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NECROTIC MACHINES/ZOMBIE GENDERS: TRANSFEMININE DISRUPTIONS OF
FEMINIST PROGRESS

by

ALEXANDRA CHACE

Under the Direction of Cassandra White, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Predominant narratives of trans womanhood—from biomedical sources, Feminist depictions, and film representations—typically present trans women as monstrous and antagonistic to normative cisgender society. Accordingly, this thesis traces this oppositional frame to the roots of ‘trans’ as a cultural category, through 20th century biomedical discourses, Feminist conceptions of trans woman identity, and horror films in order to better understand the contemporary proliferation of antipathy and violence towards transgender women. In so doing, this thesis revisits trans exclusionary theorists such as Mary Daly and Janice Raymond, developing Daly’s concept of ‘robotitude’ into a notion of transitory ‘necrosis’, positing the zombie as a moving post-human model for mapping anti-trans violence and transphobia in regard to becoming-trans. This thesis further argues for trans identity not as a stable ontology, but as a hauntological trajectory of becoming in which trans lives are rendered illegible and occluded.

INDEX WORDS: transgender, horror, feminism, hauntology, psychoanalysis, posthumanism

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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Georgia State University

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Alexandra Chace
2019

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FEMINIST PROGRESS

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1 INTRODUCTION

Narratives tend to begin by establishing a moralistic and binary opposition of the protagonist-good-Self and the antagonist-bad-Other, even prior to laying out the specific terms of the conflict at hand. I am not here referring to one particular type of story—film, perhaps—but the multiple, competing, intersecting metanarratives of the symbolic order from which these more atomistic narratives arise.

Regarding gender, the traditional narrative in Western society presupposes two parties: men-good-Self and women-bad-Other (all three of these qualities arrive simultaneously). In this binary opposition, men are established as the agents which move and progress a given story of society forward, in part through their “conquest” of women, who are viewed primarily as impediments to male/social development who must be subdued if the typical narrative is to progress towards its inevitably male-dominated conclusion. As Julia Kristeva (1982) so clearly put it in her extension of Douglas’s work on defilement:

In societies where it occurs, ritualization of defilement is accompanied by a strong concern for separating the sexes, and this means giving men rights over women. The latter, apparently put in the position of passive objects, are none the less felt to be wily powers, “baleful schemers” from whom rightful beneficiaries must protect themselves...One of them, the masculine, apparently victorious, confesses through its very relentlessness against the other, the feminine, that it is threatened by an asymmetrical, irrational, wily, uncontrollable power (Kristeva and Roudiez 1982, 70).

Of course, this arrangement of the Male-Self/Female-Other has been subject to frequent and repeated critique by Western Feminists¹ for over a century. In the most common

1. I capitalize ‘Anthropology’ and ‘Feminism’ throughout in order to distinguish the field of inquiry from its disciplined, institutionalized, and normative realization within academia.

Feminist reconfiguration, the symbolic arrangement is instead posited along the equally binary position of women as protagonist-good-Self, still in opposition to the Male-bad-Other. Here, men impede women's naturalized progression along a one line of thinking toward her inevitable self-actualization and narrative progression. For many Feminists, men "hold women back" from an imagined could-be of post-patriarchal/matriarchal society.

But narratives always allow a series of illuminations/occlusions and inclusions/exclusions in giving form to a certain symbolic arrangement. Politicians, fiction writers, and film makers know this structure quite well, and deviations from this most basic script are seldom, temporary, or illusory. From the outset, the prevailing Feminist narrative only flips the script, leaving intact the binary opposition of the narrative. This is exhibited perfectly in the horror genre: beginning in the 1980s, our protagonist becomes unambiguously female, as we see in *Dressed to Kill*, *The Silence of The Lambs*, *Friday the 13th*, *Prom Night*, etc. On the surface, these narratives appear quite empowering, and certainly contrast themselves with earlier films which relied on male characters to save the woman and subdue the antagonist. But as Monique Wittig suggests, "Matriarchy is no less heterosexual than patriarchy: it is only the sex of the oppressor that changes. Furthermore, not only is this conception still imprisoned in the categories of sex (woman and man), but it holds onto the idea that the capacity to give birth (biology) is what defines a woman" (Wittig 2000, 129).

In her book, *Hipparchia's Choice* (2000), French Feminist and philosopher Michele Le Doeuff referred to these differentiating trends as the "feminism of difference", which is "based on the idea that women's true femininity is suppressed, has been so for centuries as a result of our sex's submission to the other or to patriarchal structures and is now even more so because of a modern social life which erases differences and makes everyone the same" (Le Doeuff 2000, 51). Le Doeuff accused these feminists of searching "for a language in which women can 'speak their sex'", reducing women's diversity to sameness, speaking "in terms of a single femininity" (54). These critique largely serves as my own

point of departure, but I do want to make clear that I am not suggesting that all feminists hold this goal, but that these ideas are nonetheless particularly pervasive. Abu-Lughod (2008) explains:

From Simone de Beauvoir on, it has been accepted that, at least in the modern West, women have been the other to men's self. Feminism has been a movement devoted to helping women become selves and subjects rather than objects and men's others. The crisis in feminist theory (related to a crisis in the women's movement) that followed on the heels of feminist attempts to turn those who had been constituted as other into selves—or, to use the popular metaphor, to let women speak—was the problem of "difference." For whom do Feminists speak? (Abu-Lughod 2008, 52).

In this mission to establish the womanly Self, Marilyn Strathern (1987) already pointed out an awkwardness between Feminism and Anthropology (Strathern 1987). I, too, admit a certain awkwardness, but not as a matter of ethnocentrism or of competing goals, but in situating my own project within the narrative constraints of some Feminist (and Anthropological) practices, which account for patriarchy by merely flipping the script of this social opposition. But in this relation, I wonder what 'sex' do trans women speak, and which sex are they allowed to speak? Who speaks for trans women? Where, in this arrangement of Self and Other are trans women located?

Regarding Feminist-Anthropologist awkwardness, Abu-Lughod (2008) argues that "...the awkwardness Strathern senses in the relationship between feminism and anthropology might better be understood as the result of diametrically opposed processes of self-construction through opposition to others – processes that begin from different sides of a power divide" (Abu-Lughod 2008, 52). But in this Feminist process of Self formation, we risk reifying heterosexual opposition through the function of difference, preventing appropriate connections and links between men and women. Indeed, here the Anthropological focus on difference may in fact be a hindrance to theorizing trans womanhood because trans womanhood is so ubiquitously constructed *as different*—different from us,

different from women, different from society. As Wittig (1982) rightly points out, “[t]he ideology of sexual difference functions as censorship in our culture by masking, on the ground of nature, the social opposition between men and women” (Wittig 1982, 124). In the case of trans people, the ideology of difference serves to exacerbate the existing social inequities between cisgender and transgender people.

In this ideology of difference, trans women in particular continue to be casualties, because trans women’s position as Other is carried over into the Feminist arrangement of Self/Other, reproducing many of the same patriarchal fears and preoccupations with transfemininity. And because trans women are placed into the position of Other along with men, the notion of their essential maleness is reified and reproduced, placing them in an adversarial relationship to Feminist progress and self-actualization. In the traditional narratives of patriarchy, Feminism, and Anthropology alike, therefore, trans women are cast as *always already forever* Other, and the feminist and Anthropological challenges to traditional arrangements serves to stabilize differences between cisgender and transgender subjects, and possible points of similarity are occluded.

The horror genre, at least post-1980, clearly appropriates the feminist narrative, in that the transwoman-antagonist is juxtaposed against the ciswoman-protagonist (the damsel). This is not altogether dissimilar to homophobic narratives of gays and lesbians. As Benshoff (2002) point out in reference to an anti-gay propaganda film, “[t]he point comes across loudly and clearly: homosexuals are violent, degraded monsters and their evil agenda is to destroy the very fabric of American society” (Benshoff 2002, 92). The difference, however, is the specific relation of a rivalry between or a threat that trans women pose to cisgender women. In these narratives, trans women are readily put forward as practitioners of violence against cis women. Moreover, beginning in the 1980s, the trans antagonist narrative subsumed in a kind of “girl power” ideology, in which the cis woman defends herself against the trans woman’s phallic advancements, and spectators are clearly meant to identify and empathize with the cis female protagonist. In this era, the slasher film relies explicitly on a kind of feminist invocation, and a patriar-

chal sympathy towards the damsel, in order to progress towards the eventual conclusion, which almost always results in the death of an ambiguously transfeminine Other. But the narrative of the transgender assailant or the trans-woman-as-antagonist is hardly limited to film, rather, the “transgender antagonist” narrative actually serves as justification for trans women’s exclusion from feminist spaces, and even as a kind of post hoc justification for violence against trans women, along the lines of the trans panic defense. Given these sentiments, how do we approach violence against trans women are so readily casts as antagonists, dividers, and even assailants from the start? What do we do when our own feminist empathies recreate this narrative, causing us to prefer cisgender women, cis men, and transgender men over trans women?

The present is an interesting moment for transgender women. Time magazine declared the “transgender tipping point” in 2014, but now, five years removed, I’m admittedly not sure which way we’re tipping. The trans woman issue is an ongoing hot topic in feminist spaces, especially among those oriented towards the second wave or radical feminist tradition. Recently, I was accused of having “drunk the trans kool-aid” for failing to unequivocally denounce a trans women maligned by certain trans-exclusionary radical feminists (TERFs). Similarly groups of feminists have accused me of being a “handmaiden” to patriarchal power by advocating for trans women (and cis men’s) place within queer and feminist communities. No doubt, these are extreme examples, and many would argue that TERFs constitute an extreme minority of modern feminist organizing. But this fails to account for the pervasiveness of TERF-style rhetoric that slips through the cracks or bubbles just under the surface of many feminist discussions. In certain communities and locations, TERF rhetoric and other rhetoric that frames trans women as antagonists to cis women’s political goals remains pervasive. In the United Kingdom, for example, the Gender Recognition Act, which allows trans people to legally change their gender, has come under fire by certain feminists activists on charges of erasing women or being at odds with the women’s movement in the UK. Sara Ditum (2018), writing in *The Economist*, argues that “rather than confront male violence or lobby the

medical system, the focus of trans activism has overwhelmingly been the feminist movement, spaces and services designed for women, and the meaning of the word “woman””. She continues:

Too often, gender neutrality is accomplished by neutralising services or analyses centred on women. But it is also important to understand that, far from loosening the shackles of gender, modern trans ideology often tightens them. Feminism offers the radical proposition that what you like, what you wear and who you are should not be dictated by your chromosomes, hormones or any other marker of biological sex. Trans ideology reverses that. Perhaps men do like beer and women can't read maps, runs the theory, but some individuals have simply been assigned to the wrong category (Ditum 2018).

Ditum 2018 refers to a scenario in which a sexual healthcare provider used the term ““everyone with a cervix” rather than “women”” (Ditum 2018). Here, it is unclear if Ditum is primarily referring to transgender men or women, but often the ambiguity of such statements minimizes these differences, or seeks to blame trans women for a choice of language meant primarily to refer to transgender men and other persons assigned female at birth which happen to have cervixes. Later on in the article, Ditum (2018) makes it somewhat more clear that the “males” she refers to are, presumably, transgender women, by arguing that “there is a word for a situation where women talking about female bodies is considered impermissibly antisocial, where describing the consequences of sexism for women is systematically impeded, where resources for women are redistributed to male users while resources for men are left in male hands, and where “male” and “female” are rigidly associated with masculinity and femininity...The word is misogyny” (Ditum 2018). Clearly, trans women are coming for our vaginas, our bathrooms, even gender itself; these narratives of assault intersect and reprise themselves repeatedly.

Even for seemingly trans-positive feminists, this frame works to create a very serious crisis of feminist affinity, and many feminists draw harsh lines of difference when it comes to trans women's place in Feminism. For example, in an interview with the UK's *Channel*

4 *News*, activist and author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie explains:

My feeling is that trans women are trans women. I think the whole problem of gender in the world is about our experiences ... it's about the way the world treats us. And I think if you've lived in the world as a man, with the privileges that the world accords to men, and then sort of changed, switched gender, it's difficult for me to accept that then we can equate your experience with the experience of a woman (*Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie Interview 2017*).

Given how pervasive these narratives are, I wonder: what avenues exist for disruption?

Once upon a time, I begrudgingly turned to Feminist Anthropology for this project. Indeed, Feminist Anthropology may be particularly suited to this kind of engagement, because Feminist Anthropologists always find themselves in crises of affiliation. Within Feminist Anthropology, critical cross-cultural engagement often puts the Feminist-minded Anthropologist's relationship to Feminist politics on the line. The "awkward" coexistence of Feminism and Anthropology has been duly noted, and shows few signs of waning (see Strathern, Abu-Lughod, and Patino). In *Writing Against Culture*, Abu-Lughod (2008) argues:

The more interesting aspect of the feminist's situation, though, is what she shares with the halfie: a blocked ability to comfortably assume the self of anthropology. For both, although in different ways, the self is split, caught at the intersection of systems of difference. I am less concerned with the existential consequences of this split...than with the awareness such splits generate about three crucial issues: positionality, audience, and the power inherent in distinctions of self and other. What happens when the "other" that the anthropologist is studying is simultaneously constructed as, at least partially, a self? (Abu-Lughod 2008, 52)

Addressing this problem, Jennifer Patino (2018), following Abu-Lughod (2008), warned us to be wary of our seemingly "natural" affinities, assumptions, and empathies toward

certain groups (e.g. women) which may foreclose critical engagement with certain subjects that “have been cast more as victimizers than as victims (Patico 2018, 88).

