Benjamin attempted to reread existing practices of cross-dressing in terms of medicalized visual rhetorics – and also how these existing, and evolving, practices of gender presentation resisted, appropriated, and transformed their authoritative framings.

## Transvestite/Transsexual

Harry Benjamin opens *The Transsexual Phenomenon* with a brief historical overview, and the history he tells begins with Magnus Hirschfeld.<sup>29</sup> Explaining that Hirschfeld was probably the first to use the term “transvestism as a medical diagnosis,” Benjamin describes Hirschfeld’s interaction with “many of these persons” and notes the destruction of Hirschfeld’s institute by the Nazis. Benjamin also explicitly reveals his own personal role in this history as a visitor to the Institute for Sexual Science. But the overall gesture

of Benjamin’s reference to Hirschfeld is to distinguish himself from Hirschfeld’s earlier model of “transvestitism” in order to then introduce a new category, “transsexualism.”<sup>30</sup> Both Hirschfeld and Benjamin wanted their work to contribute a broader agenda of furthering public knowledge. For Hirschfeld, that agenda was “enlightenment”: the achievement of social reform and increased visibility for sexual minorities based on an understanding of natural human sexual phenomena. For Benjamin, however, this agenda included not only a new paradigm for understanding what he called transsexualism but also a new model of treatment closely connected to his own work as a medical doctor. Hence even as Benjamin admits his personal and scientific debt to Hirschfeld, he emphasizes how his model of treatment supersedes this earlier history.<sup>31</sup>

This intention is especially visible in the way that Benjamin uses images. Take, for example, the repetition of this motif from the illustrated volume to *Die Transvestiten*,<sup>32</sup> published in 1912 (see figures 5.2 and 5.3).

There is no doubt that Benjamin knew Hirschfeld’s book well, and I suspect that he intentionally chose these two images, with their undeniable visual symmetry to Hirschfeld’s arrangement of images. In that case, even Benjamin’s choice of images underscores his claim to supersede Hirschfeld, because a closer comparison shows that the two similar sets of images tell contrasting stories.

Hirschfeld’s sorrowful transvestite ostensibly tells the story of an unhappy identity conflict ending in suicide. Given the caption, the diptych undoubtedly means

FIGURE 5.2: "A transvestite from the people who died by suicide," Plate 33 in Hirschfeld's illustrated volume to *Die Transvestiten*, 1912.

**Tafel XXXIII**

Ein Transvestit aus dem Volke, der durch  
Selbstmord geendet hat.





FIGURE 5.3: Harry Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, 1966, photograph section. University of Victoria Libraries, Transgender Archives collection. Harry Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon*. New York: Ace Publishing Corp, 1966. Special Collections call number RC560 C4B46 1966.

to say that this person's desire to dress in the clothing of one gender is at odds with their biological sex. But the images themselves are not so equivocal. For one thing, it is not entirely clear whether the clothing in the first image is masculine or feminine. It seems the buttons are in the front, and women's clothing would have likely had buttons in the back; but how should one read the cravat-like piece of clothing around the neck? Is this already an attempt to dress more femininely, or androgynously? The clothing in the second image, by contrast, is clearly marked as feminine by the headscarf

and the knit sweater; the way the figure is holding her cup is also quite feminine, evidence of an alignment in gender identity between clothing and comportment that we are certainly also meant to read as being in tragic conflict with the figure's biological sex. The diptych thus stages a tragic conflict precisely by suggesting and then frustrating any interpretation of before and after. It is worth noting, as well, that the trope of tragic suicide was common in discussions of homosexuality in the first decades of the twentieth century, where it was often used rhetorically to elicit support for



Both the visual gesture of before-and-after and photomontage are used in one popular depiction of a story that can be considered foundational because of its public impact and how it has come to be canonized in history – that of Lili Elbe. Here is the cover of a German version of a 1932 book edited by Niels Hoyer and purporting to be Lili Elbe’s autobiography. The title can be translated as *A Person Changes Their Sex: A Life Confession*, but it was published in English in a modified form as *Man into Woman: An Authentic Record of a Change of Sex* and was republished in 2004 with the title *Man into Woman: The First Sex Change: A Portrait of Lili Elbe: The True and Remarkable Transformation of the Painter Einar Wegener*.<sup>1</sup>

Lili Elbe (born Einar Wegener in Denmark in 1882) underwent four gender-affirming surgeries in 1930 and 1931, the first in Berlin (under Hirschfeld’s supervision) and the other three in Dresden, carried out by Kurt Warnekros. Particularly since the 2015 film *The Danish Girl*, Elbe has entered popular memory as the most visible person to undergo an early sex change operation. But she was not the first. Earlier operations were performed in 1920–21 by the Berlin surgeon Richard Mühsam for a patient who went by the name Dorchen.<sup>2</sup> Ideals of femininity linked with motherhood were deeply entrenched in the culture, leading to unrealistic expectations of what surgery might be able to achieve. These drove medical innovations that were particularly dangerous: Elbe

died of organ rejection after a uterus implantation. The autobiography described above was not written by Elbe, but by Ernst Ludwig Hathorn Jacobson (under the pseudonym Niels Hoyer) after Elbe’s death. As Sabine Meyer has conclusively demonstrated, although Elbe commissioned Jacobson to write the book and despite its later influence on trans readers, its status as an authentic account of how she would have described her life should be questioned.<sup>3</sup> Still, despite its somewhat dubious authenticity, this was the first account of a trans individual to gain widespread attention.

As with Hirschfeld and Benjamin, the visual rhetoric of this particular cover (there were others in other languages, which were much more staid) disrupts any simple biographical narrative. The book is titled “A Person Changes Their Sex” and subtitled “A Life Confession.” Yet the cover also names three separate authors: the name “Einar Wegener” in a readable block script, a signature that reads “Lili Elbe,” and an indication that the book has been edited by Niels Hoyer. We hardly need any tools of deconstruction or theoretical awareness about the complex authenticity of confessions to see that the “author” of this life history is plainly fragmented – personally and visually – just as the cover also fragments its columns of printed text.



homosexuals and (ideally) mobilize efforts for social and legal reform.<sup>33</sup> Here, this trope is similarly meant to elicit support for the tragic situation of transvestites. But it also underscores the overlap between the categories of homosexual (which had been circulating popularly for some time) and Hirschfeld's new category of the transvestite, despite Hirschfeld's attempt to now differentiate them.

Benjamin's photos, by contrast, depict clearly defined scenes of before and after. Even more importantly, the clinical ability Benjamin claims – of being able to change the bodies of his patients by changing their gender – now appears to resolve the underlying problem illustrated by Hirschfeld's transvestite. Benjamin's treatments turn the earlier tragic situation into a happy ending. The repetition of the motif appears to say (if only slyly, for those who also know Hirschfeld's work): while Hirschfeld can only document the tragic fate of those forced to act and dress against their own sense of their gender, Benjamin can now do something about it. Hirschfeld's book announces its author on the title page as "Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, Special Doctor for Nervous and Psychological Diseases in Berlin." The German word for disease here, *Leiden*, also means "suffering." In Hirschfeld's work, it remains unclear whether this desire is itself pathological or a consequence of a society that cannot accept it. But in any case, in Benjamin's images the suffering that Hirschfeld aims to depict has been replaced by a new notion of subjectivity based on hormonal treatment, which Michael Pettit has termed the "glandular self."<sup>34</sup> This new self, Pettit

argues, was not immediately visible to the eye: "With its emphasis on the invisible secretion of chemicals, the glandular self likewise located the essence of human nature just beyond the threshold of ordinary and unassisted perception."<sup>35</sup> One consequence of Benjamin's arrangement of these photographs is to push back against this epistemic invisibility. As the treating endocrinologist, he moreover claims this glandular self as his own field and object of work, and its subjects as his own creation.

There is one more context crucial for reading these photographs of an actor/actress, namely the fact that it was precisely the accusation of impersonating or masquerading that was historically used to discredit those who cross-dressed and to bring legal charges against them. The possibility of arrest that transvestites in Hirschfeld's time faced was real, though it varied by country. Indeed, when Benjamin mentions Hirschfeld, his comments focus on his predecessor's work in helping to procure "transvestite passes" from the police in Germany to protect transvestites from arrest, with the explanation that this was the reason most transvestites came to visit Hirschfeld. "In the majority of cases," Benjamin writes, "this permission was granted because these patients had no intention of committing a crime through 'masquerading' or 'impersonating.' 'Dressing' was considered beneficial to their mental health."<sup>36</sup> Here again, Benjamin underscores the paradigm shift his book is meant to illustrate. Whereas Hirschfeld tried to solve this problem of masquerading with a police certificate, here again Benjamin will now apparently solve

the problem altogether through medical, hormonal intervention.

Seen in this context, Benjamin's choice to represent an actor/actress is highly significant. Alex's essay underscores how it was only in theatrical spaces or on the streets in red-light districts in large cities that society offered trans women space to appear; this survival strategy meant working as prostitutes, with the accompanying effect of rendering invisible more bourgeois transgender women. Moreover, this coding of trans women as exciting sexual deviants drew from long-standing, explicitly bourgeois views of female actors as necessarily vulgar or sexual. In this view, the very appearance of women on stage was subject to a double-bind: it exposed femininity that was defined specifically in terms of chastity and modesty or, in its most extreme form, as something not to be seen in public at all.<sup>37</sup> As Alex explains, popular perceptions of trans women in the 1950s exacerbated these prejudices, which must have added extra weight to accusations that transvestites were acting and hence untrustworthy. No doubt to counter this danger, Benjamin's emphasis on the happy outcome of his treatment suggests that we can now trust this person's gender presentation to accord with who they are. That is to say: we can trust that this actress is not acting when she presents in her new gendered self; because her gender performance now accords with her body, she must no longer "masquerade" or "impersonate." Furthermore, we can now clearly tell her gender performance apart from her professional abilities as an

actress, giving both her gender and her professional identity a new kind of security and authenticity.