Patico (2018) continues by arguing that we should embrace the tension between Feminism and Anthropology, rather than trying to fully integrate both models of self-formation (Patico 2018). But as Abu-Lughod points out, not all forms of feminism are equally well suited to accounting for these natural affinities. She compares cultural feminism to a kind of “reverse Orientalism”, arguing that “This valorization by cultural feminists, like reverse Orientalists, of the previously devalued qualities attributed to them may be provisionally useful in forging a sense of unity and in waging struggles of empowerment...[y]et...it leaves in place the divide that [structure] experiences of selfhood and oppression” (Abu-Lughod 2008, 55).

These are points well-taken, but where I break with Feminist Anthropology is in my complete and utter apathy towards capital-A Anthropology and capital-F Feminism, in part because they both seem to assume some kind of stable positionality (the Western Self and/or the Western Female Self), and my own life has never been marked by consistency of positionality, in part because my own life has been marked by shifting sand—passing as queer, passing as straight, passing as a woman, not passing as non-binary, passing for middle class, and so on. Writing this thesis was something of a transformative project itself—a year ago, I claimed womanhood, but now I think I’d claim anything but, and ‘came out’ as non-binary somewhere in the writing process.

Similarly, I’m not sure I would identify as a ‘feminist’ anymore. ‘Postfeminist’ sounds somewhat better, but I’m not sure. And while I have certain sympathies with the feminist narrative on numerous issues, ultimately, I’d rather not be beholden to any sense of what a ‘Feminist’ (or for that matter, an ‘Anthropologist’) is, and I make no commitments or obligations to either groups. I wonder if I might be able to avoid the ‘awkwardness’ altogether by refusing or confusing disciplinary boundaries. I’m not sure, but I wonder: has this project been non-binary all along?

1.1 Goals and Guiding Questions

My goal is to describe instances of trans women as antagonists, while linking this to the emergence of the medicalized transgender subject in the 20th century, and how these narratives of trans women as antagonists connect together through time and space. While an earlier iteration of this line of thinking explored the medicalization of gender through a traditional medical anthropological study of trans women's experiences seeking medical care and how that medical 'care' is defined, I soon found that medical discourses of trans identity were implicated in a wide range of cultural discourses, especially within Cinema representation and Feminist theory. Specifically, I am interested in the visual culture aspects of transfemininity, both in terms of aesthetics, moving images, and textual imageries.

Horror cinema provides a particularly useful locale for theorizing injustice. In the slasher film, the trans murderer is absurd and excessive—she is over-the-top in her brutality and monstrosity as she destroys and violates cisgender women on screen. These monsters are provided with minimal background information, and the little provided only underscores the unavoidable fact that they are deviant, pathetic, reprehensible, and otherwise undeserving of empathetic feelings or positive identification. I focus on these instances where trans women and transfeminine individuals are most maligned—as dangerous, pathological, even murderous—in order to find new pathways of critique and intervention. Horror movies may seem over-the-top, but are they not analogous to the real-world over-the-top maltreatment of transgender women?

In the beginning I was heavily influenced by psychoanalysis, and Judith Butler, Julia Kristeva, and Laura Mulvey, and this is central to much of my methodology. Psychoanalysis, particularly through the works of Judith Butler, Julia Kristeva, and Laura Mulvey, is central to my methodology. Freud points out that “psychoanalysis does not try to describe what a woman is—that would be a task it could scarcely perform—but sets about enquiring how she comes into being, how a woman develops out of a child with a bisex-

ual disposition" (Freud et al. 1953, 116). Though my interest is not so narrowly focused on Freud's woman "problem", I am inquiring specifically into the discursive conditions through which subjects come into existence, not merely how they are (mis)treated as subjects. In particular, I apply Kristeva's notion of the Abject to images of gender with the medical and cinematic context of the late 20th and early 20th century. I begin with a fairly typical psychoanalytic reading of Brian De Palma's *Dressed to Kill*, drawing from Butler and Kristeva's formulation of the Abject and melancholy. Continuing a similar psychoanalytic line of thinking, I move to apply Mulvey's notion of the male gaze to slasher horror films. But, and this is another testament to the transformative element of this project, I later came under the influence of works by Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and Mark Fisher who provide much of the theoretical basis for the later chapters, when I dive deeply into the similarly horrific imagery of Mary Daly and Janice Raymond's work.

I am also deeply indebted to the transfeminist tradition, and situate my work within it through Julia Serano and Talia Bettcher's work on transmisogyny, and to this regard, this work may also be understood as a psychoanalytic/schizoanalytic reading of transmisogyny. Serano distinguishes three forms of sexism: traditional sexism, oppositional sexism, and cissexism. My primary focus is on linking traditional sexism, which is "the belief that maleness and masculinity are superior to femaleness and femininity", and oppositional sexism, which "is the belief that female and male are rigid, mutually exclusive categories, each possessing a unique and nonoverlapping set of attributes, aptitudes, abilities, and desires" (Serano 2007, 14-15).

This project asks, among other questions: How and why are trans women rendered monstrous in media? What brings about their maltreatment, including physical violence, throughout Western society? How are medical discourses implicated in visual and political discourses? How does society normalize and subsume trans women within cis/heterosexual discourses? And lastly, what routes exist for trans women within these constraints?

In truth, I feel morally and politically obligated to theorize. I write this at a particular

moment in history where trans women and other gender-variant individuals are more visible, yet perhaps more marginalized, than ever. In a 2015 survey of trans individuals across America, James et al. (2015) found that 48% of respondents “reported being denied equal treatment, verbally harassed, and/or physically attacked in the past year because of being transgender” (James et al. 2016, 198). 47% reported being sexually assaulted in their lifetime, and over half of all respondents experienced intimate partner violence (198). One trans woman was found in a ditch “after being brutally raped for three days”, but when she met an officer at the ER, he told her that she “deserved it for attempting to be a woman and should have died”, refusing to make a report of what happened to her (201). Another trans person explains that “when people have tried to grope me in the street or have verbally harassed me, it’s usually because they see me as a sexual target or because they can’t figure out whether I am a ‘man’ or a ‘woman’ and they think they have the right to demand an explanation” (201).

Trans people are in a state of emergence, especially in my own community. In 2017, Scout Schultz, a non-binary transfeminine activist at Georgia Tech, was shot and killed by police who failed to accurately diagnose the situation that led to their death (Boone and Stirgus 2017). Scout and I were acquaintances, and often sparred over mutual political disagreements about the same issue that this work seeks to address. Soon after they died, two friends of Scout, both young trans and non-binary activists, committed suicide. One of them was a woman I had dated years before, who had already struggled with living life black, trans, and a woman. I believe that, by understanding and diagnosing the underlying motivations behind gender violence, discrimination, and harassment, we can develop new and improved strategies to avoid it, and to make lives more livable, and more livable lives. Theory empowers us to change society for the better. And for me, I sincerely hope that means fewer dead and traumatized friends.

1.2 The Field/The Film

While this project was inspired by ethnographic work, I am aware that my work is somewhat different from many of my peers within Anthropology and within my own department. When describing my research to colleagues, friends, and even uninitiated strangers outside the discipline, I often find others somewhat surprised that I am not doing “traditional ethnography”, or that my thesis is not based on “fieldwork”. Even within the discipline, the trope of the young traveler who seeks knowledge by going “over there” to study “those people” remains strong. Sometimes, the implication is somewhat more grim: that I am not personally implicated in this work and that my arguments derive more from the armchair than real-world observations.

I do not mean to imply that this is true of the entire discipline, or that there are not significant anthropological inquiries which disrupt this norm (there are!). But some of these (rhetorical) “accusations” may be true. After all, I do not have a field that is in any way spatially distinct from where I live and work. While I have done ethnographic work on related themes, the arguments that follow are not firmly rooted within “ethnographic” data collected for such. The subject of this inquiry, film, inheres a problematization of “the field” and disqualifies me from the participant observation (as traditionally understood) or ethnographic interview. And unlike archaeologists, the only digging I’ve done involved some misplaced DVDs at my local video rental store (the last in Atlanta, I might add).

The issue of the discipline, and of disciplines more broadly, thus bares heavy on my mind. Is this Anthropology? Am I an Anthropologist? James Clifford (1997) argues that “[t]he legacy of intensive fieldwork defines *anthropological* styles of research, styles critically important for disciplinary (self-)recognition” (Clifford 1997, 59). But does this imply that it is possible to be an anthropologist without recognition? Is it simply that I *am* an anthropologist but no one can *recognize* me as such because of the nature of my work? As we shall see later, the issue of legibility—and how we become legible as something or

another—is near and dear to this project. But for now, my point is not to bog down into personal disagreements, but rather to suggest that the field is not quite as given as previously thought, and conceptions of the “field” are by no means static across disciplines. Clifford (1997), for example, recalls an anecdote of an earth scientist “in the field” searching for fault lines via helicopter following the 1994 earthquake in Los Angeles. Clifford (1997) explains:

What made this fieldwork was the act of physically *going out* into a *cleared place of work*. “Going out” presupposes a spatial distinction between a home base and an exterior place of discovery. A cleared space of work assumes that one can keep out distracting influences. A field, by definition, is not overgrown. The earth scientist could not have done his helicopter “fieldwork” on a foggy day. An archaeologist cannot excavate a site properly if it is inhabited or built over. An anthropologist may feel it necessary to clear his or her field, at least conceptually, of tourists, missionaries, or government troops. Going out into a cleared place of work presupposes specific practices of displacement and focused, disciplined attention (Clifford 1997, 53).

The question, then, is this: Do I have a field? And if so, where is it? Clifford (1997) suggests that “[t]he community does not simply use (define) the term “fieldwork”; it is materially used (defined) by it” (55). While admittedly my own department has been fantastic in encouraging me to go in whichever direction I see fit, the nature of disciplinary work in Anthropology is not always so malleable. For Moser (2007), fieldwork is the “basic constituting experience, not only for anthropological knowledge but of anthropologists themselves” (Moser 2007, 243). The field, however, is not a uniform space, and may not be a “cleared place of work” for all anthropological researchers. Berry et al. (2017) argue that “the givenness of fieldwork as an individualistic rite of passage often obscures its constitutive and interlocking racial and gender hierarchies and inequities” (Berry et al. 2017). Certainly, fieldwork as envisioned by a relatively narrow set of early 20th century Anthropologists offers little for those who are not able to “clear the field” so

easily.

So what would it mean to have an Anthropology of film? If we accept a new field-work with no presumption of a “cleared place of work”, perhaps we may consider new venues of anthropological inquiry. The notion of a “cleared place of work” has, after all, was long ago complicated by the reflexive turn: the field, or in my case the film, does not precede cultural discourse. We should also remember that Anthropologists, despite the emphasis on ethnography, have never limited themselves solely to ethnographic data. Geertz (2005), for example, argued that ritual is a “story [we] tell about [ourselves]”, and thus have a primarily interpretive function which ought to be of interest to anthropologists (Geertz 2005, 82). In a similar way, films, too, are stories we as a culture tell about ourselves, and can reveal a lot about predominant cultural discourses and moral sensibilities.

But films and rituals alike are first and foremost cultural artifacts. Accordingly, my argument is not that the films I will be looking at are in themselves full representatives of ‘our culture’ (no more than ethnographic data is fully representative), but instead that they tell a disparate and disconnected story that can be constructed based on cross-comparisons with other available data: in this case, previous work by anthropologists, feminists, and philosophers, as well as medical discourse, practices, and diagnostic criteria. In this sense, what I am doing is a kind of textual archaeology, and while I may not literally be digging up these cultural artifacts, I am nonetheless assembling or collecting these disparate texts to make broader arguments about ideology and cultural practice.

2 CARVING (OUT) TRANS BODIES

In the 20th century, among all its technological progress, gender variance became increasingly subject to the medical gaze, where previously it had been relegated to moral and religious regulation. In becoming a medical “problem” warranting inquiry from surgeons, endocrinologists, and psychiatrists, gender variance gave birth to new configurations of the body—giving birth to a specific and carefully explicated notion of the “transsexual”. Among these early medical “fathers” of transsexuality was Harry Benjamin, a German-American psychiatrist and founder of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, now known as the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH), which established the first international standards of medical care and diagnostic criteria for gender non-conforming individuals, now known as transvestites and transsexuals.

Harry Benjamin’s early work on trans people distinguishes two subtypes of gender variance, the “psychogenic” (psychosomatic) transvestite and the “somatopsychic” transsexual, divided by recommended treatment, perceived legitimacy of their identity claims, and speculated etiologies. Regarding psychosomatic transvestites, the “conflict [of gender] results from social pressure and legal prohibition” concerning attire and other aspects of normative gender (Benjamin 2006). Benjamin (2006) establishes an implicit hierarchy between each subcategory, accusing the psychogenic transvestite of narcissism for desiring an end to legal prohibitions concerning dress. Benjamin (2006), however, gave more credence to the identity claims of somatopsychic transsexuals (later known as ‘true’ transsexuals), arguing that they are “of feminine constitution” and particularly feminine in their relative disinterest in sex (Benjamin 2006).

The perception of and the apparent “naturalness” of femininity was deterministic in available treatment. Benjamin, for example, claims that “another factor should be considered, namely the physical and especially facial characteristics of the patient,” ar-

guing that “a feminine habitus...increases the chances of a successful outcome [while] a masculine appearance mitigates against it” (Benjamin 2006). Psychosomatic transsexuals, meanwhile, were seen as comparatively more masculine and less sincere in their identity claims, and because of this Benjamin writes that “treatment is therefore rarely attempted...but if so it would be principally psychoanalytic...endocrine therapy is rarely indicated” (Benjamin 2006). In instances of hypogonadism, “masculinization may be attempted with testosterone (Benjamin 2006). Yet for the most part, this sort of medical correction was relatively rare. For feminine male homosexuals, it was already known by the 60s that “giving testosterone to effeminate homosexuals does not make them any less effeminate but just increases their need for more homosexual relations (Stoller 2006, 57).

In these cases, the body was therefore excluded as a locus of “fixing” the medical problem which came to be known as transsexualism. Transversely, in the case of ‘somatopsychic transsexuals’, however, a variety of medications, surgeries, and other corporal interventions were developed to create normatively female bodies to correspond to their gendered identities, already assumed to be of higher legitimacy and concern. By Benjamin’s day, several forms of surgical intervention had already been attempted, most famously in the case of Lili Elbe, who was subject to a primitive version of sex reassignment surgery, and died from complications following an attempted implantation of an ovary into her abdomen. But by the 1950s, organo-therapy and other forms of organ transplant had been all but abandoned. Instead, somatopsychic transsexuals were given access to Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) and various other gender-affirming treatments, including sex reassignment surgery, and the desire to have those surgeries was considered prerequisite to most forms of medical treatment.

2.1 From Mind to Body

As soon as these new biomedical technologies became available, it became paramount to determine who was deserving of surgical intervention. One of the first tasks of the new sexologists was to establish a differential diagnosis of transsexualism as distinct

from other conditions. Magnus Hirschfeld (2006) set out to distinguish transvestites from normatively-gendered homosexuals. He argues that while he was “at first...inclined to assume that we again had homosexuality before us...we saw in most of our cases that there was not a trace of it; that on the other hand, there was an even stronger antipathy than normally appears in other heterosexuals”. Here, true homosexuality was assumed to be “inborn...and only congenital homosexuality can be true” (Hirschfeld 2006, 29). Similarly, he distinguished transvestites from sexual fetishists, explaining:

“The sexual interests of fetishists are concentrated without exception on a specific part of the body of the woman or also on specific pieces of women’s clothing,” according to Krafft-Ebing (*Psychopathia Sexualis*, p. 108). The strong erotic charm that a part or especially the material covering it exerts, for which I suggested using the expression “part-covering” (“Teilanziehung”) in *Essence of Love* (see chap. 6, “On PartCovering,” pp. 134–284), or “partial attraction,” is in this case the determining factor. An attraction to a “part,” which extends to a woman from “top to toe,” is a contradiction in itself, an impossibility. Furthermore, we also see in fetishists, but not in transvestites, that the object of their tendency in the first place is loved in itself in relation to a second person, in more pathological cases also detached from the latter (for example, a tuft of hair cut off, a stolen handkerchief), but in no way mainly loved as a part of them themselves (30).

And lastly, Hirschfeld was clear in distinguishing transvestites from the mentally ill and insane. He argues that “[n]o matter how much transvestite men feel like women when dressed in women’s clothing and women feel like men when dressed in men’s clothing, they still remain aware that in reality it is not so”. For Hirschfeld, “[i]f they did consider themselves actually to be women...it would be an illusory idea, and the condition would have to be addressed as mental illness, as being insane, as paranoia”, comparing such cases to “persons with megalomania...[who] think they are the Messiah or millionaires or even the emperor or pope in one person” (33).

Hirschfeld's typology reverberates in Benjamin's typology, which had profound influence on early psychiatric conceptualizations of trans identity. Skipping forward to the the 90s and 2000s, Ray Blanchard and Michael Bailey followed in Benjamin and Hirschfeld's footsteps by establishing yet another dichotomous typology of trans women, in which Blanchard argues for the existence of an "autogynephilic" transsexual juxtaposed against a "homosexual transsexual" on lines of sexual orientation. According to Blanchard (1989), "[t]he concept of autogynophilia underlies Blanchard's (1985b, 1988b, 1989) hypothesis that there are only two fundamentally different types of gender identity disturbance in males: homosexual (aroused by men) and autogynephilic (aroused by the idea of being women)" (Blanchard 1989, 618). Instead of believing transgender women's assertions about their own gender and sexual orientation, Blanchard (1989) explicitly refers to transgender women as men, and argues that all asexual, bisexual, lesbian, and queer-identified transgender women are actually "autogynephilic males".

Although both apparent subtypes of transgender women report sexual attraction to men, Blanchard (1989) argues that attraction to men in these circumstances is bifurcated in etiology. Trans women only attracted to men (in his words, "homosexual transsexuals") "are directly aroused by the objective features of the male physique, especially the sight and feel of the male genitalia" (617). All other trans women ("autogynephilic males"), however, experience attraction at "the thought of being a woman, which is symbolized in the fantasy of being penetrated by a man" and that, in these circumstances, "the male sexual partner serves the same function as women's apparel or make-up, namely to aid and intensify the fantasy of being a woman" (617). In this model, "homosexual transsexuals" pursue medical and surgical transition in order to please or attract heterosexual men, meanwhile the "autogynephiles" pursue these treatments in order to live out a paraphilic sexual fantasy of being a woman.

Blanchard's typology also attributes specific social traits to the two types of trans women that it proposes. J. Michael Bailey expanded on Blanchard's theories in his controversial pop psychology book *The Man Who Would Be Queen: The Science of Gender-Bending*

and Transsexualism (2003). Bailey characterizes homosexual transsexuals as more likely to be poor, non-white, and more “feminine”, of lower IQ, and more likely to transition at lower ages (Bailey 2003). In Bailey’s view, as children homosexual transsexuals’ “femininity was remarkable to anyone who observed them”, which “contrasts greatly with the childhood histories of [autogynephiles]” (Bailey 2003). Even as adults, argues Bailey, “autogynephiles are [not] especially feminine adults”, noting that “most have been married, and to most observers, appear to be conventional husbands”, who “rarely have stereotypical female occupations”, instead opting to serve in the military or to pursue “[t]echnological and scientific careers” (Bailey 2003). Bailey also recalls a remark from Ray Blanchard, who “saw a seemingly close relation between autogynephilia and computer nerdiness” (Bailey 2003). Bailey (2003) continues:

Autogynephiles have claimed that they chose stereotypically masculine occupations to hide their feminine side, but I doubt this. It seems more consistent with the overall picture to say that autogynephilia is not associated with stereotypically feminine interests. Finally, autogynephiles do not typically look or act very feminine, especially in comparison with homosexual transsexuals. To the extent that autogynephiles achieve a feminine presentation, it is with great effort. Cross-dressers attend workshops in talking, walking, standing, and gesturing like women. The work usually pays off eventually in a passable feminine presentation, but it is work. (Bailey 2003)

Bailey’s characterizations of trans women seems largely based on personal anecdotes and ethically murky inquiries. Regardless, Bailey and Blanchard’s work reinscribes a differential understanding of transfemininity, picking and choosing the “winners” of medical treatment based on the perceived authenticity or naturalness of their femininity. Above all, the goal was to contour and shape what was already there—either a deviant masculinity or a new, transfemininity. The hierarchical nature of the clinic, especially in the mid 20th century, provided an excellent venue for exercising these biases and setting them into flesh.

2.2 Transition Eugenics

By the 1980s, transgender medicine mostly stabilized in protocol. Trans woman historian Susan Stryker (2008) explains:

...by 1980, a routine set of procedures and protocols for medically managing transgender populations had fallen into place. A person seeking to change genders would need several months of psychotherapy for a diagnosis of GID before being referred to an endocrinologist for hormone therapy, followed by at least a year of living socially as a member of the desired gender. At that point, a psychiatrist would evaluate the suitability of the person seeking to change gender for surgery, after which legal changes in gender identity could be pursued (Stryker 2008, 85).

The requirement for “living socially as a member of the desired gender” came to be known as Real Life Experience (RLE). Although what counts as RLE was never formally explicated and interpretation was usually in the hands of individual medical doctors and psychologists. This allowed individual physicians and psychiatrists to enforce arbitrary power over an individual’s gender presentation and behavior. The idea behind this model was deeply normative, intended to intervene only insofar as it could control and direct gender variance along pre-approved routes.

In a similar sense, medical typologies themselves carry a normative bias, and reflect broader cultural narratives and tropes around gender variance. I mean to say that is not by accident that Blanchard and Bailey play directly into transmisogynistic scripts, their role is to serve as academic justification for pre-existing cultural scripts, and in doing so, they further explicate and strengthen the scripts they write within. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the theory of autogynephilia has been subject to significant methodological critique from other psychiatrists, gender theorists, and trans feminists. Serano (2010) argues that studies on autogynephilia are pathologizing, in that they hyper-focus on transgender women in particular and that they needlessly sexualize transgender women and

contribute to anti-trans woman stigma. Serano (2010) illustrates her concerns through analogy:

Many natal women have sexual fantasies about being raped (reviewed in Leitenberg & Henning, 1995). It is one thing to respectfully attempt to explore and understand such rape fantasies. It would be an entirely different thing to insist that there are two subtypes of women—those who have rape fantasies and those who do not; to use the label “autoraptophiles” when describing women who have such fantasies and to insist that they are primarily motivated by their desire to be raped; to include “autoraptophilia” as a modifier in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders; and to encourage the lay public to actively distinguish between those women who are “autoraptophiles” and those who are not. Such actions would undoubtedly have a severe, negative impact on women (who are already routinely sexualized and marginalized in our culture). Yet, proponents of autogynephilia have argued that transsexual women should be viewed and treated in an analogous manner. Such a view would surely add to the sexualization and discrimination that MtF spectrum people already face and would potentially jeopardize lesbian-, bisexual-, and asexual-identified transsexual women’s access to medical and legal sex reassignment.

Furthermore, Blanchard’s theory failed to have cis female control subjects. Charles Moser (2009), for example, applies Blanchard’s diagnostic criteria for autogynephilia to cisgender female subjects, finding that 93% of cis women studied meet Blanchard’s criteria for autogynephilia, casting doubt on the validity of Blanchard’s theory as a phenomenon specific to trans females.

Moreover, Blanchard and Bailey’s work seems to reiterate two predominant trans-misogynistic tropes in media: the hyper feminine ‘deceiver’, whose ‘true sex’ lies beneath a normatively feminine appearance, and the ‘pathetic transsexual’, whose ‘true sex’ is admittedly recognizable. For Serano, “[m]edia depictions of trans women... usually fall

under one of two main archetypes: the “deceptive transsexual” or the “pathetic transsexual.”” (Serano 2007, 38).

Although both models “are presented as having a vested interest in achieving an ultrafeminine appearance, they differ in their abilities to pull it off” (Serano 2007, 38). Deceivers “generally act as unexpected plot twists” or as sexual predators who prey upon innocent men by tricking them “into falling for other “men” (38). Deceivers are contrasted by the pathetic transsexuals, who “aren’t deluding anyone” (38). A pathetic transsexual is depicted with masculine mannerisms and body, though she “will inevitably insist that she is a woman trapped inside a man’s body”, and “the intense contradiction between the “pathetic” character’s gender identity and her physical appearance is often played for laughs” (38). Bailey and Blanchard’s articulation of the autogynephile and the homosexual transsexual follow neatly along these tropes.

Regardless, these medical typologies play a tremendous role in shaping trans health-care and medical policy. By (re)producing their own biases into medical doctrine, researchers articulate a clear biopolitical imperative to carve out and account for trans populations in ways that prevent destabilization of the heteronormative two-gender system. Serano (2007) explains:

The idea that trans people should decide for themselves whether or not to physically transition...has been opposed by the gatekeeper establishment from the beginning. The most common argument is that the system as it stands acts as a safeguard to prevent people who are not transsexual (e.g., cissexuals who are merely embarrassed or confused about their atypical sexuality or who exhibit “delusional” or “antisocial” behavior) from undergoing potentially irreversible medical procedures. Once again, such practices reveal the cissexist biases of the gatekeepers: Trans people are denied immediate treatment of their gender dissonance in order to protect the well-being of a rather small minority of cissexuals (158).

By restricting access to transition to only the least disruptive trans people, gatekeeping

reproduces narrow notions of womanhood onto transsexual female subjects. Far from the work of a few independent researchers, gatekeeping ideologies have circulated into broader culture, specifically law and policy, which have largely been written with regard to medical doctrine. Medical gatekeeping not only determines who receives medical treatment, but also who receives legal recognition of their sex on major identity documents and vital records, including driver's licenses and birth certificates. In this sense, trans bodies are constructed through biocultural interaction, where cultural norms construct bodies (socially and surgically) along normative lines. For example, most states require surgical procedure in order to change sex (many require vaginoplasty or phalloplasty, others are non-specific), compelling trans people to submit to the rules of medical practice whether they desire genital surgery or not ("Changing Birth Certificate Sex Designations: State-By-State Guidelines" n.d.). Apparently as punishment, mismatched identity documents opens trans people up to violence and discrimination. Having a name and sex incongruent with one's appearance allows trans people who have not 'completed' transition to be singled out, and many institutions now rely on ID sex designation in allowing access to gender-segregated services, including bathrooms, sports teams, and so on. And given the requirements for legal reassignment of sex, those with non-normatively gendered bodies are erased entirely.