Benjamin's repetition of this motif also opens up a class difference to Hirschfeld's image. Hirschfeld's transvestite is explicitly marked as being "from the people" and appears in peasant garb. On the one hand, this, too, might be read as a strategy to insulate this person from charges of acting, particularly given that the photo seems quite staged and theatrical: to be from among the people might be read as being simplistic and naive, and therefore as genuine or incapable of guile. Hence even if the photo clearly appears to depict a person acting out a stock role or emotion, the simplicity of its protagonist might be taken as protection from charges of having nefarious intentions. Yet on the other hand, of course, the bourgeois suspicion against lower-class frauds and tricksters could equally apply here. Both possibilities are stereotyped projections of class difference, and it is only the figure's suicide that ultimately proves the genuineness of their suffering. The effect of Benjamin's image, by contrast, is to entirely do away with this problem for his actress. Now she can be confident in her professional identity without it threatening her gender identity, and vice versa. What's more, her profession as an actress gains middle-class respectability: in its authenticity, it is distanced from the various transvestites and female impersonators the public largely associated with transvestites.

Ultimately, however, like Hirschfeld's arrangement of J.'s photographs or sorrowful transvestite, Benjamin's



FIGURE 5.5: Progression of images in Harry Benjamin's *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, 1966. University of Victoria Libraries, Transgender Archives collection. Harry Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon*. New York: Ace Publishing Corp, 1966. Special Collections call number RC560 C4B46 1966.

photographs say more than he himself perhaps intended to convey. First, Benjamin refers to his patient apart from her gendered professional identity (actor/actress) and her personal gender presentation only as “X” – thus avoiding any reference to her sex. The effect is to make sex a kind of floating variable under the control of the doctor who names it and changes it. And regardless of what Benjamin says, I find the nature of these images quite ambivalent. Are they portraits? Publicity shots? Production stills? If the point of Benjamin’s treatment is to make it so that transsexuals no longer have to masquerade, it remains a striking choice to illustrate that success with photos in which we cannot tell, and in which it is not clearly explained, whether we are seeing a person acting out a role or acting

out themselves. Indeed, knowing that this person has happily transitioned to a woman means that, at least in the first image, they must be acting out this inauthentic identity of being a man. Finally, it is likely that none of these photographs were staged for Hirschfeld or Benjamin, though we cannot be sure. What is clear is that their intentions go beyond or diverge from what Hirschfeld and Benjamin want us to see. With these photos from *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, I would say that the images even stand at odds with Benjamin’s intentions.

The tensions we find in a juxtaposition of the images from these two books play out on a larger scale in Benjamin’s choice of images overall. For if we look at the place of the actor/actress in relation to these other photographs, we find that the image



occupies a crucial position. Benjamin's selection and arrangement of images tell a story of a progression (figure 5.5). First, we find a person depicted in male and female clothing before treatment. Second, across two pages recto and verso, we find a person depicted in male and female clothing in the process of transitioning through hormone therapy and surgery. Third, we are shown a person who has undergone surgical and hormone treatment, with a focus on the naked body. And fourth, we have the photographs of the actor/actress documenting a happy outcome of a successful treatment. We have here a process of undressing and re-dressing with treatment of the body in between.

If we look more closely at the central collage spread across two pages, we see that it too documents the transition of a transsexual, thus repeating *in nuce*

the overall story of this image selection (figure 5.6). The letters in Benjamin's captions direct us to read the photographs according to biographical chronology, and this chronology unfolds as if it were printed in a book, from right to left and top to bottom, one page at a time. First, we have an unassuming, ordinary person who presents in men's clothing. Then, we have a kind of revelation, perhaps of the truth hiding beneath this façade but also of a person described as being lost to their own fantasies, "in wish-dreaming mode." Third, we see this same person "as female," in a mirror image to the first photograph as the person as male. And finally, we see two images that focus on the medical aspects of the transition and the transformation of the body, which Benjamin nevertheless comments upon by noting the "exaggerated" breast implants.



FIGURE 5.6: Two facing pages from *The Transsexual Phenomenon*. The caption in the image reads: “a. Transsexual before any treatment or operation. b. Same patient three years previous to treatment in a wish-dreaming mode. c. Same patient as a female. d. and e. Same patient after breast operation and nearly two years of estrogen therapy (example of exaggerated breast implants).” University of Victoria Libraries, Transgender Archives collection. Harry Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon*. New York: Ace Publishing Corp, 1966. Special Collections call number RC560 C4B46 1966.

But here, again, the images say more. For one thing, the spread of photographs across two pages hardly limits itself to being read sequentially like a book and, by analogy, as a personal biographical narrative. The powerful correspondence in size and style between the images facing each other across the page is clearly intended to illustrate before and

after. So even as we are shown the story of a successful transition, the images maintain an awareness of this person as a transsexual who has transitioned. Moreover, the clear contrast between the content of the top and bottom rows also generates meaning. Above, we see bourgeois respectability. Below, we see the plainly eroticized desires and fantasies that this

person connects to their female self – the allegedly pathological transsexual desire hiding, as it were, beneath the clothing in the top row, just as the “exaggerated breasts” can be read as physical remnants of the earlier psychological disturbance this first revelation might insinuate. As with the photographs of the actor/actress, these images present an underlying point of tension or at least difference to the bourgeois stability and respectability that Benjamin means to produce and secure with his medical treatment.

Finally, and perhaps to state the obvious: a wide gap appears to open up between the intentions likely represented by the photographs in the bottom row and Benjamin’s medical intentions with his book. Benjamin’s reaction to the overtly erotic desire the photographs display is to pathologize it as transsexual and as psychologically out of touch with reality. But as Annette and Alex have shown in great detail, this was often a fear projected by medical authorities onto trans men and women of the time, reflecting worries the doctors had about how their work would be perceived in public; and the power that medical authorities had to shape or coerce the appearance and behaviour of individuals desperate for treatment was enormous. The psychological reality of these individuals was much more complex than what they showed to doctors or what doctors show us. When I look at these photographs, I wonder: how different is the desire they depict from the motivations that so many of us have today in taking explicit photographs of ourselves? The intention of expressing a gender that differs from the

one assigned at birth may be different, but other intentions reflected in this photograph are quite common: to look sexy, to stage a certain look, to live out a certain fantasy, and probably – if one is lucky – to get others’ approval, attention, and maybe even love. Benjamin struggles (or perhaps it is more accurate to say: does not even try) to integrate these aspects of the photographs with the evident claims they also make to represent this person’s gender identity.

Benjamin’s medical reframing of this cross-dressing is exemplary for the difficulties that both he and Hirschfeld encounter in using images to illustrate their categories of transvestite and transsexual. What the photos evince is simply more complicated and varied than these two categories and their medical reframings allow for. Both Hirschfeld and Benjamin turn to arrangements of photographs to illustrate the complexity of gender identities that cross over between male and female. Both men attempt to frame these images in narrative terms, but the images themselves – and their arrangement – open up layers of meaning that fail to conform to this framework. Some of these meanings reflect the complexity of these individuals’ lives, and others reflect prejudices projected onto them. But for both doctors, it is moments of gender conflict or transition that remain difficult to depict photographically. Hirschfeld wants us to see, in and on the body, a conflict between a desire or drive and how a person dresses and acts. That is what the label “transvestite” is meant to capture. But what we see instead are narrative tropes of biography and tragic tropes of suffering and suicide. While

## Hirschfeld's "Male Transvestites"

As in the magazine *Das 3. Geschlecht*, the images of "male transvestites" used by Hirschfeld often focus on fashion. We find figures posed in elegant dresses, artists, transvestites "from among the people" and - with John O. (as Hirschfeld calls her) - a single collage presenting a life story of gender transition. But unlike "female transvestites," who appear (when clothed) in a range of stock male social characters (as hunters, warriors, sailors, sportsmen), "male transvestites" are marked primarily by the social class of what they are wearing. This distinction obviously reflects gender norms about men and women, i.e., that women are primarily defined by their gender, men by their social role. And like the photographs of "male transvestites" printed in *Das 3. Geschlecht*, the dominant concern in the images published by Hirschfeld is with passing as women.

The first of these images is notable as a photo of Baron Hermann von Teschenberg, one of the four founders - with Hirschfeld - of what is probably the world's first gay rights organization, the Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee (Scientific-Humanitarian Committee) in 1897. (When Hirschfeld first published this image of Teschenberg in 1902, with a signed dedication indicating Teschenberg's gender and social status as a baron and his willingness for



FIGURE 5.7: "Two transvestites from aristocratic circles. Hermann Freiherr v. Teschenberg. N. N. from Rome. Hirschfeld's illustrated volume to *Die Transvestiten*, 1912.

the photo to be published, however, Hirschfeld presents Teschenberg as a homosexual and not as a transvestite.)