The effect of these medical typologies is not only normative, but also plainly eugenic in nature. For gender variant individuals, especially transgender women, who do not fit the diagnostic criteria, the biomedical model pushes its subjects into situations where discrimination and violence are more likely to occur. For trans women who do meet the diagnostic criteria, care is taken to inscribe the perceived naturalness of their femininity onto the body. The message is clear: non-conformity is not to be rewarded if a more normative option can be pursued.

2.3 Heterosexual Rivalries

In *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the Shemale* (1979), which is widely considered to be virulently transphobic and especially transmisogynistic, the titular “empire” that Janice Raymond describes is “a medical empire, based on a patriarchal medical model” (Raymond 1979, 119). In Raymond’s view, supporters of the medical model of transsexuality “have given themselves the mandate to manipulate in the interests of reduced suffering for the transsexuals” (122). Far from being an empowering choice, “[t]he kind of individualism that transsexual therapy promotes is really an individualism that serves a role-defined society and thus it is more realistic to say that it is an ethic of social conformity” (98). Although the goal of reducing trans women’s suffering appears noble, as Raymond (1979) points out, it is nonetheless not an apolitical endeavor, because medical professionals “have forced transsexuals back into a social system whose basic sexist norms and values remain unquestioned” (122). She continues:

Many persons express the urgency of their desire to be trans-sexed in terms of “normalizing” their self-perceived masculine or feminine psyche in a male or female body. The abhorrence of homosexuality, expressed by many transsexuals, and their unwillingness to be identified as such, indicate their desire to “normalize” their sexual relationships as heterosexual by acquiring the appropriate genitalia...Thus the transsexual is generally no advocate of social criticism and change (122-123).

While Raymond’s work is not at all sympathetic to transgender women, she does make several important criticisms of the medical model that have been echoed by prominent transgender feminists, including Sandy Stone, Emi Koyama, and Julia Serano. In *The Transfeminist Manifesto* (2006), Emi Koyama notes that trans women “in particular are encouraged and sometimes required to adopt the traditional definition of femininity in order to be accepted and legitimized by the medical community...[t]rans women often find themselves having to “prove” their womanhood by internalizing gender stereotypes in

order to be acknowledged as women or to receive hormonal and surgical interventions” (Koyama 2006, 2).

Sandy Stone, who was directly targeted by Janice Raymond in *The Transsexual Empire*, responded in 1987 with *The Empire Strikes Back: a Posttranssexual Manifesto*, directly addressing certain allegations against her, and notably, echoing back some of Raymond’s primary concerns with the medical model of transsexuality. In Stone’s view, rather than concerning themselves primarily with the creation of anatomically normative female bodies, “[t]he [Stanford] clinic took on the additional role of “grooming clinic” or “charm school” because, according to the judgment of the staff, the men who presented as wanting to be women didn’t always “behave like” women.” (Stone 1987, 10). The clinic took this role as part of “an effort to produce not simply anatomically legible females, but women...i.e., gendered females” (Stone 1987, 10). By recreating trans subjects in entirely normative turns, the gender clinic bends, but does not break the broader two-gender system by allowing trans women ‘outside’ the gender role assigned to them at birth, while at the same time pushing them ‘inside’ yet another normative category: being “in-between” genders is rendered physically and socially impossible.

The conservative pressure in trans medical narratives effectively split the nascent trans community off from its potential allies in the feminist and women’s liberation movement. Deeply damaging to the hope of a common framework came by way of Ray Blanchard’s autogynephilia theory. Stephanie Hsu (2019) explains:

Despite the argument that a diagnosis of paraphilia could potentially expand medical access to trans and cross-dressing individuals, Blanchard’s depiction of trans desire as envious therefore bears weighty ethical implications. In fact, the DSM-IV explicitly distanced itself from any such notion by defining GID as “a strong and persistent cross-gender identification (not merely a desire for any perceived cultural advantages of being the other sex)” (American Psychiatric Association 2000). The portrayal of trans desire as a form of rivalry with cisgender (i.e. non-transgender) women also reprises some of second-

wave feminism's most reactionary responses to trans inclusion, including Janice Raymond's accusation that trans women utilize male privilege to appropriate cisgender women's bodies and their political spaces while retaining access to both gendered worlds (Hsu 2019, 61-62).

The medical theories which describe trans identity in terms of paraphilic desire (i.e. a sickness) therefore played a role in developing the discursive conditions in which trans-exclusionary feminisms framed transgender women as Other, as predators, and even as rapists. Indeed, feminists such as Janice Raymond, however, have adopted the ultra feminine medical construction as representative of trans woman as a whole while expounding upon the notion of transgender people as dangerous.

My argument thus comprises two parts. In the first, transgender women in particular have been subject to a variety of biocultural and biomedical procedures which channel gender variance along highly specific biocultural trajectories. But perhaps more importantly, by posing the transgender woman as an envious subject, and indeed as deceptive patients that must be exhaustively verified for any and all treatment, biomedical discourses of gender variance introduced a second normalizing practice: complete political isolation of the trans community.

Blanchard argues that gender variance, along autogynephilic lines, "results from overshooting one's actual erotic target—that some trans women, for instance, are men who love women too much", thereby repositioning gender variance as first and foremost along heterosexual lines, following Benjamin and Hirschfeld. Stephanie Hsu (2019) explains:

...autogynephilia subverts the real diversity of lived gender experience and subordinates it to the logic of compulsory heterosexuality. This logic allows Blanchard to attribute a predictive force to his particular understanding of eroticism, which takes a deterministic view of the progression from cross-dressing to transsexualism: "As a practical matter, the autogynephilic type

seems to have a higher risk of developing gender dysphoria," he counsels researchers and clinicians (Hsu 2019, 56).

Bailey, at least, did not hide the heterosexist aspect of autogynephilia. He claims very clearly that "There is no way to say this as sensitively as I would prefer, so I will just go ahead...Most homosexual transsexuals are much better looking than most autogynephilic transsexuals" (qtd. in Hsu 2019). As Hsu points out, "[t]his sexist or transmisogynistic observation suggests that a theory of erotic motivation could actually reinforce the power imbalance between clinicians or researchers and trans patients whose motives for gender transition would therefore be directly subject to erotic sensibilities not their own" (57-58).

In other words, both archetypes of transfeminine gender variance are completely subsumed into the heterosexual matrix. The homosexual transsexual's 'natural' femininity is reduced wholly to a tactic of attracting male sexual partners, and the autogynephile's desire to be feminine is attributed first and foremost to a slight alteration on 'normal' heterosexual male sexuality. Materially, this means not only the interpretation of bodies through the heterosexual matrix, but the literal differential biomedical construction of bodies along heterosexual lines.

Furthermore, in the same stroke that medical typologies have created power imbalances between clinicians and trans patients marked by erotic exchanges, they have also repositioned transfeminine people in a specifically heterosexual opposition with cissexual women. Here, it is worth noting that the main target of Raymond and other feminists' ire is not the homosexual transsexual, but specifically trans women who identify as lesbians, who have been subordinated and subsumed by a new heterosexual discourse which repositions them in sexual and social opposition to cissexual women. This means that the space carved out for transgender women—in some cases literally carved—is one of complete political isolation, placing them in an antagonist orientation to both clinical researchers and some feminist discourses we might assume would be sympathetic. As Raymond argues, "[a]ll transsexuals rape women's bodies by reducing the female form to an artifact, appropriating this body for themselves..." (Raymond 1979, 104).

3 VIOLENT SUBJECTS

We begin Brian De Palma's *Dressed to Kill* in the bedroom: our gaze peers slowly around the wall and into the bathroom. There, Kate Miller gazes, over her shoulder and through the shower door, to a man at the sink, shaving. Chest exposed. Kate caresses her curves as each drop flows down her body. As she gazes, we, too, gaze. Her fingers drop from breasts to bush as she looks on, the razor's motions clearing the cream from his face. She grazes her hand onto her vulva, moaning.

Stop.

Music shifts. She gasps. A man is behind her. He covers her mouth, forcing his fingers into her. Her body rises from the shower floor as he thrusts onto her, raping her. She screams.

Cut.

An alarm sounds. It's the morning news. Kate's husband is on top of her, thrusting away as he always does. She moans and curls *for him*. He finishes, gives her a peck, and it's off to the shower: Kate lays there, unsatisfied, unfulfilled. Wanting. Frustrated. The "wham bang special".

Is this a nightmare? A wholesome sexual dream gone wrong? Or the kinky fantasy of the wayward housewife craving attention? Or some combination thereof? Desire is, first and foremost, mercurial. Pleasure and terror are twins, not cousins. Bedfellows. Fellow travelers. In embodiment they are easily confused—consider a scream: we scream when frightened, we scream when happy, and we scream when fucked. To pleasure and terror we respond identically: our bodies tense, adrenaline rushes through our veins. We are alert, focused, sensitive. How are these affections different?

In *Unnatural Emotions: Everyday Sentiments on a Micronesian Atoll & Their Challenge to Western Theory*, anthropologist Catherine Lutz (1988) speaks to a Western discourse of emotion that concerns itself "with emotion as essence; whether the passions are portrayed

as aspects of a divinely inspired human nature or as genetically encoded biological fact, they remain, to varying degrees, things that have an inherent and unchanging nature” (Lutz 1988, 53). In the West, we posit an “inner truth” to emotion that must “come out” through specific, universally understood actions. Lutz (1988), in response, argues for a broader interpretation of emotions as produced and implicated within certain sociocultural systems. According to Lutz, in the traditional Western view “...emotion is seen as a component of individuals rather than of social situations or relationships, the discipline and methods of psychology have been taken as most appropriate for its study” (41).

Kate arrives at her psychiatrist’s office (Dr. Elliot), where the two discuss her lackluster sex life. She asks him if he finds her sexually attractive, to which he says yes, but stresses that it is inappropriate because she is married and is his patient. Dissatisfied, Kate leaves for a museum, where she sits, suggestively, next to a handsome, dark-haired stranger. He stands up suddenly and walks away, pretending to make note of the pieces adorning the museum walls. Kate drops her glove, pursuing the man through the museum. There is no dialogue: the music builds tension. The tension becomes terror, and Kate’s face shows her fear: will Kate find him? De Palma pays careful homage to Hitchcock’s *Psycho*, except now the conditions reverse: she is not being chased, she is chasing. She bursts outside the building, combing the street for the dark-haired man. She spots him in a taxi, hurries into the cab, and the two strangers fuck in the backseat.

The next morning, Kate awakens in his apartment. She rummages around the room, eventually finding documents that suggest that Warren (the stranger) had contracted a sexually transmitted disease. Her pleasure at her sexual encounter quickly turns to disgust: the tiniest twist turns pleasure into terror. Disgusted and horrified, she flees his apartment and heads toward the elevator. At the elevator, she is greeted by a tall blonde woman in black sunglasses and a black trench coat. The woman reveals a razor blade, and (with comical effects) ruthlessly murders Kate before the doors close.

Dressed to Kill stars Angie Dickinson (Kate Miller) opposite Michael Kaine (Dr. Elliot). The opening scenes I transcribe here seem, at first, of little important to Dr. Elliot’s story

that follows. Within 30 minutes, De Palma introduces, develops, and ultimately murders his main character and barely mentions her again. But this is not just a convenient plot device to inaugurate Elliot's story, nor is it merely a Hitchcockian citation. Rather, *Dressed to Kill*'s opening scenes establish, as a baseline, a critique of Western discourses of emotion, the very same later echoed by Lutz (1988).

Within Western discourse, there is an assumption of difference—that there are different 'genres' of emotion entirely, each with distinct causes and physical responses, reflecting a distinct inner psychological state. We thus consider these emotions accordingly, following Derrida's the law of genre: *Genres will not be mixed. I will not mix genres.* But, as Derrida explains, genre is already an imposition onto the text, for nevertheless genres *are* mixed. *We will* mix genres. Genres are already mixed. Lutz (1988) saw the limits: we assume that emotions are discrete, oppositional, singular, but, as I will argue, this is not necessarily true. Derrida 1980 notes:

As soon as the word "genre" is sounded, as soon as it is heard, as soon as one attempts to conceive it, a limit is drawn. And when a limit is established, norms and interdictions are not far behind: "Do," "Do not" says "genre," the word "genre," the figure, the voice, or the law of genre. And this can be said of genre in all genres, be it a question of a generic or a general determination of what one calls "nature" or physis (for example, a biological genre in the sense of gender, or the human genre, a genre of all that is in general), or be it a question of a typology designated as nonnatural and depending on laws or orders which were once held to be opposed to physis according to those values associated with techné, thesis, nomos (for example, an artistic, poetic, or literary genre) (Derrida and Ronell 1980, 56).

Dressed to Kill illustrates the mercuriality of emotion: from pleasure to horror, from horror to pleasure, initiated by minute contextual shifts. The museum scene replicates a slasher film chase perfectly: the camera is positioned such that the audience is intimately aware of her growing stress, the mood builds to frantic, she makes haste through seeming end-

less museum corridors, as if being chased. But Kate is not being chased—is she actually scared? How would we know?

My wager: that discourses of emotion that speak of the particular (“happiness,” “sadness”; “pleasure,” “terror”) are prescriptive impositions, rather than natural categories. Emotion is not just socially constructed, but linguistically contingent. I argue that *I am happy* and *I am sad* are not necessarily contradictory, but rather that these emotions coexist, and in fact the imposition of difference requires coexistence. The nature of emotion is instead rhizomatic—branching, connecting, multiplying, and overlapping.

I will, through *Dressed to Kill*, consider the issue of gender violence in its affective processes: *Why do men hurt women they love?* Did they hate them all along? In cases of such violence, is there really a “change” or “shift” in affective sensibilities? What social and psychological purpose does violence against the feminine serve?

3.1 Abjection and Feeling

We often assume that emotion, as well as identity, reflects an inner reality that is then “expressed” through actions and words. But feeling does not occur in a vacuum, and feelings are subject to cultural construction and cultural interpretation: a change in tune or angle radically changes how we feel and how others perceive our feelings. Emotion then, like identity, is an intersubjective event, rather than a subjective fact. To this regard, philosopher Judith Butler (2004) introduces the idea of “provisionality”. In her view, “[t]o claim that this is what I am is to suggest a provisional totalization of this “I”” (Butler 2004, 309). Identities produce a “radical concealment” when we attempt to “disclose the true and full content of that “I”” (309). With regard to her own lesbian identity, Butler writes:

...it is always finally unclear what is meant by invoking the lesbian-signifier, since its signification is always to some degree out of one’s control, but also because its specificity can only be demarcated by exclusions that return to disrupt its claim to coherence. What, if anything, can lesbians be said to share? (309).

Butler's "radical concealment" is not confined to identity, rather, we also inaugurate a "radical concealment" when we "come out" with our emotions. To say "I am happy" precludes anger, fear, or sadness. Butler rightly questions "[w]hat or who is it that is "out," made manifest and fully disclosed, when and if I reveal myself as lesbian? What is it that is now known, anything?" (Butler 2004, 309). It is impossible to account for what we preclude and what others preclude from us. Assertive or angry women, already the "emotional gender," run the risk of dismissal as irrational or hysterical. Anger can be used to discredit testimony or to incite laughter: the intent of the author is denied or channeled through other means.

As Lutz (1998) suggests, emotion "exists in a system of power relations and plays a role in maintaining it" (Lutz 1988, 54). Emotional performance is mediated and translated by intersubjective relations of power. As such, "emotion occupies an important place in Western gender ideologies" because the "ideological subordination of women" is realized "in identifying emotion primarily with irrationality, subjectivity, the chaotic, and other negative characteristics, and in subsequently labeling women the emotional gender" (54). Clearly, emotions are not as clear-cut as Western theory would have us believe. Instead, emotion as a social institution presupposes certain affiliations and alliances of power.

For Sara Ahmed, emotions "do things, and they align individuals with communities—or bodily space with social space—through the very intensity of their attachments" (Ahmed 2004, 119). But emotions likewise serve to repudiate or reject others. In *Dressed to Kill*, the central conflict is derived from Dr. Elliot's refusal to give his "transsexual" patient, Bobbi, approval to pursue Sex Reassignment Surgery. In response, Bobbi plots her revenge, communicating her plans with Dr. Elliot through messages left on his telephone. We eventually learn that the tall blonde that murdered Kate Miller was, in fact, Bobbi, who stole Dr. Elliot's razor from his desk. Bobbi explains:

This is Bobbi. You won't see me anymore, so I thought I'd have a little session with your machine. Oh Doctor, I'm so unhappy. I'm a woman trapped inside a man's body—and you're not helping me to get out! So I got a new shrink,

Levy's his name, he's gonna sign the papers so I can get my operation. Oh... I borrowed your razor... and - well, you'll read all about it. Some blonde bitch saw me, but I'll get her (De Palma et al. 2015).

But this conflict is not what it seems: Bobbi and Dr. Elliot are actually the same person, and the conflict De Palma offers is, instead, an internal conflict between Dr. Elliot's "male side" and "female side". Dr. Levy explains:

He was a transsexual...about to make the last step but his male side couldn't let him do it. There was Dr. Elliot, and there was Bobbi. Bobbi came to me to get psychiatric approval for a sex reassignment operation. I thought he was unstable, and Elliot confirmed my diagnosis. Opposite sexes inhabiting the same body. [The] sex-change operation was to resolve the conflict, but as much as Bobbi tried to get it, Elliot blocked it. So Bobbi got even (De Palma et al. 2015).

I would like to suspend discussion of the cissexist and transmisogynistic implications of this narrative. For now, I will take the film at its word for the conflict it presents. Following French philosopher Kristeva (1980) and Butler (2004), we know that being a "man" presupposes an abjection of the motherly body and associated femininities, characterized by "an "expulsion" followed by a "repulsion" that founds and consolidates culturally hegemonic identities along sex/race/sexuality axes of differentiation" (Butler 2004, 108). The abject femininity is "expelled from the body, discharged as excrement, literally rendered "Other"" (Butler 2004, 107). To declare oneself 'man' renders femininity invisible, impossible, and elsewhere. It is important to note, however, that the expulsion is actually the process wherein "the alien is effectively established", though it "appears as an expulsion of alien elements" (Butler 2004, 107). The establishment of the me and not-me "establishes the boundaries of the body which are also the first contours of the subject" (107).

In Lacanian terms, young infants become self-aware through a "mirror stage", in

which they, as if looking through mirrors, slowly separating themselves from their environment, eventually realizing that they are looking at their own reflections. In doing so, they form preliminary assumptions about themselves and their position within the world (Lacan and Fink 2002, 3). Lacan (2002) regards “the function of the mirror-stage as a particular case of the function of the imago, which is to establish a relationship between the organism and its reality” (3). In other words, the child makes (and is encouraged to make) certain judgment calls about what is “inner” and “outer” of the self. Lacan (2002) argues:

We have only to understand the mirror stage as an identification, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image—whose predestination to this phase-effect is sufficiently indicated by the use, in analytic theory, of the ancient term imago (2–3).

The issue with Freud and Lacan’s “stages” discourse is that abjection is not a stage in the sense that it is bound to any given time or duration. Rather, abjection is a “stage” insofar as it provides a conceptual locale for a set of stylized repetitive performances and repudiations. Once borders are created (whether national or psychological), they must be defended. *Genres will not be mixed. I will not mix genres. Borders will not be crossed. I will not cross borders.* Borders continue to impose, they are never quite imposed: the alien that appears as outer is, in fact, inner. In this view, the mimetic processes produce merely the illusion of separation, rather than a true division. The alien is expelled, but never quite fully “out”.

Affect is, in fact, central to the inauguration of the ego, and creates and structures borders. In her work on melancholy, Butler argues that it is “the unfinished process of grieving” that is “central to the formation of the identifications that form the ego” (Butler 2004, 245). For her, “[t]he lost object is incorporated and phantasmically preserved in and as the ego. The lost object is incorporated and phantasmically preserved in and as the ego” (p. 245). In other words, “[m]elancholic identification permits the loss of the object

in the external world because it provides a way to *preserve* the object as part of the ego and, hence, to avert the loss as a complete loss" (Butler 2004, 246). Butler (2004) explains that "gender is acquired at least in part through the repudiation of homosexual attachments", therefore "the girl becomes a girl through being subject to a prohibition which bars the mother as an object of desire". This prohibition "installs that barred object as a part of the ego...as a melancholic identification" (248).

But affect itself requires a series of prohibitions. To be happy, for example, requires a repudiation of melancholy. Happiness is tautological: the antonym of "happy" is "sad". To say "I am happy" means, therefore, that "I am not sad". In order for happiness to be maintained, one must reject sadness in all its forms. We learn appropriate affect largely by mimicry and in so doing we learn which emotions must be rejected or evaded in a given context. Those who present with contextually-inappropriate emotions incite discomfort and disgust from others. Persons who are "unstable" present first and foremost with rapidly shifting and concurrent emotions. To be "stable", one must know how one feels, in discrete terms, and this feeling must be consistent through time and space. Elliot/Bobbi is unstable in part because of their failure to bring about affective cohesion by giving the impression of expulsion.

Allow me to consider an extreme example from fiction: *the Vulcans*. In *Star Trek*, the Vulcan's logic provides a careful foil of Western conceptions of emotion in their rejection of emotion entirely. Although Vulcans are a humanoid species, sharing many anatomical and cultural similarities with humans, among Vulcans emotion is taboo, and to express emotion or to hint at any particular affection is offensive. Instead, Vulcans prize 'logic' above all else. The most devout followers of Vulcan philosophy commit themselves to *kolinahr*, a ritualistic purging of all emotion in the name of logical enlightenment (Dawson 2001).

But Vulcan logic, of course, embeds certain political judgements about emotion and its purpose. And surely, Vulcans are nevertheless *affected*, despite their nominal rejection of emotion. In reality, Vulcans are *repulsed* by their own emotions, and they, rather than

having “successfully” purged them, work tirelessly to keep them under control. These emotions are, for the Vulcans, as taboo as the feminine or the homosexual: they are dangerous, filthy, and irrational. Kristeva (1982) explains:

Defilement is what is jettisoned from the “symbolic system.” It is what escapes that social rationality, that logical order on which a social aggregate is based, which then becomes differentiated from a temporary agglomeration of individuals and, in short, constitutes a classification system or a structure (Kristeva and Roudiez 1982, 65).

We are who we are insofar as we embrace and repudiate certain affections. The Vulcan ideal is an impossibility: to be ‘logical’ does not mean unaffected. To be unaffected is impossible. As Sara Ahmed explains, “emotions are not simply “within” or “without” but that they create the very effect of the surfaces or boundaries of bodies and worlds”, meaning that bodies and communities become discrete through the circulation of affect through individuals (Ahmed 2004, 117). Similarly, Richard and Rudnycky (2009) argue that affect is “mutually constitutive”, meaning that subjects obtain cultural intelligibility through the many affective mimetic processes in which they are engaged. In Butler’s terms, the mimetic processes of emotionality stabilize identity (and therefore emotion) as mutually intelligible categories of analysis. Vulcans become legible *as Vulcan* in their defilement of these emotional attachments, and by becoming *Vulcan* they simultaneously refute humanity, thereby literally rendering themselves alien to the audience. It is not that Vulcans are unique in their repudiated emotions, but rather, the object of their defilement (emotion) is predicated on a different symbolic system. Humans, too, require a series of repudiations to maintain legibility *as human* or as a specific identity (in Dr. Elliot’s case, that of a heterosexual man).

3.2 Circulations

I am aware that I have primarily discussed the individual processes of abjection and repudiation (albeit in the social context), and that I have, at times, given the impression of universalism in working through psychoanalytic theory. But psychoanalytic theory is concerned with relations, not merely individuals. As Kristeva suggests, “abjection is coextensive with social and symbolic order, on the individual as well as on the collective level” (Kristeva and Roudiez 1982, 68). Kristeva continues:

By virtue of this, abjection, just like prohibition of incest, is a universal phenomenon; one encounters it as soon as the symbolic and/or social dimension of man is constituted, and this throughout the course of civilization. But abjection assumes specific shapes and different codings according to the various “symbolic systems” (68).

We have seen a few examples of these shapes and codings in different contexts. The Vulcans provide an excellent visual exploration of the tensions that these logics inaugurate: the expulsion of internal emotions and thoughts that can never fully be removed. But De Palma provides perhaps the best example of how these seemingly internal processes become enacted onto the external world. Kristeva, similarly, argues that “internal perceptions of emotional and thought processes can be projected outwards in the same way as sense perceptions; they are thus employed for building up the external world, though they should by rights remain part of the internal world” (60). By showing Dr. Elliot’s conflict as external (abjected), rather than internal, De Palma shows us the social consequences of Dr. Elliot’s own repudiation of the feminine: violence.

In this model, Elliot repudiates the feminine through outward expressions of heterosexual desire. Dr. Levy explains that “Elliot’s penis became erect and Bobbi took control trying to kill anyone that made Elliot masculinely sexual” (De Palma et al. 2015). Because heterosexuality repudiates the feminine, his femininity lives on in his reinforced heterosexual/male identifications, and “the desire for the feminine is marked by that re-

pudiation" (Butler 2004, 248). Dr. Elliot "wants the woman he would never be" (248).

Elliot's positive feelings toward the women who arouse him are identical and simultaneous to the negative feelings he develops for Bobbi, whom he must control, defile, and excrete into the alien. Transversely, the imposition of the feminine requires control, defilement, and excretion of the masculine. For Bobbi, to murder the objects of Elliot's heterosexual attraction is to affectively foreclose on homosexual affections, for Bobbi can only be a woman insofar as she repudiates the masculine and prohibits homosexual attachments. Butler (2004) explains:

...consider guilt as the turning back into the ego of homosexual attachment. If the loss becomes a renewed sense of conflict, and if the aggression that follows from that loss cannot be articulated or externalized, then it rebounds upon the ego itself, in the form of a super-ego (251).

It is precisely *because* he loves a woman that Elliot must kill a woman—himself. The "non-constitution of the (outside) object as such renders unstable the ego's identity, which could not be precisely established without having been differentiated from an other, from its object" (Kristeva and Roudiez 1982, 62).