Some of the photos that Hirschfeld publishes are quite stunning and beautiful in the sense that they pass as female (figure 5.8). Others point to moments of theatrical gender play - here also with evidence of Hirschfeld's transatlantic gaze (figure 5.9). And

Tafel XXXI



Der Transvestit Adam Kl.



FIGURE 5.8: “The transvestite Adam Kl.” Hirschfeld’s illustrated volume to *Die Transvestiten*, 1912.

with some, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the individuals they depict are being exposed as ridiculous, even if these individuals themselves might be in on the joke or have made it themselves (figure 5.10).

The normative judgement reflected in these photos appears again and again in the images exhibited in *TransTrans*. Rainer’s essay traces

Tafel XXXIX

Ein italienischer und ein amerikanischer Student in Frauenrollen.



a) Student der Universität Pisa.



b) Student der Universität Yale.

FIGURE 5.9: “An Italian and an American student playing the roles of women. a) Student from the University of Pisa. b) Student from Yale University. Hirschfeld’s illustrated volume to *Die Transvestiten*, 1912.

these judgements in the popular magazine *Das 3. Geschlecht*. Annette and Alex both show how it appears in medical criteria for treatment and doctor’s opinions that selected out unstable individuals, or individuals with “unreasonable” demands or expectations. It can also be found in Benjamin’s emphasis of the exaggerated self-presentation and





Transvestiten, die sich als Balletteusen am wohlsten fühlen.



FIGURE 5.10: “Transvestites who feel most comfortable as ballet dancers.” Hirschfeld’s illustrated volume to *Die Transvestiten*, 1912.

sexual desires – the “wish-dreaming mode” – of the individual presented in Michael’s essay in figure 5.6. It is also worth noting that the normative framework projected onto images of men cross-dressing as women is largely absent from images of women cross-dressing as men.

These normative framings come from the incongruence or congruence between the person’s body, on the one hand, and their self-presentation and clothing, on the other. Beauty is a consequence of these two aspects existing in alignment; ridicule results

when they do not. We find a difference, however, in this dynamic when comparing single images with the many arrangements of images of the same person that Hirschfeld and Benjamin produce. Single images depict passing or ridicule by evoking a comparison with gender norms that are tacitly assumed and brought to bear by the viewer (thought of course also made clear or underscored in other images). Single images thus also move away from an explicit mode of comparison that would take both points of the comparison as equals and shift toward moments of emotional resonance that reflect and reinforce existing gender norms. The medical arrangements of photographs, by contrast, can be read as demonstrations of the gender performativity as repeated acts of stylization that Butler, for instance, theorizes as the truth of all gender. This remains true even as Hirschfeld and Benjamin emphasize the “before/after” perspective of treatment, try to make sense of nonbinary gender in terms of biographical transition or tragedy, or make an argument for how gender expressed in a choice of clothing is ostensibly visible on the body. Of course, Hirschfeld’s intention in arranging these single portraits in pairs or groups was to show patterns or similar types within human diversity. But this also accentuates the individuality of each presentation within the category as a matter of style and self-fashioning.

Benjamin offers a paradigm for treatment meant to solve this tragic conflict, his notion of success as passing forces a single interpretation upon the particular histories of his patients, hiding their desires beneath a veneer of bourgeois normalcy and respectability. In short, both medical paradigms struggle to depict cross-dressing as a complex expression of gender identity in its own right, just as they fail to fully recognize the power that clothing has to make gender in and on the body, rather than just express it.

To illustrate this even more clearly, I now shift to a wider consideration of images of cross-dressing from which Hirschfeld and Benjamin drew. Since both men were concerned with illustrating a long history of transvestitism and transsexualism, this also entails a perspective shift beyond photographs to other kinds of images.

## Picturing Cross-Dressing

The trope of presenting the same person in male and female clothing was one foundational gesture of Hirschfeld's visual rhetorics and an innovation that he introduced to sexology. So, for example, we find in the illustrated volume of *Die Transvestiten* this reproduction of a painting depicting the Chevalier d'Éon, a cross-dressing French aristocrat who became famous in late-eighteenth century England for engaging in fencing duels while dressed in female clothing, and who then lived as a woman.

Hirschfeld had already used these two images, in a lecture in 1904 and in his 1905 book *Geschlechts-Übergänge*,



FIGURE 5.11: Plate 51, The Chevalier d'Éon from the illustrated volume to *Die Transvestiten*, 1912. The caption in the image reads: "The Chevalier Charles, Charlotte, Genevieve, Louise, Auguste, Andrée, Thimothée, D'Éon & Beaumont. As a young female courtier (35 years old). Based on a copy by Angelika Kaufmann of Latour from the collection of George Keate, Esq. As an envoy to the Russian court (1770). Painted by Huquier. Engraved by Burke."

to introduce his practice of representing "mixed-sex" individuals through arrangements of images of the same person wearing male and female clothing. (It is plate 28; we discuss this juxtaposition in more detail in the gallery "Gender Play," which accompanies Rainer's essay.) Hirschfeld's decision to again use this

image in *Die Transvestiten* is an example of how he applied his evolving categories to reinterpret the same images, biographies, or individuals. He saw and showed different things as his categories changed, or depending on the audience he was speaking to. This juxtaposition of D'Éon is thus not so much or not just an illustration of a contrast or even transition between man and woman but much more broadly of how clothing can shape and reshape identity, and how this reshaping continually escapes the categories by which it is recognized. How one dresses does not express a truth about one's (gendered) self. It generates meaning through an interplay of expression and recognition, as a gender play between oneself – or selves – and others, between what is outwardly seen and what is kept private.

Hirschfeld's use of these images thus also exemplifies how his work aligned with, supported, and fed the needs of emerging movements for sexual minorities to find historical antecedents for their own identities – beginning with Hirschfeld's decision to publish the letters that Karl Heinrich Ulrichs wrote to his family in 1899 in the first issue of the newly founded *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* (Yearbook for sexual intermediaries).<sup>38</sup> Havelock Ellis's use of d'Éon to coin the term "eonism" – which Benjamin notes – was also received in this same light: the world's first organization for transvestites, Vereinigung D'Éon (Association D'Éon) was founded in Hirschfeld's Institute for Sexual Science. But in *Die Transvestiten*, Hirschfeld uses images depicting a range of (gender) play performed by d'Éon's cross-dressing that undercuts any simple

reduction to this modern medical framing, or to a binary of male and female identities. Immediately after the juxtaposition of d'Éon dressed as a man and a woman, Hirschfeld also includes three more images of the same person: "As an old woman," "As an Amazon," and "As a dragoner captain."

Finally, one key point in d'Éon's biography is that d'Éon was a spy – and spies, it goes without saying, cannot be trusted because they are experts at deception. To quote a description of this history that Benjamin published in an appendix to his book:

He is reported to have made his debut into history in woman's garb as the rival of Madame de Pompadour as a pretty new mistress for Louis XV. When his secret was made known to the King, the latter capitalized on his initial mistake by turning the Chevalier into a trusted diplomat. On one occasion, in 1755, he went to Russia on a secret mission disguised as the niece of the King's accredited agent and the following year returned to Russia attired as a man to complete the mission. Following the death of Louis XV he lived permanently as a woman. There was great uncertainty in England, where he spent his final years, as to whether his true morphological sex was male or whether the periods in male attire were not, in fact, the periods of impersonation. When he died, the Chevalier d'Éon had lived forty-nine years as a man and thirty-four years as a woman.<sup>39</sup>

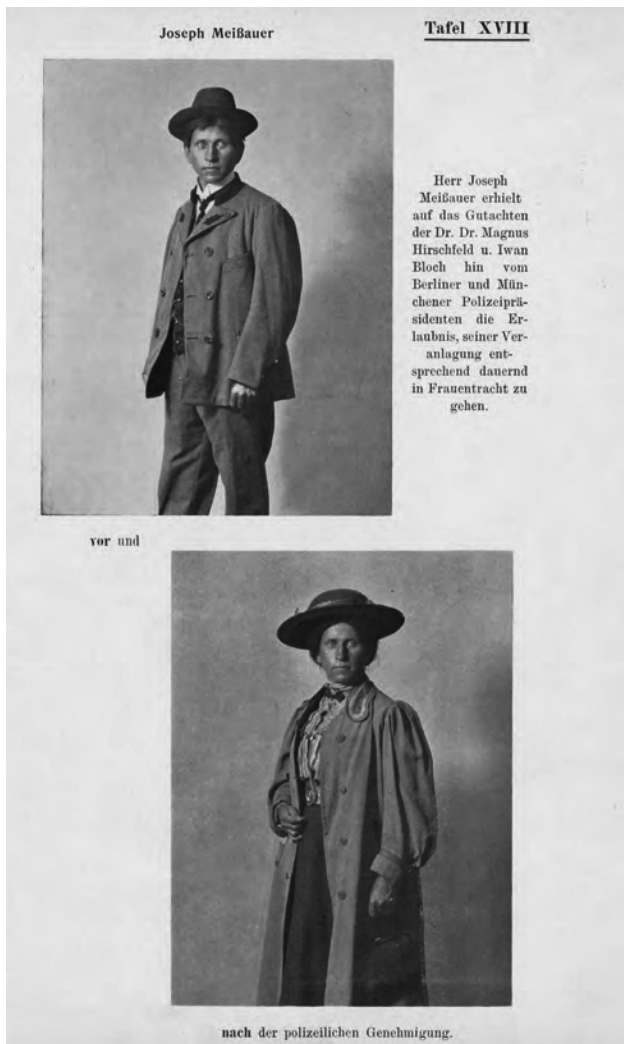


FIGURE 5.12: Joseph Meißauer. Hirschfeld's illustrated volume to *Die Transvestiten*, 1912. The captions in the image read: "Joseph Meißauer; before and after the police's approval. On the basis of the medical assessment of Dr. Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld and Iwan Bloch, Mr. Joseph Meißauer received permission from the Berlin and Munich police to constantly wear women's clothing in accordance with his disposition."

Within the gesture of representing the same person as male and female that we find in these histories, we almost always also find the danger of masquerade and criminal dissimulation. The subtitle of Hirschfeld's book on transvestites is *Der erotische Verkleidungstrieb*, which is usually



FIGURE 5.13: "A male prostitute." Hirschfeld's illustrated volume to *Die Transvestiten*, 1912. The captions in the image read: "A male prostitute. a) As she duped the Parisian men over years. b) As she was discovered upon her arrest."

translated as "erotic drive to cross-dress" but could just as easily mean "the erotic drive to disguise oneself."

The contrast between an upstanding, bourgeois mode of cross-dressing and more criminal intentions is amplified by other images in Hirschfeld's volume. For instance, take these images of Joseph Meißauer (figure 5.12). As the caption indicates, Joseph Meißauer was one of the individuals to receive a so-called transvestite pass issued by the police, in this case on the basis of the medical assessment of Hirschfeld and Iwan Bloch. By contrast, some images emphasize the threat of dissimulation that this transvestite pass was meant to counter. An example is this set of photographs, which Hirschfeld placed immediately after the paintings of d'Éon, the spy (figure 5.13).

The history of photography from which *TransTrans* draws was deeply intertwined with such fears. It was to break the “professional criminal’s mastery of disguises,” Alan Sekula first argued, that nineteenth-century photography sought to employ the supposedly precise, objective lens of the camera.<sup>40</sup> Hirschfeld inherited these techniques and this objective understanding of photography. But just as his work hoped to free transvestites from the criminal bind forced on them by society, he interpreted what photography documents and reveals differently: as a tool for the natural scientist who observes, describes, and categorizes the phenomena that he sees. Throughout his career, Hirschfeld was keen to show the widespread manifestation of what he conceived as sexual variations – what we would today call variations of gender and sexual identity – across social classes and cultures. This followed an intention he established during the previous decade of describing the behaviour of cross-dressing in naturalistic terms, as a kind of camouflage or mimicry like that used or manifested by animals.<sup>41</sup>

Translating these intentions into a kind of social anthropology (a field just emerging at this time), Hirschfeld structured the illustrated volume of *Die Transvestiten* into two sections: an “Ethnographic Historical Section” and a “General Part.”<sup>42</sup> Yet his selection of images does not correspond to what we might expect today of these conceptual distinctions. The ethnographic-historical section consists almost entirely of drawings made by a famous Berlin artist Max Tilke. The sole exception is one photograph of

the back of an African woman (Plate 2), intended to depict “decorative scars of an ornamental character on the back of a *Janude* woman,” as the caption indicates. I take the intention as being to show scarring as a practice of adorning the body similar to clothing, though this is not stated. But such an intention would have significant consequences for a notion of “transvestitism.” Darwin, for instance, turned to practices of body modification or adornment to distinguish “savages” from civilized societies, in which these aesthetic practices are expressed through the impermanent fashions of dress.<sup>43</sup> One effect, then, of this sole photograph here – of a black woman’s back, without a face, and hence entirely depersonalized – is that photography as an ethnographic tool becomes overdetermined as the medium for showing a body that is not only “savage” (to quote Darwin) but also feminine, black, and non-Western. Another, overall effect is to distinguish Hirschfeld’s project and the various other sketched images of non-Western transvestites from such a purely racialized ethnography.

Indeed, in the second, “general” section (assembled by Hirschfeld alone), photography reappears in a more familiar, subjective form – as a medium of bourgeois portraiture, mixed in together with drawings and paintings that Hirschfeld meant to be read both as depictions of social reality and, as with his interpretation of the transvestite’s clothing, an expression of an inner psychological identity. Yet there is more hidden in Hirschfeld’s selection of images. As Rainer has pointed out, Tilke considered himself a transvestite and

appears here, unnamed, wearing female clothing, as “a well-known artist in women’s clothing” (Plate 23).<sup>44</sup> Like Hirschfeld, whose homosexuality was an open secret, Tilke is thus also to be seen here as a (closeted) reminder that the ostensibly objective, disinterested perspective that was claimed by sexology and instrumentalized in its arguments for social reform was also driven by deeply personal concerns.<sup>45</sup>

This ethnographic undertone nevertheless persists through both parts of the volume inasmuch as we are presented with figures from a range of cultures, classes, and historical periods. When projected onto non-European cultures, it produces fantastic forms of otherness – as in, for example, this projection of European mythology and mythic history onto these two “Amazons of our time” (figure 5.14). Like Tilke’s “ethnographic” drawings in the illustrated volume, this projection represents a displacement of gender transgression away from Hirschfeld’s own social world. In this sense, it contrasts markedly with the images that Hirschfeld shows of Western society, in which norms of passing and bourgeois respectability dominate.

One of these images, however, stands out because the “transvestite” it depicts has “glued his head onto a fashion photo” (figure 5.15). This photomontage – a practice that Sabine Kriebel has called “*the modern pictorial idiom*” – reflects popular practices of the time.<sup>46</sup> In introducing her analysis of John Heartfield’s “revolutionary” montage practice, for instance, Kriebel cites a request sent to him that he “construct” a “portrait” of a soldier who had died, by

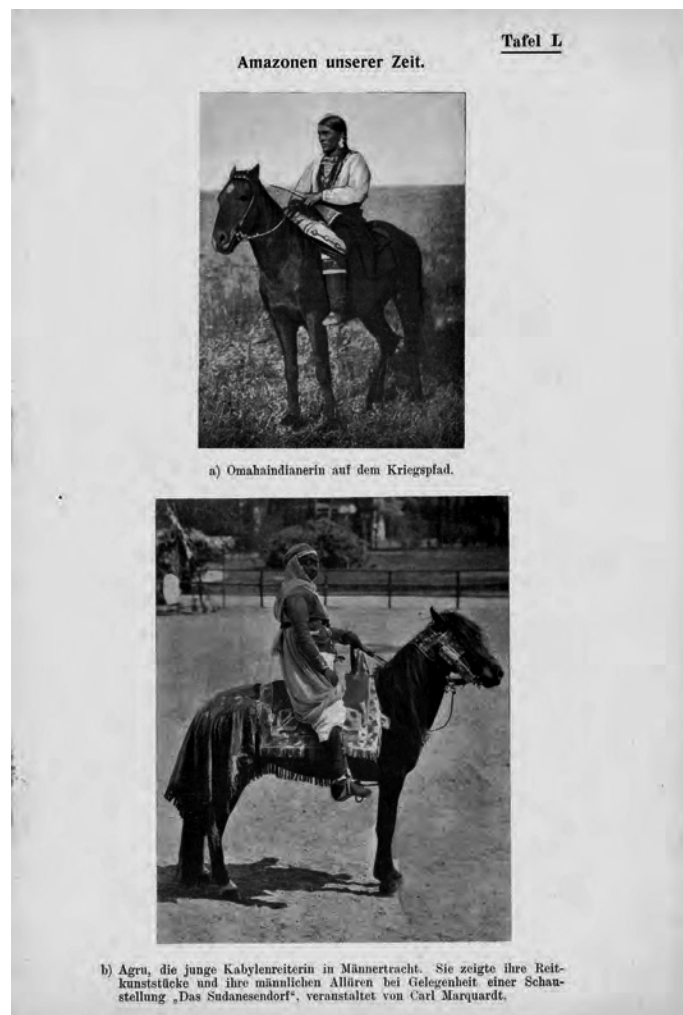


FIGURE 5.14: “Amazons of our time.” Hirschfeld’s illustrated volume to *Die Transvestiten*, 1912. The captions in the images read: “a) Omaha Indian Woman on the warpath; b) Agru, the young Kabul rider in male clothing. She shows her riding show tricks at the occasion of an exhibition ‘The Sudanese Village,’ organized by Carl Marquardt.”



FIGURE 5.15: “A transvestite from the casuistic.” Hirschfeld’s illustrated volume to *Die Transvestiten*, 1912. “Image 1. Characterized by the fact that he has glued his head into a fashion photo. Image 2. The same transvestite in his own female clothing.”

altering a photograph in which the soldier appears in military uniform, to instead present him in “cap, gown, and hood, and civilian clothes,” thus satisfying the desires of his mother, who could not “picture” him in his military outfit. The request reflected, Kriebel notes, the “widespread wartime practice whereby infantrymen at the front affixed photographs of their faces to picture postcards of soldiers in uniform and sent them to family members back home.”