But this instability is not just instability of the individual, but instability of the social group: I am not speaking of Dr. Elliot, but rather of men as a social group. It is not by accident or coincidence that men are subject to intense gender policing, and that trans women, for example, who refuse masculine and heterosexual identifications, are subject to social scrutiny and intensified gender violence. Violence against women, therefore, cannot be reduced to the individual, because the disdain and rejection of the feminine and homosexual is circulatory. Ahmed (2004) explains:

...hate cannot be found in one figure, but works to create the very outline of different figures or objects of hate, a creation that crucially aligns the figures together and constitutes them as a "common" threat. Importantly, then, hate does not reside in a given subject or object. Hate is economic; it circulates be-

tween signifiers in relationships of difference and displacement (Ahmed 2004, 119).

For men, the origin of this hate derived from the rejection of the motherly body. The motherly body is constructed *as threat*, and its rejection is internalized in and as the super-ego. From there, this rejection is displaced onto the Other—women. Men are men to the extent that they do not want another man, but men are men also in their outward displays of (trans)misogyny, which serve to strengthen their heterosexual careers. By embracing certain sensibilities and affections, we align ourselves with broader groups. In the case of men, this affect—hate—functions as rhetoric: it binds men together and restates their masculine and heterosexual identities. But hate does not precede love, for love (for something, someone) is already implicated in the imposition of hate. It cannot rightly be said that hate and love are distinct processes, they arrive simultaneously: a kind of love-hate.

3.3 Carceral Logics

As Anne Carson (1986) points out, this observation is not new, for long ago Sappho described eros as “bittersweet”, “at once an experience of pleasure and pain” (Carson 1986, 3). For Carson, as for Sappho, the order is of no import, rather, bittersweet describes merely the “instant of desire” (3). This simultaneous sensation is exactly the contradiction with which I began: *Why do men hurt women they love?* But as I have argued, when we acknowledge affect as mercurial and the psychosocial conditions which birth it, there is no contradiction, only multiplicity. Love and hate are central to the heterosexual paradigm, and in fact “construct between them the machinery of human contact” (3).

We cannot read gender violence outside of this observation. Though our emotional signs (happy/sad, love/hate) provide useful buckets in which to categorize and situate our own experiences and those of others, they fail to adequately account for the complications of our feelings. In effect, they recreate a prison of emotion in their extreme totality. But far from reflective of inner (stable) psychological truths, we can conceive of affect

“not so much as an object circulating among subjects, but rather as a medium in which subjects circulate” (Richard and Rudnycky 2009, 59). In the model I propose, feelings are not solid objects, rather, they are liquid. Affect is rhizomorphous, which, in its Deleuzian sense, recognizes the production of “stems and filaments that seem to be roots” (Deleuze and Guattari 1989, 15). Despite the apparent naturalness of these deep-rooted buckets, culturally imposed categories are poor in their account of affect, because affect is instead a turbulent ocean, within which borders are crossed, genres are mixed, and stems are unrooted. As it is, there are no clear-cut affects in the plural, only *affect* in its branching, connecting, multiplying, and overlapping implication.

While mainstream narratives of gender violence, especially intimate partner violence (e.g. “That’s not love, that’s hate”), are useful insofar as they direct victims into consciousness with regard to violence against them. But as myself and many other victims of abuse often say, abusive partners are not *always* hateful or violent. In fact, this apparent bifurcation of their behavior is often a source of tension and hesitation when victims contemplate leaving abusive relationships. Often, those who commit violence against their partners are quite charming, even loving, but this love is (re-)framed as a facade in the Feminist counter narrative, which reassesses the abusive partner as always already abusive and hateful. To be abusive is not just to engage in violence, rather, hate becomes a permanent state of being: hateful they are, hateful they have been, and hateful they will always be.

But this model falls short on a few counts. On the macro scale, critiques of sexual fetishization often appropriate this same narrative, and therefore gloss over the loving aspects of the phenomenon. Transgender women, for example, are ubiquitously the butt of jokes which predicate themselves on their apparent undesirability as romantic and sexual partners. Nonetheless, trans women also feature prominently in fetish pornography and sex work. In the trans community, men who specifically seek out romantic and sexual relationships with transgender women are known as “admirers”. While this may seem, in fronting these positive affective links, to be a rather uncritical engagement with a politically fraught practice, it is no more uncritical than the complete disavowal of

those potentially positive affects. Fetishization of the Other cannot be neatly dismissed as hatred.

Moreover, the ensuing totalization of the subject *as* hate itself is a rather destructive proposition, foreclosing any and all opportunities for change, reform, or redemption. To be “totally” an abuser is to compromise the fundamental illusion of safe society. As Mary Douglas (2013) puts it:

A polluting person is always in the wrong. He has developed some wrong condition or simply crossed over some line which should not have been crossed and this displacement unleashes danger for someone (Douglas 2013, 118).

The abuser is therefore transformed into an eternal fountain of social psychological unrest, and the only solutions to this unrest almost always imply or require expulsion and segregation, lest these polluting persons poison all of society. Crucially, Ahmed suggests that “[f]ear works to create a sense of being overwhelmed: rather than being contained in an object, fear is intensified by the impossibility of containment” (Ahmed 2004, 124). In this light, to attempt containment of “abuse” into a discrete “abuser” is to relocate fear into discrete corporeal objects. These discrete objects—bodies—can then be acted upon in various ways; specifically, they become subject to regimes of discipline and containment. This is necessary because, as Ahmed (2004) explains, “[i]f the others who are feared “pass by,” then the others might pass their way into the community, and could be anywhere and everywhere” (124). The “passing by” of pollution cannot, therefore, be tolerated by safe society.

I would be negligent if I did not mention the improbability of *Dressed to Kill*'s narrative, and others that paint transgender women as agents of violence (whether in bathrooms or rape crisis centers), rather than victims of such violence. Nonetheless, in Elliot I find a careful contestation of efforts to carve out the trans subject; his/her tendency to evade consistent gender categorization is in fact the impetus for his dismissal from receiving transition-related care in the first place. It is not surprising to see this contes-

tation read as violent, the “carving out” of the trans subject is analogous to and arrives in tandem with “carving out” the criminal and other undesirable subjects. I do not mean to repeat the usual statistical objections and rebuttals here, but it is particularly interesting that the threat of violence is often removed to the subject whose particular pollution is contained through other means (trans/gendering, racialization, etc.). This conflated Other, now wholly Other, is subsequently juxtaposed against the Self. To use Douglas’s terms, the “polluting person” or object is literally “always in the wrong” (Douglas 2013, 118). Being “always in the wrong”, already new regimes of regulation and surveillance are instituted—would it be possible, for example to “ban” transgender individuals from the military without the prior containment of the trans subject? Would it be possible to build the prison without the criminal? I mean to say that these totalizing strategies of containment are a means of subjectivation, through which the Other becomes identifiable as a discrete object of power apart from the normative Self. In Kristeva’s terms, the repulsion towards the polluting person “consolidate[s] “identities” founded on the instituting of the “Other” or a set of Others through exclusion and domination” (Butler 2017, 469).

In a Foucauldian view, to contain or carve out a demographic, then, is to already grade the subject along a discursive Norm; the individualization of hate and the creation of these totalized categories is to always already discipline the subject. Fittingly, the localization of hate within the subject exposes its own sociality, and surveillance in the safe society arises, in part, because power is never fully accomplished. In other words, the impossibility of containment—the universal potential to pollute—provides renewing justification for these regimes. Specifically, the threat of being overwhelmed fosters the carving out of the criminal class and their confinement within the prison. Is it surprising, then, that neoliberal criminal justice has so readily adopted the hate crime? In fact, the totalization of the hateful subject jives well with the regular business of carceral containment: “to serve as the instrument that creates a criminal milieu that the ruling classes can control” (Droit 1975).

There are no easy solutions to this problem, but in searching for alternatives, I believe

the tension arising from the impossibility of containment may be fundamentally productive in illuminating what these politics of containment obscure: the cultural institutions, processes, and performances that direct, mediate, and spark violence. By confronting our fears of being “passed by”, we find the Other within ourselves: accepting the fundamental human propensity for violence while nonetheless interrogating the discourses that produce these acts. To be clear, I am not suggesting that we “accept” violence or that there should be no consequences for harming others. Rather, I refuse to accept the equally worrisome carceral and punitive implications of attaching violence to certain subjects. By moving beyond carceral models, we bring about new avenues for reconciliation and reform that are prerequisite to viable anti-violence praxis.

4 POST-FEMINIST GAZES

4.1 Trans Women and the Male Gaze

If cinema is viewed as a kind of ritual or cultural practice with a primarily interpretive function, then, as Geertz (2005) noted with other forms of ritual, cinema is a “story [we] tell about [ourselves]” (Geertz 2005, 82). As texts, rituals can therefore be read in the normal mode of literary critique, and Geertz goes further to suggest that culture itself is merely a collection of such texts, a kind of “ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the Anthropologist strains to read”, providing partial, and perhaps contradictory insights into cultural values and structures. In Deleuzian terms, cultures, when thought of as discrete, are in fact assemblages of these contradictory concepts and narratives.

Contradictory as they are, I do not mean to provide an exhaustive account of trans women’s position within cinema, but there are some important cases which may illuminate part of this story. If cinema is a text, even an ensemble of texts, what can cinema do for the Anthropologist, who far too often eschews these visual texts in our research? In my view, cinema may be even more accessible and important than other forms of ritual, because the Anthropologist need not read these texts “over the shoulder” (as Geertz suggests) of our informants; rather, these texts can arguably be read more directly, even if those readings lack certain sociocultural contexts. A similar view of cinema was also put forward by Laura Mulvey (1989), who views cinema “[a]s an advanced representation system...[that] poses questions about the ways the unconscious (formed by the dominant order) structures ways of seeing and pleasure in looking” (Mulvey 1989, 15). Once more, this system, though it may be representational, does not, by itself, constitute an exhaustive narrative of society, but nonetheless plays at the notion of seeing, pleasure, and identification.

In *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Mulvey (1989) investigates the role of women in cinema, primarily focusing on one of a “number of possible pleasures” to be derived

from cinema: scopophilia, or “pleasure in looking”, a pleasure Freud associates with “with taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze” (Mulvey 1989, 16). Scopophilia relies upon and reinforces a specific configuration of subject-object, which is not random but instead transposed from a broader symbolic order in which a given film arises. The gazer and the gazed are, to some degree, predetermined or preconfigured by a dominant visual narrative of looking—in this case, male/female. Mulvey (1989) elaborates:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness* (19).

This to-be-looked-at-ness, or the exhibitionist role itself, is in part accomplished by the spectator’s identification with the gazer (male), who is usually the protagonist of the film. Note that the symbolic order to which I refer is marked by certain hierarchies of empathy, which in this case do not merely indicate our good will or affiliation toward the protagonist, but also our propensity to put ourselves in one’s shoes, in other words to identify with them such that we literally take their gaze as our own, here also precipitated through specific cinematographic arrangements. This is precisely how films make legible and make themselves read along the protagonist-antagonist narrative structure.

Broader propensities toward identification (a sense of affiliation, empathy, etc.), along with specific cinematographic cues, form the epistemic foundation of narrative cinema. In this sense, scopophilia is only accomplished through a culturally directed gaze sourced from a prior identification. While here I say “prior” for convention’s sake, I tread carefully knowing that this is not fully pre-orchestrated, but that these epistemic foundations which make narrative imaginable in the first place are (re)produced actively in film-making. To read Mulvey in Foucault’s terms, this power-knowledge of visual inter-

action and narrative is derived from “ruling ideology and the psychological structures that back it up” (Mulvey 1989, 20). Mulvey (1989) explains:

According to the principles of the ruling ideology and the psychological structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification. Man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like. Hence the split between spectacle and narrative supports the man’s role as the active one of advancing the story, making things happen. The man controls the film fantasy and also emerges as the representative of power in a further sense: as the bearer of the look of the spectator, transferring it behind the screen to neutralise the extradiegetic tendencies represented by woman as spectacle. This is made possible through the processes set in motion by structuring the film around a main controlling figure with whom the spectator can identify. As the spectator identifies with the main male protagonist, he projects his look onto that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that the power of the male protagonist as he controls events coincides with the active power of the erotic look, both giving a satisfying sense of omnipotence (20).

This suggests that the concept of a narrative taking place—of “making things happen”—is defined through hegemonic (male) terms, and literally through the eyes of men—the male gaze. For Clover, this positionality implied the exercise of the “active investigating gaze” within slasher horror films.

But this arrangement of man-gazer and gazed-upon-woman is no longer quite so clear. In the years since Mulvey’s work, slasher horror in particular has appeared to break with her formulation by introducing new, female protagonists. In a more traditional film, such as *Psycho*, strictly male identification is found throughout, both in our identification with the killer and the man, Sam, who ultimately subdues him. Meanwhile, in the new script, the protagonist is unambiguously female in a morphological sense. In this script, as Clover points out, the identification at first appears to be with the man (killer), but finally shifts to the protagonist, who is, at least morphologically speaking, female. Brian

De Palma's *Dressed to Kill* is a particularly potent example, given the strong parallels with psycho. Here, the flip is (as expected) flipped: a woman saves the day, and the "man" is subdued. As another example, *The Silence of the Lambs* similarly stars Jodi Foster as Clarice Starling, a young FBI trainee and the protagonist of the film (Demme 1991). Importantly, our identification is firmly in the grasp of this female protagonist: just when it seems like a man would intervene on her behalf, she takes care of herself and subdues the killer. Carol Clover (2002) explains:

...let us for the moment accept the equation point of view = identification. We are linked, in this way, with the killer in the early part of the film, usually before we have seen him directly and before we have come to know the Final Girl in any detail. Our closeness to him wanes as our closeness to the Final Girl waxes—a shift underwritten by story line as well as camera position. By the end, point of view is hers: we are in the closet with her, watching with her eyes the knife blade stab through the door; in the room with her as the killer breaks through the window and grabs at her; in the car with her as the killer stabs through the convertible top, and so on. With her, we become if not the killer of the killer then the agent of his expulsion from the narrative vision. If, during the film's course, we shifted our sympathies back and forth, and dealt them out to other characters along the way, we belong in the end to the Final Girl; there is no alternative. (Clover 2002, 78)

What gives? Are we now so postfeminist that we have begun, finally, to identify with the woman, accept her gaze, and exert it onto men? Was the narrative so easily reversed? At first glance, this seems like a victory for the feminist cause, in which women are finally in the driver's seat of narrative.

And when viewed purely on its morphological content, the slasher film does seem to thoroughly flip the predominant script of men as predators and women as prey—by the end, the man-prey is killed by the woman-predator. Clover (2002) explains:

On the face of it, the relation between the sexes in slasher films could hardly be clearer. The killer is with few exceptions recognizably human and distinctly male; his fury is unmistakably sexual in both roots and expression; his victims are mostly women, often sexually free and always young and beautiful ones. Just how essential this victim is to horror is suggested by her historical durability. If the killer has over time been variously figured as shark, fog, gorilla, birds, and slime, the victim is eternally and prototypically the damsel. Cinema hardly invented the pattern. It has simply given visual expression to the abiding proposition that, in Poe's famous formulation, the death of a beautiful woman is the "most poetical topic in the world" (Clover 2002, 77).

But this morphological approach to the protagonist and antagonist is precisely what Clover disrupts, pointing out that "the gender of the principals [is not] as straightforward as it first seems" (80).

In the case of the killer, his masculinity is always "severely qualified", and he "ranges from the virginal or sexually inert to the transvestite or transsexual". In some cases, like Doctor Elliot, the killer "is spiritually divided", or, in the case of *Friday The 13th*, is "even equipped with vulva and vagina" (60). For the protagonist, who Clover deems "The Final Girl", her gender is "likewise compromised," in this cases "by her masculine interests, her inevitable sexual reluctance...her apartness from other girls, [and] sometimes her name" (80). Clover continues:

At the level of the cinematic apparatus, her unfemininity is signaled clearly by her exercise of the "active investigating gaze" normally reserved for males and hideously punished in females when they assume it themselves; tentatively at first and then aggressively; the Final Girl looks *for* the killer, even tracking him to his forest hut or his underground labyrinth, and then *at* him, therewith bringing him, often for the first time, into our vision as well. When, in the final scene, she stops screaming, looks at the killer, and reaches for the knife (sledge hammer, scalpel, gun, machete, hanger, knitting needle, chainsaw),

she addresses the killer on his own terms (Clover 2002, 80).

The phallic imagery is not to be discounted, and plays an important role in establishing her “unfemininity” or newly phallic purpose within the heterosexual matrix of the film. For example, regarding accusations of punishing female sexuality in *Halloween*, director John Carpenter explained that “the one girl who is the most sexually uptight just keeps stabbing this guy with a long knife...She uses all those phallic symbols on the guy...She and the killer have a certain link: sexual repression” (81). In this way, the film is subsumed by relatively normative heterosexual desire, regardless of the specific acting out of the genitals.

Crucially, it is not by accident that gender is qualified in this particular fashion, and by the end of the phallic exercise, “[t]he Final Girl has not just manned herself; she specifically unmans an oppressor whose masculinity was in question to begin with” (81). What is perhaps even more notable, then, is the specifically non-phallic construction of the killer. Clover (2002) explains:

In this respect, slasher killers have much in common with the monsters of classic horror—monsters who, in Linda Williams’s formulation, represent not just “an eruption of the normally repressed animal sexual energy of the civilized male” but also the “power and potency of a non-phallic sexuality.” To the extent that the monster is constructed as feminine, the horror film thus expresses female desire only to show how monstrous it is. The intention is manifest in *Aliens*, in which the Final Girl, Ripley, is pitted in the climactic scene against the most terrifying “alien” of all: an egg-laying Mother (80).

By “unmanning” the killer, she also “unphalluses” them, penetrating them with clearly phallic symbols. The aversion to non-phallic sexuality is unmistakable. In *Dressed to Kill*, for example, the notion of Elliot having phallic sex with a woman is what precipitates his murderous rage, and while this remains complicated throughout the film, by the end he is ultimately subdued by the phallus-gun of the final girl. In *Silence of the Lambs*, Buffalo

Bill wishes to take the role of woman himself—and is similarly ultimately subdued by the final girl (Demme 1991). In *Scream 2*, the phallus is indeed present, but the antagonist is actually multiple, and the true mastermind is a cissexual woman, Mrs. Loomis, seeking revenge on our protagonist for killing her son, Billy, who was the antagonist in the first film (Craven 1997).

And in *Friday the 13th*, the villain attacking kids at Camp Crystal Lake is ultimately revealed to be a cissexual woman, Mrs. Voorhees, whose young son (Jason) had drowned years before (Cunningham 1980). In the case of Mrs. Voorhees, the phallus is not physically present (as an organ) at all, which points to the truly linguistic nature of the phallus. After all, Lacan (2002) makes clear that "...the phallus is a signifier...intended to designate as a whole the effects of the signified, in that the signifier conditions them by its presence as a signifier"(Lacan and Fink 2002, 218). The morphological phallus is therefore subordinate to this signifier-signified relationship.

4.2 Deep Play and Visual Pleasure

How might we describe the role of these narratives, gazes, and identifications in our society—and indeed the role of film? Geertz's model holds a lot of merit. In his time with the Balinese people, Anthropologist Clifford Geertz (2005) turned his eye to a simple Balinese ritual: cockfights. In Bali, the cockfight is more than just the fighting of cocks. Geertz (2005) explains:

To anyone who has been in Bali any length of time, the deep psychological identification of Balinese men with their cocks is unmistakable. The double entendre here is deliberate. It works in exactly the same way in Balinese as it does in English, even to producing the same tired jokes, strained puns, and uninventive obscenities. (Geertz 2005, 60).

Geertz (2005) goes on to point out that "As much of America surfaces in a ballpark, on a golf links, at a race track, or around a poker table, much of Bali surfaces in a cock ring.

For it is only apparently cocks that are fighting there. Actually, it is men.” (Geertz 2005, 59-60). The cockfight ritual, much like organized sports in America, fosters a culture of betting. In some games, the bets are small, but in others, they become astronomically large.

Geertz (2005) describes these high-stakes cockfights as a form of “deep play”, appropriating a term from Jeremy Bentham to describe the phenomenon, defining it as “play in which the stakes are so high that it is...irrational for men to engage in it at all. If a man whose fortune is a thousand pounds (or ringgits) wagers five hundred of it on an even bet, the marginal utility of the pound he stands to win is clearly less than the marginal disutility of the one he stands to lose” (71).

Slasher films may not be cockfights, but they do share a certain symbolic content and social role insofar as they “play at” social norms and actively validate the normative order. For example, while cinema does not have a direct monetary stake that cockfight betting entails, we might privilege both the spectator’s affiliation and identification with a given character as his or her stake in the action on screen/in the ring. Geertz (2005), for example, sketches the rules of cockfight betting:

A man virtually never bets against a cock owned by a member of his own kin group. Usually he will feel obliged to bet for it, the more so the closer the kin tie and the deeper the fight. If he is certain in his mind that it will not win, he may just not bet at all, particularly if it is only a second cousin’s bird or if the fight is a shallow one. But as a rule he will feel he must support it and, in deep games, nearly always does. Thus the great majority of the people calling “five” or “speckled” so demonstratively are expressing their allegiance to their kinsman, not their evaluation of his bird, their understanding of probability theory, or even their hopes of unearned income (75).

Any monetary stake is therefore secondary, and dependent upon identifications with a given player. After all, Geertz (2005) makes clear that “much more is at stake than material gain: namely, esteem, honor, dignity, respect—in a word, though in Bali a profoundly

freighted word, status. It is at stake symbolically, for...no one's status is actually altered by the outcome of a cockfight; it is only, and that momentarily, affirmed or insulted" (Geertz 2005, 71). In effect, the cockfight is a test of the strength of pre-existing affiliations, identifications, and empathies. Notably, "you rarely get two cocks from the same group [fighting]...and virtually never from the same sub-subfaction" (74). The other cock is from then literally Other, and the affiliated cock is subsumed by the Self.

Importantly, the cockfight creates the illusion of risk to status, though no one's affiliation is ever actually changed. But in return for our identification, we do get something in return: scopophilic pleasure. After all, the cockfight and the movie are, in the best conditions, spectator sports. In Bali, one takes another's cock as an object, subjecting it to a controlling and curious gaze as the cock is evaluated and targeted for destruction. Precisely the same arrangement is present in the horror film. Noël Carroll (2002) argues that "in order to account for the interest we take in and the pleasure we take from horror, we may hypothesize that, in the main, the locus of our gratification is not the monster as such but the whole narrative structure in which the presentation of the monster is staged" (Carroll 2002, 34). For Carroll (2002), "these stories, with great frequency, revolve around proving, disclosing, discovering, and confirming the existence of something that is impossible, something that defies standing conceptual schemes" (34). The narrative structure therefore *produces* pleasure, determining its foci and its limits.

As Lyotard suggests, "[n]arratives...define what has the right to be said and done in the culture in question, and since they are themselves a part of that culture, they are legitimated by the simple fact that they do what they do" (Lyotard 1984, 32). When viewed in these terms, we can say that the narrative structure of horror is therefore the primary mechanism through which we draw pleasure from a scene—all the while (re)transmitting cultural knowledge, whether it be the cockfight's engagement with affiliation and status or the horror film's play at gender norms. Already in our terms there is a kind of affiliation at play: How odd is it that the individual we call the "killer" is labeled as such, when the entire narrative of the film is based on subduing or killing him? Might we not be equally

warranted to attribute this label to the protagonists? The dichotomy is unavoidable, and it is not sufficient to talk about the antagonist on its own terms. Rather, the horror film is marked by a series of affective and erotic exchanges on screen (drawn from the symbolic order), and a certain uncertainty about the discreteness of these rolls and the binary oppositions of love/hate, pleasure/disgust, purity/impurity, and male/female. Writing on the 1990s British thriller, *The Crying Game*, Kate Bornstein (2006) explains:

You know the scene: the one that got all the attention—the one you weren't supposed to talk about? The one with the (gasp) full penile nudity—on the body of what appeared to be a woman! To me, the telling aspect of the scene is not so much the revelation of the person as transgendered, as much as it was the nausea and vomiting by the guy who did the discovering...With all the talk centering on the movie at the time of its release, no one focused on the issue of revulsion. I think no one brought it up, because it would draw focus to the other side of revulsion: desire (Bornstein 2006, 237).

Bornstein's observation of desire shrouded by disgust is precisely the message of Brian De Palma's opening scene to *Dressed to Kill*, as discussed in the previous chapter. But notably, the revelatory nature of this scene is repeated time and time again. In *Dressed to Kill*, for example, Elliot's 'reveal' in these terms happens after they are shot by the blonde cop: the camera cuts to Elliot on the ground, glasses and wig thrown off, laying incapacitated in women's clothing. In *The Silence of the Lambs*, shortly before they are confronted by Clarice Starling (the protagonist and final girl), the film cuts to an image of Buffalo Bill adorning himself in jewelry and lip gloss, topless. Here, as with the Mulvey's description, our gaze relies on the revelation/reveal of the female form to us/the protagonist.

Equally important in both, these revelations initiate the derivation of scopophilic pleasure. In *The Silence of the Lambs*, our first view of the killer is focused narrowly on their lips and bare chest and nipples. Moreover, the first utterance—"Would you fuck me? I'd fuck me"—not only indicated sexual desire in itself, but is supported by the familiar routine of sexualized lipstick application. But our pleasure is primarily voyeuristic.

It is not until Clarice arrives that we start seeing things through another's eyes. After first confronting Bill, the camera shifts to first person as she navigates the killer's basement lair. But when Bill cuts the lights, our identification with Clarice is called into question as we assume Bill's own eyes (through night vision). These moments are the height of tension, and the stakes of our play is at its highest as the stability of our own identifications is momentarily called into question. In the darkness, Bill stalks her, right behind her. He slowly raises his phallus-pistol, cocks it. Hearing this, Clarice fumbles her own phallus-weapon, already drawn. She beats him to the shot. At the very last second, our view returns to hers and she shoots and kills Buffalo Bill, and his body falls helpless, gurgling, onto the floor. As Clover pointed out, "[i]f, during the film's course, we shifted our sympathies back and forth, and dealt them out to other characters along the way, we belong in the end to the Final Girl; there is no alternative" (Clover 2002, 78). By taking Bill as our object, and subjecting him to our gaze, scopophilia is accomplished.