Hence even before the war maimed so many bodies and spurred the development of the techniques in plastic surgery that would also have such far-reaching implications for transgender history, photomontage was already emerging with a kind of “magical” power analogous to surgery. For this particular transvestite, this power allowed her to literally picture herself in new clothing – a cutting-and-pasting confirmed as equivalent to reality in the second image in which she actually wears women’s clothing. Photography here becomes a means to literally picture what this person has imagined, in a medium that claims to objectively record what it sees, even as the “suture” of photomontage (to use Kriebel’s language) remains as a marker of this modern practice for reimagining reality. If we are meant to see past the cutting-and-pasting of the first image, which is how I take the intention behind the image, then the technical, material conditions of the photomontage appear to have disappeared – to have lost meaning, in light of photography’s own power to picture identity.

Some of the photographs shown in *TransTrans*, however, mark a contrast to

the works of art that Hirschfeld uses as illustrations. We have already discussed one example in two images of Voo-Doo from a later publication of Hirschfeld's that was intended for a popular audience, *Geschlechtskunde*, reproduced in the gallery accompanying Rainer's essay (figures 2.18 and 2.19). Hirschfeld first prints the "Expressive drawing by Voo-Doo," opposite "Feminine form of expression of the same person in dance." While the clothing in the photograph makes the image more unambiguously female, the emphasis on dance locates gender primarily in something performed with the body, rather than in/on the body itself; and while the drawing reveals a truth that the clothing hides, namely Voo-Doo's male genitals, it is also this image in which body, clothing, and self-expression most fully align as a creative fashioning of the self. In the image, the streamers in the drawing become extensions of Voo-Doo's body, the body becomes an exuberant expression of the self, and the drawing itself appears and is presented as an imaginative, creative act. When placed opposite this black-and-white photograph, it also has an effect similar to the erotic transferrals Rainer analyzes. It not only provides vibrant color lost in the medium of photography, which can be read as a critique – at perhaps the most obvious level – of the medium's supposedly mimetic veracity. The image's "expressiveness" also charges this reality with exuberant, imaginative energy, and the repetition of the pose in the photograph, but without clothing, codes the image as a self-revelation.

Two additional examples from Hirschfeld's *Geschlechtskunde* illustrate a similar dynamic, in which cross-dressing as its own mode of gender is recorded as works of art.

In the drawing (figure 5.16), the mask in the figure's left hand covers their breast, almost becoming part of the bodice or – with its shape and shading – a breast and a nipple. This is a mask that has been lowered from the face, plainly revealing the figure's identity while also pointing to the agency the figure has to make this choice. But the mask has transformed into something else: a gesture, a piece of clothing, and a kind of second skin. It thereby holds the potential to heighten gender ambiguity and erotic potential, affectively drawing viewers' attention and curiosity about the figure it depicts. Agency, behavior, clothing, and the body all come together here as intertwined markers of gender. Yet the drawing stages a revelation while calling its terms of identity and recognition into question.

The second image (figure 5.17), a painting, is notable for its signature, which gives this masculine self-presentation a name, "Joseph," and dedicates the work to Hirschfeld.

Hirschfeld reads these works of art as artistic productions of a "feminine" male artist and a "female artist inclined toward masculinity." This interpretation displaces gender creativity from the clothing to the art: in the first image, it is in the drawing itself that Hirschfeld labels "transvestitic"; and in the second, it is the painting that itself "projects" this soul into a body that, in colour and style, can hardly be told apart





FIGURE 5.16: "Transvestite drawing of a feminine [male] artist." Hirschfeld, *Geschlechtskunde*, 1930.

from the figure's clothing and the painting itself.

Benjamin, too, followed Hirschfeld's tradition and turned to artistic sources for historical evidence of the natural "phenomenon" he was addressing. He includes an appendix to his book by Richard Green, M.D., on "Transsexualism: Mythological, Historical, and Cross-Cultural Aspects" that offers a broad overview of gender ambiguity, cross-dressing, and gender transformation across cultures, to conclude:

Clearly, the phenomenon of assuming the role of a member of the opposite sex is neither new nor unique to our culture. Evidence for its existence is traceable to the oldest recorded myths. Diverse cultures present data demonstrating that the phenomenon is widely extant in one form or another and has been incorporated into cultures with varying degrees of social acceptance. Appraisal of contemporary clinical material regarding such patients assumes a fuller significance when cast against the backdrop of this historical and anthropological perspective. Ultimately a comprehensive understanding, evaluation and management of transsexualism will take into account the extensively rooted sources of this psychosexual phenomenon.<sup>47</sup>

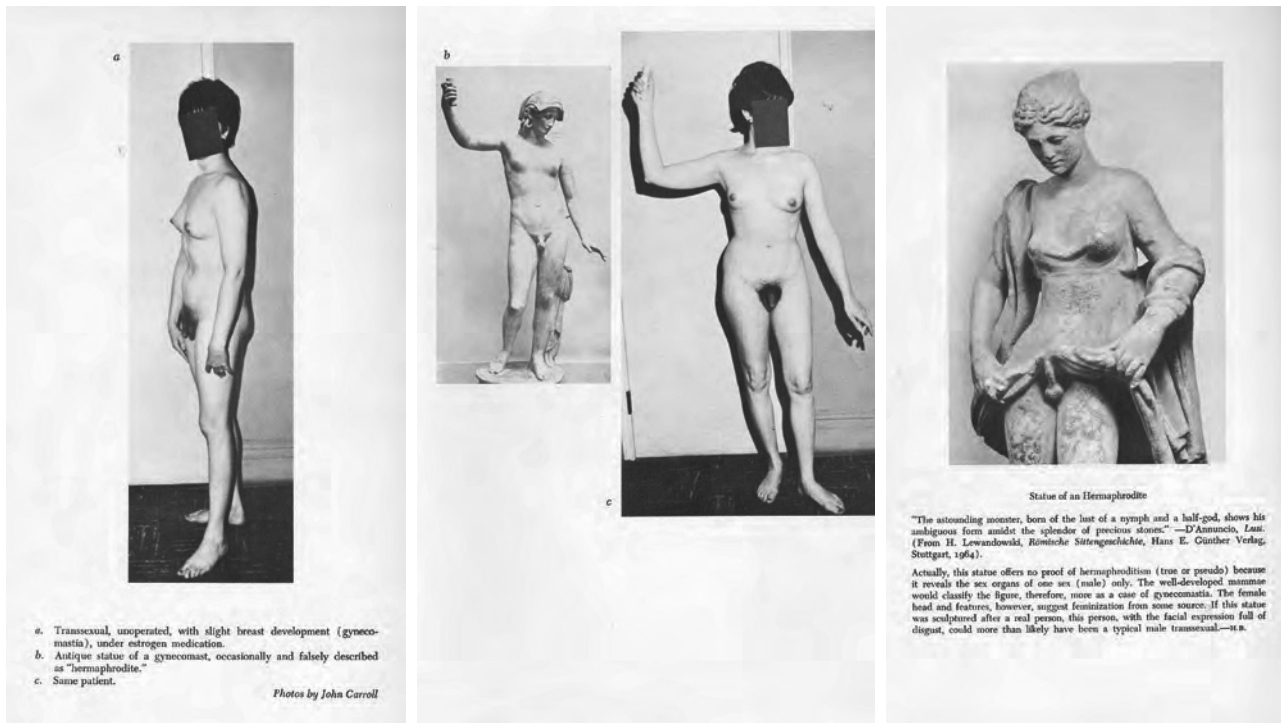
Benjamin's book itself might be expected to offer some insight into how a clinically based approach might "take into account"



FIGURE 5.17: "A painting projecting the soul of a female artist inclined toward masculinity with the signature: 'Self-portrait as Joseph,' dedicated to Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld from Mark V., January 1927." Hirschfeld, *Geschlechtskunde*, 1930.

this history. What we find, however, is something quite different. First, Benjamin uses works of art to clearly distinguish his paradigm from earlier, supposedly mistaken attempts to explain the "transsexual phenomenon" and to differentiate it from other instances of nonbinary gender, such as "hermaphroditism." This is his intended use of this material. Second, we find that he uses art to quite literally project gender presentation onto his patients.

To see this, take the following series of images from *The Transsexual Phenomenon*



FIGURES 5.18: Three pages from the photographs published in *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, 1966. [left] Set 2: Photos by John Carroll. "a. Transsexual, unoperated, with slight breast development (gynecomastia), under estrogen medication. b. Antique statue of a gynecomast, occasionally and falsely described as 'hermaphrodite.' c. Same patient. [right] Statue of a Hermaphrodite. Statue of a Hermaphrodite. 'The astounding monster, born of the lust of a nymph and a half-god, shows his ambiguous form amidst the splendor of precious stones.' —D'Annunzio, *Lust* [Desire]. (From H. Lewandowski, *Römische Sittengeschichte* [History of Roman morality], Hans E. Günther Verlag, Stuttgart, 1964). Actually, this statue offers no proof of hermaphroditism (true or pseudo) because it reveals the sex organs of one sex (male) only. The well-developed mammae would classify the figure, therefore, more as a case of gynecomastia. The female head and features, however, suggest feminization from some source. If this statue was sculpted after a real person, this person, with the facial expression full of disgust, could more than likely have been a typical male transsexual. — H.B." University of Victoria Libraries, Transgender Archives collection. Harry Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon*. New York: Ace Publishing Corp, 1966. Special Collections call number RC560 C4B46 1966.

(figure 5.18). The statue on the right is an example of earlier traditions representing "hermaphroditism" that would have been well known by Benjamin. Benjamin grew up and was educated in Germany, where he — like Hirschfeld, only seventeen years older — received a classically steeped (medical) education.<sup>48</sup> Benjamin uses this image to push back against this tradition, citing it as

a work of art to then discount its value as natural scientific evidence. Yet he does so, in fact, by misreading the work — by meaning to see through the claims it explicitly makes to uncover a different reality.

This becomes clear if we untangle the layers of references and citations that frame the image. Benjamin takes the photograph from a 1964-book written by

Herbert Lewandowski (which Benjamin references) – *Römische Sittengeschichte*, or “Roman moral history” – together with a quote that Lewandowski added to his own reproduction of the photograph: “The astounding monster, born of the lust of a nymph and a half-god, shows his ambiguous form amidst the splendor of precious stones’ – D’Annuncia, *Lust* [Desire].”<sup>49</sup> Benjamin does not offer any commentary of his own on this source or his decision to include Lewandowski’s quote-as-gloss. This suggests Benjamin likely accepted at face value the claims the image and quote appear to be making, perhaps even considering them to be state-of-the-art cultural criticism. But what does this choice of image and quote appear to say?

Lewandowski was a German Jew with connections to 1920s sexologists, including Hirschfeld.<sup>50</sup> One of his first books, published in 1926 and titled *Das Sexualproblem in der modernen Literatur und Kunst* (The sexual problem in modern literature and art), was an attempt to understand sexuality as a driving force in culture on par with its importance for personality. Following a similar aim, in this later book Lewandowski sets out to complicate the common narrative that moral decline caused the fall of the Roman Empire by providing an account of how Roman culture fused together apparently contrasting elements of culture – heathen cults and Christian worship, or sublime art and political, social decline – to then present this history as a mirror to his own times.

Lewandowski prints this image of a hermaphroditic statue in a chapter on the

“*Vita sexualis Romanorum*,” following a discussion of amulets of erect phalluses as cultural objects to which heathens ascribed magic powers, which Lewandowski uses to rebut modern charges that showing such ancient erotic representations might be considered obscene. This discussion of phallic amulets is followed by a discussion of hermaphrodites as a phenomenon that seems to have completely disappeared from “our world” but can be found, if “suppressed,” in the history of art. Lewandowski first cites modern sexology (Hirschfeld) and research into hormones as proof of a fundamental “bisexuality” of the human being – a term that in his usage seems to refer, without any disambiguation, both to sex and to sexual preference. This discussion of “hermaphrodites” then quickly becomes a discussion of male homosexuality, specifically of the emperor Hadrian, followed by a discussion of “marriage in antique Rome.” The upshot of this sequence is an argument that charges of sexual deviancy in this Roman history must be read primarily as political smears, and in a contrast to the strict moral expectations of chastity placed on Roman women before and after marriage.

The placement and function of this statue in Lewandowski’s book thus has very little to do with understanding or depicting hermaphroditism as a phenomenon on its own terms. Rather, it is used to illustrate an argument that turns to hermaphrodites in order to explain heteronormative political and social structures, and to distinguish heathen depictions of sexuality from mere obscenity. The discourse of art that Lewandowski employs to represent

hermaphrodites serves a similar function. It is marked, on the one hand, as “aesthetic speculation” reflecting modern fascination with such sexual phenomena and with erotic representations as themselves strange and exotic, if not threatening. This is underscored by Lewandowski’s decision to append as the image’s caption a quote from the first novel published by the Italian decadent writer, Gabriele D’Annunzio, referenced however by its German title, “Lust” or “desire.”<sup>51</sup> Lewandowski nevertheless also points to this art as reflections of a truth that he considers modern sexology and medicine to have now more fully revealed – if only we could see past its exoticizing, othering, aesthetic fantasy. The implicit point is that what we should see instead is the social and political function of this fantasy – and specifically, of fantasy that springs of desire to produce an “astounding” yet amazing “monster” – in defining heterosexual norms of marriage and male political power.

Benjamin’s decision to use this image and caption without any critical commentary can be taken as evidence that Lewandowski’s norms and assumptions also structured Benjamin’s thinking about gender and sexuality, or art and science. At the same time, however, what Benjamin does make of this reference only intensifies a reading of the image as a fantasy at odds with “normal” or “healthy” social reality. For one thing, Benjamin’s gloss completely inverts the literary caption that Lewandowski took from D’Annunzio: “Lust.” The German word can mean lust, desire, or pleasure. Taken by itself as a caption to this statue, the German word “Lust” asks

us to read the meaning of the work on multiple levels: physically, in the erection; in the figure’s gaze at its own body and its erection; and in the desire or pleasure that the sculpture might arouse in us as an erotic object and a work of art. But in viewing the sculpture as a depiction of a “typical male transsexual” rather than a work of art, Benjamin gives the impression that he is seeing through this aesthetic-erotic pleasure to find a facial expression of “disgust” – an emotion, he writes, that many male transsexuals felt toward their genitals.

It is significant that this is the only erection we find in Benjamin’s book, since showing an actual erection might have brought charges of obscenity. What we have here is a displacement of *Lust* – including eroticism and naked sexuality – onto a work of art, to distinguish it from the “transsexual phenomenon” Benjamin is trying to demystify and treat as a natural medical condition. Even his choice to leave the German word “Lust” untranslated contributes to this aim: *Lust* is not lust, which in English carries a much narrower meaning and is how English speakers would undoubtedly read this word. Benjamin was a native speaker of German; he knew what he was doing. What Benjamin sees in the *Lust* of this figure’s nonbinary body and sexuality is a pathological lust reflecting underlying disgust.

The statue must also be read together with the triptych that Benjamin published on the facing page. There are photographs in Benjamin’s papers that show various attempts to re-create the exact pose of this statue. We do not know if this was at Benjamin’s direction or if it was the idea of

the person it depicts. But it was obviously staged to make a point. In her discussion of photography and shame, Kathrin Peters refers to a medical tradition of photography in which women copy neoclassical sculptures.<sup>52</sup> I have no doubt that Benjamin must have at least been aware of this tradition. Peters argues that the intention of this practice is paradoxical: copying a work of art is intended to overcome the “conventional” shame taught by culture, allowing a presentation of the body in its naturalness and lifelikeness. Peters situates this practice in the context of how medicine, prompted in part by the photographic documentation of nonbinary bodies, developed visual strategies for constructing the beautiful body, and specifically the female body, as “normal.”<sup>53</sup>

Benjamin’s photographs echo this practice; they are likely meant to ennoble the body they present, showing it as a “natural” occurrence while also aligning it with the ideals of beauty the statue represents and the evidence it is taken to give that transsexuality is a naturally occurring, historical phenomenon. The posing might also have been intended to help the patient overcome the shame of exhibiting her entirely naked body, with its male genitals and enlarged breasts. But as a prelude to the statue of *Lust*, the photos say more. They stage a moment of exposure expressly meant to be sexual – yet not shameful, not disgusting. Benjamin means to present a modern diagnosis of this “phenomenon” of transsexualism in contrast to the false, mythical understanding of hermaphroditism that he also sees in this statue. Yet his

interpretation of the statue as *Lust* reminds us of the central premise of his new category: “transsexualism” is not about clothing, but about the body itself. Just as the statue pulls up its dress to reveal its shocking, exciting sexual secret, we as readers of the book might wonder what psychological secrets are left hiding beneath the neoclassical beauty that adorns this naked body like a gown. The arrangement of all four images practically invites us to become psychosexual voyeurs.

Cross-dressing here becomes undressing – a laying bare of the body that makes it visible as transsexual and available for treatment. This is a sense of sex that clothing might hide, and which clothing cannot treat, and Benjamin undresses it to show it. But he then paradoxically re-dresses it, in the cloak of art, in order to strip it of supposedly mistaken social conventions and reveal what he takes to be its natural history. Art functions here as a norm laid upon the body, to which the nonbinary body must conform to regain its natural beauty, rather than as means of self-expression or self-fashioning. Or, as with Benjamin’s actor/actress, successful treatment makes it possible to turn oneself into a work of art, apart from the threat of gender performance as masquerade. Yet hiding beneath this surface, as Benjamin’s analysis of this statue shows, there is always the danger of arousal, desire, and disgust, of pathological “wish-fulfillment.”

Hirschfeld’s depictions of cross-dressing as transvestitism tell a slightly different story. The truth they aim to depict can be seen only through the arrangement of multiple photographs, but this truth

still remains elusive, defined as a hidden desire. Conversely, single images often hide or fail to show the act of crossing over, or they invest it with the threat of deception or with outright ridicule. Here, too, we find works of art that reflect a power to perform rather than to picture gender, and it is these images that most strikingly fail to fit within the photographic medical framing Hirschfeld and Benjamin both employ.

In the final essay of this book, we now turn to our exhibition – to how we ourselves came to look beyond the gaze of medical diagnosis inherent to so many of these images and focus instead on the practices with which they were made, the ways in which they were shared and made public, and the private stories they leave untold.

#### GALLERY NOTES: Photomontage of Lili Elbe

- 1 Niels Hoyer, ed., *Lili Elbe: Ein Mensch wechselt sein Geschlecht: Eine Lebensbeichte* (Dresden: Carl Reissner Verlag, 1932); Niels Hoyer, ed., *Man into Woman: An Authentic Record of a Change of Sex*, trans. H. J. Stenning (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1933); Niels Hoyer, ed., *Man into Woman: The First Sex Change: A Portrait of Lili Elbe: The True and Remarkable Transformation of the Painter Einar Wegener*, trans. James Stenning (London: Blue Boat Books, 2004).
- 2 For a history of Dorchen, named at birth as Rudolf Richter, see Herrn and Taylor, “Transvestites/Transsexuals,” esp. 181–2.
- 3 Sabine Meyer, “Wie Lili zu einem richtigen Mädchen wurde”: *Lili Elbe: Zur Konstruktion von Geschlecht und Identität zwischen Medialisierung, Regulierung und Subjektivierung* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2015). For a briefer summary, see Rainer Herrn and Annette F. Timm, “Elbe, Lili (1882–1931),” in *Global Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender LGBTQ History*, vol. 3 (Farmington Hills, MI: Charles Scribner & Sons, 2019), 500–502.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

- 1 Magnus Hirschfeld and Max Tilke, *Der erotische Verkleidungstrieb (Die Transvestiten)*, illustrated volume (Berlin: Alfred Pulvermacher & Co., 1912), 100–15. In the account that Hirschfeld relates, J. notes that she was teased as a child with names like “Mädli,” ‘Mädchengesicht’ oder ‘Johanna’ (“‘little girl,’ ‘sissy-face,’ or ‘Johanna.’” *Die Transvestiten*, 105; and *The Transvestites*, 87, translation modified), and J. tells of a scene in San Francisco where she is called Jenny, at least in private: “Wer war froher als ich, wenn die Frau sagte: ‘Jenny – die weibliche Anrede war mir, wenn wir allein waren, lieber – Rich. und ich wollen ausgehen oder gar verreisen’” (“Who was happier than I when the woman said, ‘Jenny – I liked to be called by my feminine name when we were alone – Rich. and I want to go out or go on a trip.’” *Die Transvestiten*, 110; and *The Transvestites*, 90).

- 2 Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2008), 42–43.
- 3 The original German reads: “der heftige Drang ... in der Kleidung desjenigen Geschlechts zu leben, dem die Betreffenden ihrem Körperbau nach *nicht* angehören. Der Kürze halber wollen wir diesen Trieb als *transvestitischen* (von trans = entgegengesetzt und vestis = Kleid) bezeichnen. Dabei sei vornherein betont ... dass das Kleid uns hier nicht ... ‘als totes Ding’ entgegentritt, dass die Art des Kostüms nicht die beliebige Auesserlichkeit einer willkürlichen Laune ist, sondern als *Ausdrucksform der inneren Persönlichkeit*, als *Zeichen ihrer Sinnesart* zu gelten hat.” Emphasis in the original. Magnus Hirschfeld, *Die Transvestiten: Eine Untersuchung über den erotischen Verkleidungstrieb* (Berlin: Alfred Pulvermacher & Co., 1910), 159.
- 4 See chapter 3, “Gesten der Scham,” in Kathrin Peters, *Rätselbilder des Geschlechts: Körperwissen und Medialität um 1900* (Zurich: Diaphenes, 2018), 85–108. See also Katharina Sykora, “Umkleidekabinen des Geschlechts: Sexualmedizinische Fotografie im frühen 20. Jahrhundert,” *Fotogeschichte: Beiträge zur Geschichte und Ästhetik der Fotografie* 24, no. 92 (2004): 15–30, who emphasizes how the images were staged or constructed in ways to avoid voyeurism and guide the gaze toward a scientific perspective. See also the various discussions of Fredericke Schmidt in Michael Thomas Taylor, Annette F. Timm, and Rainer Herrn, eds, *Not Straight from Germany: Sexual Publics and Sexual Citizenship Since Magnus Hirschfeld* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), and especially the essay by Sabine Kriebel, “Sexology’s Beholders: The Exhibition *PopSex!* in Calgary,” 80–2.
- 5 In other words, my sense of this collage of John O. is that it resists this medicalizing impulse, and that as the only image of nudity in *Die Transvestiten*, it must be read separately from Hirschfeld’s *Geschlechts-Übergänge* (1905). In this regard, I also slightly disagree with Katie Sutton’s perspective on these photos. Sutton lists this arrangement as an example of how some photos of transvestites used by Hirschfeld are to be read primarily in a medicalized context, “their aesthetics governed less by the photographed subject than by the scientific priorities of the researcher and targeted more obviously toward Hirschfeld’s medical readers”; Katie Sutton, “Sexology’s Photographic Turn: Visualizing Trans Identity in Interwar Germany,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 27, no. 3 (2018): 442–79, here 464.
- 6 Hirschfeld uses the same technique of combining images to portray transvestites in the second volume of *Sexualpathologie*, but this time as a triptych of the person dressed in female clothing, naked, and then in men’s clothing. See Magnus Hirschfeld, *Sexualpathologie: Ein Lehrbuch für Ärzte und Studierende*, vol. 2 (Bonn: A. Marcus & E. Webers Verlag, 1918), 144.
- 7 Jordan Bear and Kate Palmer Albers, *Before-and-After Photography: Histories and Contexts* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 2.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” *October* 39 (Winter 1986): 3–64.
- 10 On the use of photography in medical contexts, see especially (in addition to Peters), Molly Rogers, *Delia’s Tears: Race, Science, and Photography in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010); Gunnar Schmidt, *Anamorphotische Körper: Medizinische Bilder vom Menschen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2001); Anne Maxwell, *Picture Imperfect: Photography and Eugenics, 1879–1940* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2008); Jennifer Tucker, *Nature Exposed: Photography as Eyewitness in Victorian Science* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); and Ludmilla Jordanova, *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989). For a perspective attentive to queer histories of sexuality, see Dana Seidler, “Queer Physiognomies; Or, How Many Ways Can We Do the History of Sexuality?,” *Criticism* 46, no. 1 (2004): 71–102. For the context of German sexology specifically, see also David James Prickett, “Magnus Hirschfeld and the Photographic (Re)Invention of the ‘Third Sex,’” in *Visual Culture in Twentieth-Century Germany: Text as Spectacle*, edited by Gail Finney (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,



- 2006), 103–19. For a broader consideration of photography and the claims it makes to provide historical evidence, see John Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), as well as Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (London: Macmillan, 1988). For the context of criminal archives, see Susanne Regener, *Fotografische Erfassung: Zur Geschichte medialer Konstruktionen des Kriminellen* (Munich: Fink, 1999).
- 11 See Shawn Michelle Smith, *American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photography on the Color Line: W. E. B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004); and Maurice O. Wallace and Shawn Michelle Smith, *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012). See also Lisa Bloom, *With Other Eyes: Looking at Race and Gender in Visual Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
  - 12 Donna West Brett, *Photography and Ontology: Unsettling Images* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 5.
  - 13 Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology, and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), here 13 and 18. See also Elizabeth Edwards, *Uncertain Images: Museums and the Work of Photographs* (London: Routledge, 2014).
  - 14 Following Susan Stryker, Persson Perry Baumgartinger has emphasized this genealogical method for transgender studies; see *Trans Studies: Historische, begriffliche und aktivistische Aspekte* (Vienna: Zaglossus, 2017), especially 39–44.
  - 15 See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980); and Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).
  - 16 Elspeth Brown and Thy Phu, *Feeling Photography* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014), especially their introduction, 1–28.
  - 17 *Ibid.*, 3.
  - 18 Brown has further developed this perspective in Elspeth H. Brown, *Work! A Queer History of Modeling* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).
  - 19 See Sabine Kriebel and Andrés Mario Zervigón, “Introduction,” in *Photography and Doubt* (London: Routledge, 2016), 2. For a concise summary of how various theorists have written about photography, as a medium “dependent on technological change” and characterized by “multiplicity and malleability,” see Sabine Kriebel, “Theories of Photography: A Short History,” in *Photography Theory*, ed. James Elkins, 3–49, here 4 (New York: Routledge, 2007).
  - 20 Peters, *Rätselbilder des Geschlechts*, 20; all quotes in this paragraph are from this page.
  - 21 “In Sachen Geschlecht dingfest zu machen, was nicht dingfest war, sichtbar zu machen, was nicht sichtbar war, zu vereindeutigen, was nicht eindeutig war. Aber gerade dann, wenn immer genauer hingesehen werden konnte, öffneten sich zugleich immer größere Bereiche des Nicht- oder Noch-Nicht-Wissens, der Nicht-Sichtbarkeit; Bereiche, die wiederum mit neuen Visualisierungstechniken geschlossen werden sollten. In diesem Prozess stellten geschlechtliche Uneindeutigkeiten gewissermaßen Präzedenzfälle dar, von denen ausgehend sich Aussagen über das ‘Wesen’ des Geschlechts ganz allgemein treffen lassen sollten.” Peters, *Rätselbilder des Geschlechts*, 20.
  - 22 See chapter 3, “Gesten der Scham,” in *Rätselbilder des Geschlechts*, 85–108; the remaining quotes in this paragraph are from page 86.
  - 23 For such a view emphasizing visual violence, see especially Susanne Regener, *Visuelle Gewalt: Menschenbilder aus der Psychiatrie des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2010).
  - 24 “Wer sich schämt, weiß sehr genau, dass er oder sie gesehen wird, anders als der Voyeur, der davon ausgeht, dass sein Blick nicht erwidert wird, dass er selbst nicht sichtbar ist (oder vielleicht doch?)” Peters, *Rätselbilder des Geschlechts*, 86.

- 25 For three recent books documenting and reflecting on this ongoing practice, see Mark Seliger, *On Christopher Street: Transgender Stories* (New York: Rizzoli, 2016); Dave Naz, *Genderqueer: And Other Gender Identities* (Los Angeles: A Barnacle Book/Rare Bird Books, 2014); and Jess T. Dugan, *To Survive on This Shore: Photographs and Interviews with Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Older Adults* (Heidelberg: Kehrer, 2018).
- 26 Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).
- 27 Jay Prosser, *Second Skins*, especially 230. This fact also means, Prosser argues, that one imperative of work in transgender history is to sustain a truth of individual experience in the face of how that experience is expressed, reflected, and often displaced or otherwise refracted through representations. Or similarly, as contributors to *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* have noted, we need to be attentive to the specific consequences that archives and historical practices of archiving have for transgender histories. For instance, K. J. Rawson glosses the term “archive” like this: “In its radical recontextualization of historical materials, the archive emerges as a discrete object of selection and representation that always involves silences and exclusions. This cycle of inclusion and exclusion, of representation and misrepresentation, is the permanent shadow of any trans archival project, even digital ones; while transgender archives fight historical neglect, silences, and misrepresentations, the selection and discrimination involved in archiving creates a residual silencing of others. And what of the history that is hoped to be forgotten? Transgender people who transition their gender presentation may feel betrayed by the archive’s stubborn and insistent refusal to forget. Thus, while archiving transgender materials is important for community and personal identity formation, political advocacy, and historical memory, it should be treated as a powerful mechanism of memory and identity with far-reaching impacts.” *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, nos 1–2 (2014): 25. See also the special issue on “Archives and Archiving,” *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (November 2015).
- 28 Jennifer Blessing, *A Rose is a rose is a rose: Gender Performance in Photography* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1997), 8.
- 29 Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon: A Scientific Report on Transsexualism and Sex Conversion in the Human Male and Female* (New York: The Julian Press, 1966), 11–12.
- 30 For a brief overview of these categories from a medical and popular perspective, see Rainer Herrn and Michael Thomas Taylor, “Transvestites/Transsexuals,” ed. Howard H. Chiang, *Global Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBTQ) History*, vol. 3 (Farmington Hills, MI: Charles Scribner & Sons, 2019).
- 31 In the 1980s, Benjamin developed the standards of care for medical gender transition that carried his name until 2011 and are still being used today in a modified form as the *Standards of Care for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender, and Gender-Nonconforming People* published by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (7th version, 2012). See also Herrn and Taylor, “Transvestites/Transsexuals,” 1643. These standards reflected clinical practices that developed in the Netherlands in connection with many of Benjamin’s patients, as Alex’s essay retraces. In contrast to Benjamin’s approach, the current standards do not require that individuals gain medical approval or live for a period of time in the other sex before beginning treatment, emphasizing instead that medical professionals should obtain informed consent before beginning treatment; and in contrast to Benjamin’s approach of “identifying appropriate candidates for sex-reassignment,” the standards also emphasize that “while many individuals need both hormone therapy and surgery to alleviate their gender dysphoria, others need only one of these treatment options and some need neither” (8). The guidelines point to a diversity in how individuals understand their own gender identity as the basis for treatment of gender dysphoria.
- 32 Hirschfeld and Tilke, *Der erotische Verkleidungstrieb*.
- 33 See Samuel Clowes Huneke, “Death Wish: Suicide and Stereotype in the Gay Discourses of Imperial and Weimar Germany,” *New German Critique* 46, no. 1 (2019): 127–66.

- 34 Michael Pettit, "Becoming Glandular: Endocrinology, Mass Culture, and Experimental Lives in the Interwar Age," *American Historical Review* 118, no. 4 (2013): 1052–76.
- 35 Ibid., 1055.
- 36 Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, 12.
- 37 Indeed, bourgeois theatre in the eighteenth century – with its anti-theatrical ideals of natural or genuine representation, i.e., of representation that negated or denied its address to the audience and its very nature as artificial, and with its focus on tragic plots revolving around the exposure and elimination of female characters – developed precisely together with this gendered double-bind of theatrical representation. See Christopher Wild, *Theater der Keuschheit – Keuschheit des Theaters: Zu einer Geschichte der (Anti) Theatralität von Gryphius bis Kleist* (Freiburg: Rombach, 2003). More broadly, as Paul Friedland has argued, the prejudice against "actors" as threats to a democratically conceived public sphere based in authenticity, transparency, and reason has a long historical tradition, reflecting the fact that theatre has often appeared to be an evil twin of politics. For emerging ideals of democracy in the eighteenth century, calling politics "theatrical" often meant insinuating that it was driven by behind-the-scenes machinations, that is was all rhetoric, manipulation, or disingenuous, and that it was incapable of truly representing the body politic; similarly, people who could act for a living were not trusted to act honestly in public and politics. See Paul Friedland, *Political Actors: Representative Bodies and Theatricality in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).
- 38 These have been published in English as Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, "Four Letters to His Kinsfolk," in *Sodomites and Urnings: Homosexual Representations in Classic German Journals* (Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press, 2006), 1–20. Ulrichs was quickly claimed by the emerging homosexual movement, and he thought of himself as a different kind of sex, an "Urning," characterized by having a female soul in a male body. Of course, however, this description might also fit within a genealogy of transgender identities.
- 39 Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, 177–8.
- 40 See Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," 27. See also Peter Doyle, "Hard Looks: Faces, Bodies, Lives in Early Sydney Police Portrait Photography," in *Photography and Ontology: Unsettling Images*, edited by Donna West Brett, 56–71, who shows that "tricksters" were vastly overrepresented in one Sydney photographic archive, reflecting worries about "confidence trickery" as a "particularly modern, urban type of crime" (59) arising in the context of a new "dispensation of mobility and fluid identity" (60).
- 41 For a brief discussion of this point, see Rainer Herrn and Michael Thomas Taylor, "Magnus Hirschfeld's Interpretation of the Japanese Onnagata as Transvestites," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 27, no. 1 (2018): 63–100, esp. 80–1.
- 42 Katie Sutton's analysis of the images in this illustrated volume to *Die Transvestiten* offers an excellent discussion of the photographic practices that informed their production and the interplay of subjectivity and medicalization they represent. She also situates the images in the context of queer history and studies of photography and the distinctive modes of analysis they claim. Sutton, "Sexology's Photographic Turn."
- 43 Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (New York: Penguin, 2004; 2nd ed. originally 1879), see Part III, "Sexual Selection in Relation to Man, and Conclusion," 621 ff.; here 675.
- 44 Herrn, *Schnittmuster des Geschlechts*, 55.
- 45 For one discussion of how Hirschfeld was publicly perceived, see Rainer Herrn, Michael Thomas Taylor, and Annette F. Timm, "Magnus Hirschfeld's Institute for Sexual Science: A Visual Sourcebook," in *Not Straight from Germany: Sexual Publics and Sexual Citizenship since Magnus Hirschfeld*, eds., Michael Thomas Taylor, Annette F. Timm, and Rainer Herrn (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press, 2017), 37–9.
- 46 Sabine Kriebel, *Revolutionary Beauty: The Radical Photomontages of John Heartfield* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 1–6. On Heartfield, see also Andrés Mario Zervigón, *John Heartfield and the Agitated*

- Image: Photography, Persuasion, and the Rise of Avant-Garde Photomontage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).
- 47 Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, 184–5.
- 48 For Renaissance views of hermaphroditism, see Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1990), 135–42.
- 49 Herbert Lewandowski, *Römische Sittengeschichte* (Stuttgart: Hans E. Günther Verlag, 1964).
- 50 See “Lewandowski, Herbert,” in *Lexikon deutsch-jüdischer Autoren*, vol. 15 Kurw–Lewa, ed. Archiv Bibliographica Judaica and Renate Heuer (Munich: K. G. Saur, 2007), 411–24, here 411–12. Lewandowski was a prolific German writer (he wrote at least seventy books) who emigrated to Holland in 1923 and then France in 1937, where he was interned as a German citizen when the war broke out. He escaped, however, to Switzerland where he remained until he died, nearly 100 years old, in 1996. Lewandowski attended the 1932 congress of the World League of Sexual Reform in Brno, Czechoslovakia. See also Donald A. Prater, “Der Haltlose: Zum Tod des Schriftstellers Herbert Lewandowski,” *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 21 Mar 1996. Lewandowski himself provides an account of his escape from France to Switzerland in “Herbert Lewandowski: Lyon und Flucht in die Schweiz,” in *Herbert Lewandowski – Lee van Dovski: Festschrift zum 92. Geburtstag*, ed. Peter Adamski, 101–14 (Kassel: Geschichtswerkstatt am Friedrichsgymnasium, 1988).
- 51 *Il Piacere* was published in 1889 and translated into German in 1898.
- 52 Peters, *Rätselbilder des Geschlechts*, 105–8.
- 53 On this aesthetic construction of gender, see also Kathrin Peters, “Sichtbarkeit und Körper: Wilhelm von Gloeden, eine Revision,” in *Zeigen und/oder Beweisen? Die Fotografie als Kulturtechnik und Medium des Wissens*, ed. Herta Wolf, 283–305 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), as well as Kathrin Peters, “Anatomy Is Sublime: The Photographic Activity of Wilhelm von Gloeden and Magnus Hirschfeld,” in Taylor, Timm, and Herrn, eds, *Not Straight from Germany*, 170–90.