Scopophilia is not the only pleasure accomplished in these narratives, but the (re)production of the social structure itself renders the symbolic order stable and cohesive, and protects us from those expelled elements that are dangerous to society. In deep play (films or cockfights), this is clear, for what is at stake is not merely the particular status of those at play (this is always secured by the game itself), but the integrity of the symbolic order and its continued sustenance. In the case of transgender women, this sustenance rests upon images of monsters, killers, rapists, etc., and a particular notion of "overwhelming" or, as we will see in the next chapter, "infecting" those center to that symbolic order. Regardless, transgender women continue to be painted as antagonists, even in recent cases where representation at first appears positive. Amazon's popular comedy-drama, *Transparent*, for example, depicts a transgender woman as the main character (Mort/Maura), but primarily focuses on the effects of her coming out on her family and friends. Similarly, the film dramatization *The Danish Girl*, presents Lili Elbe's death as a freeing moment for her wife, Gerda, who is finally able to stabilize her life and heterosexual attachment upon Lili's death from complications to sex reassignment surgery

(Hooper 2015). The constant, in all these examples, is the prioritization of cisgender fears and feelings of disruption about the threat transgender women pose to their healthy, stable lives; in other words, all of these examples exhibit a remarkable empathy toward cisgender female characters, however “manned” they may be.

5 NECROTIC MACHINES

Comparisons of trans women with monsters are not exactly new, whether with compassion or disdain. We've already looked at several examples of this so far—Elliot in *Dressed to Kill*, Buffalo Bill in *The Silence of the Lambs*, etc. But within Feminist rhetoric, at least in published form, we might trace the vitality of this connection back to Mary Daly's (1978) book, *Gyn/Ecology*, in which she appropriates Shelley's description of Frankenstein's Monster as corollary for transgender women and the medical means of their embodiment, in a much larger argument about the nature of modern (patriarchal) medical science. Daly (1978) most notably accuses trans women of mounting "necrophillic invasion" on Western society and women's space (Daly 1978). This association was not particularly novel in itself, though it is surprising to find a horror story/academic book dedicated to the argument. Regardless, the queer—the nonprocreative—has often been associated with death. Harry Benshoff (2002) explains:

Queer even challenges "the Platonic parameters of Being – the borders of life and death."⁹ Queer suggests death over life by focusing on non-procreative sexual behaviors, making it especially suited to a genre which takes sex and death as central thematic concerns (Benshoff 2002, 94).

But notably, Daly, as well as her student Janice Raymond, inadvertently gave birth to various lines of transfeminist thought. In 1994, Stryker reclaimed and repositioned Frankenstein's Monster to argue for trans women's evasion of normative gendered and humanly embodiment. Stryker (1994) argues that, like the Monster's body, "[t]he transsexual body is an unnatural body. It is the product of medical science...a technological construction...flesh torn apart and sewn together again in a shape other than that in which it was born" (Stryker 1994, 237). The result of this shared condition of embodiment is that "[she] too [is] often perceived as less than fully human due to the means of [her] embodiment" (237).

For Stryker, it is her failure to normatively embody gender, and her “exclusion from human community [that] fuels a deep and abiding rage [that she], like the monster, direct[s] against the conditions in which [she] must struggle to exist” (Stryker 1994, 237). Stryker (1994) calls for a reclamation of the Monster for not just the transsexual cause:

I want to lay claim to the dark power of my monstrous identity without using it as a weapon against others or being wounded by it myself. I will say this as bluntly as I know how: I am a transsexual, and therefore I am a monster. Just as the words “dyke,” “fag,” “queer,” “slut,” and “whore” have been reclaimed, respectively, by lesbians and gay men, by anti-assimilationist sexual minorities, by women who pursue erotic pleasure, and by sex industry workers, words like “creature”, “monster”, and “unnatural” need to be reclaimed by the transgendered. By embracing and accepting them, even piling one on top of another, we may dispel their ability to harm us (240)

By embracing the Monster, Stryker (1994) distinguishes herself from “humans that take [affront] at being called a “creature””, arguing that it “results from the threat the term poses to your status as “lords of creation,” beings elevated above mere material existence”. Unlike these humans, Stryker (1994) finds “no shame...in acknowledging [her] egalitarian relationship with non-human material Being” (240). Stryker’s Monster, like Haraway’s Cyborg, thus resists models of violence and oppression that weaponize identity categories or reify them as discrete. For Stryker (1994), the “monster” is figured as an ontology, just as Haraway’s cyborg “is our ontology...giv[ing] us our politics” (Haraway 2006, 104). Stryker (1994) thus sees the Monster as a new shot at Haraway’s affinity-based politics.

But while Stryker’s reformulation of the Monster seems to offer a powerful alternative and rebuttal to Daly’s work and many popular notions of transsexuality, it also limits us to an stationary Being, stripping the trans-monster of its expanse and trajectory; disavowing the Becoming that makes the Monster possible (and dangerous) in the first place. Stryker (1994) privileges the state (and shock) of necrophillia over the becom-

ing of necrosis. Rather than engaging deeply with Mary Daly's arguments about trans women, technology, and society, she resorts to argumentation dependent solely on Daly's most provocative claims. Moreover, by approaching Daly in this manner, Stryker focuses wholly on the biological constructedness of trans womanhood, and downplays its more mechanic and immaterial/spectral elements of industrial and technological progress—the one subject *Gyn/Ecology* privileges above all else. So how might the post-human read Mary Daly? To continue Haraway and Stryker's project, we've got to go back to *Gyn/Ecology*.

5.1 Becoming-Dead

"Einar is dead and we both need to accept that", so says Lili Elbe in *The Danish Girl* (Hooper 2015). The affinity between death and transition runs deep, and not simply because, for many trans women, their decisions to live their life as such too often lead them prematurely to death by violence. Moreover, medications used for medical transition are commonly framed as dangerous or deadly, or as if they are the cause of any and all ailments seems to arrive along with the notion that trans women are to blame for these afflictions. This sentiment is prevalent in both medical practice and media representation. For example, recently in an episode of *The Good Doctor*, a young transgender girl taking puberty blockers develops testicular cancer and osteoporosis, both of which are attributed to her medications (Gordon 2018). These health problems are used as a justification for required her to desist her medication—effectively disallowing her from transitioning. The notion that transition-related medications are killing or adversely affecting one's health is eerily similar to an earlier episode of *Grey's Anatomy* from 2006, in which a trans woman's hormone therapy supposedly leads her to developing breast cancer, pushing her Doctor to opt out of performing sex reassignment surgery. (Minahan 2006). According to the Doctor, it wouldn't matter if they performed sex reassignment surgery, because she will have to go back to being a "man" anyway (Minahan 2006).

In *The Danish Girl*, Lili's ultimate decision to pursue sex reassignment surgery is

what ultimately kills her, and she dies because of complications from a post-op infection (Hooper 2015). The key takeaway here is that transition is not only deadly, but actively causes a certain necrosis of the body (which inevitably leads to death, either naturally or from violence) that can only be 'fixed' or prevented by desistance and a return to normative gendered embodiment, suggesting that there is a particular "slipping away" of the trans subject which separates them from the relative stability of the Monster or other chimeras. Rather than a stationary object that blurs gender in its ambiguity, the trans subject blurs gender through its move from unambiguity to ambiguity (and to unambiguity again). In other words, there is a trajectory, a pointedness, and a progression: a becoming-trans, which, because the concept of legible gender is so closely tied to personhood, requires becoming-dead. As Shelley's Monster might suggest, creation and death are bedfellows—but so are construction and decomposition.

But there is a more explicit connection to be made here for living trans subjects. Relatives of trans people, for example, are said to "mourn" the "loss" of their transitioned loved ones, as if a kind of temporal and physical disjunction occurs somewhere along the process of social and medical transition. In the 2018 documentary, *Transformer*, which chronicles the life and transition of former powerlifter Janae Kroc, her mom recalls:

When Matt first called me, for a while, I grieved...I couldn't sort my feelings...I thought, "why in hell?" I'm... But it was almost like Matt died...And uhm...it's hard, you grieve, you hate it, you hide it, you don't want to talk about it. As a mother, it's the hardest thing I've dealt with. It's like a death. And people will say "No, it's not", to me it is. I grieved, you cry, but it comes down to...it's your child (Del Monte 2017).

Even among trans people themselves, "deadname" has come to supplant "birth name" or "former name". What can account for this connection to death? What or who has died? Is it not the same flesh and blood, however modified, standing before us? How does one grieve the loss of an object that persists? How can one grieve what one has not lost? What even *is* the trans-chimera, the one that slips away?

Mary Daly, perhaps unknowingly, approaches these questions. In *Gyn/Ecology*, Mary Daly argues for a feminist praxis to recover or reformulate the lost myths of pre-patriarchal gynocentric societies. In her mind, myths continue to frame and justify patriarchal actions, and therefore women, and all who hope to bring about a better society, would do well to resist patriarchal domination by flipping the existing hierarchies. In her own words, “[p]atriarchy perpetuates its deception through myth” (Daly 1978, 34). For Daly, patriarchal society is fundamentally necrophillic (in the literal sense; death-loving) in nature. Quoting Erich Fromm, the “essential elements” of necrophillic society are its “worship of speed and the machine; poetry as a means of attack; glorification of war; destruction of culture; hate against women; locomotives and airplanes as living forces. (36)” (44). To these ends, necrophillic phallocratic society seeks to appropriate Female energy, particularly the life-giving “biophillic” energy of Female Selves. Phallocratic society, for Daly, produces various forms of “feminine nonwomen” as replacements for these fully appropriated Female Selves. She explains:

At the present stage of technology, the “presence” (absence) of women is represented in the form of photographs, or of televised two-dimensional images. The direction of phallotechnic progress is toward the production of three-dimensional, perfectly re-formed “women”, that is, hollow holograms. These projections, or feminine nonwomen, the replacements for female Selves, could of course eventually be projected in “solid” form – as solid waste products of technical progress, as robots. Eventually, too, the “solid” substitutes could be “flesh and blood” (not simply machines), produced by such “miraculous” techniques as total therapy (for example, B.F. Skinner’s behaviorism), transsexualism, and cloning. The march of mechanical masculinist progress is toward the elimination of female Self-centering reality. Whether or not our replacements are materially “hollow” or “solid” is not the ultimate issue. These are simply different ways of describing the absence of Female Depth, of spirit, in feminine nonwomen conceived by male mothers (39).

These machines—“solid waste product[s] of technical progress”—are flesh and blood, yet hollow and mechanical: they are the reanimated dead, the undead, objects devoid of Selves. They are zombies, and to be a zombie is to fraudulently present yourself as living when you are, in fact, dead. The rotten corpse, no longer a person, is matter taken from its rightful place—the grave—reanimated and removed from the normal progression of being/time.

For Daly, these zombie machines—“feminine nonwomen”—live in a “hollow/depthless state”, here termed “robotitude”. Daly continues:

[Robotitude] is comparable to a term coined by Françoise d'Eaubonne to describe the state of servitude of women in a phallographic world: “feminitude”. Robotitude, however, stresses the reduction of life in the state of servitude to mechanical motion. Moreover, it is not genderspecific, and thus indicates that the robot state is not restricted to women. (Daly 1978, 39)

For Daly, these “feminine nonwomen” are a distinct object of ire—and fear. Daly argues that “[s]ince the Female Self is the Otherworld to the patriarchs their intent is to close us off from our own selves, deceiving us into believing that these are the only doorways to our depths and that the fathers hold the keys” (35). These fathers are of two types: the “supermasculine” Apollo, who “overtly oppresses/destroys with his contrived boundaries/hierarchies/rules/roles” and the “feminine Dionysus [who] blurs the senses, seduces, confuses his victims – drugging them into complicity, offering them his “heart” as a love potion that poisons” (48).

The notion of ‘poison’ or ‘drugging’ is a common theme in zombie literature is the notion of a contagion or viral propagation of a zombie pathogen that comes from without (a pollutant). In these worlds, contact with a zombie—specifically, a bite—transforms the body from alive to a necrotic state of decomposition and (re)animation, reconfiguring the victim’s flesh and riding the body of the subject’s identity, replacing his/her Self (memories, hopes, dreams, affiliations. etc.) with a necrophillic agenda of human annihilation and zombie propagation. Zombie juice—delivered via zombie bites—is a kind of necrotic

poison that removes the individual in favor of a mechanistic interface.

But this notion of an “outside” pollutant or a virus coming from without is not without challenge. In a Daly-esque model of the zombie apocalypse, it is assumed that there is a “pure” or prior class of beings that are put into danger by outside pollutants, in this case, the mechanistic march of phallotechnic progress. But this prior purity is difficult to support, as Robert Kirkman, writer of *The Walking Dead* comic book, explains:

Just to get this on the record once and for all... and it is complicated, I know... here’s how zombification works. Whatever makes people come back as zombies, it’s inside them. It’s inside everyone. No matter how anybody dies, as long as the brain is intact... they turn into a zombie (Kirkman 2015, 26).

This is the central point: it is not so much that we *become* zombies or robots, but rather that we express or perform a zombitude/robotitude that is already present. Therefore, to “drink the trans kool-aid”, an anecdote I referred to in the introduction, is to descend into robotitude—it’s the Dionysian drug Daly warns us about. “Trans kool-aid” is the viral load of zombification, the “zombie juice” that brings the cisgender ally to a similar state of zombitude, abandoning her Female Self for the phallotechnic ‘trap’ by embracing trans women as her sisters.

To put in other terms, this notion of purity relies on a rejection, indeed an *abjection* of discordant elements, in this case an abjection of the necrotic/constructed elements of the Self in order to establish the lost freedom of pre-patriarchal myth. But the notion of pre-patriarchal society is just that: a myth. While trans people may be specifically constructed “as constructions, construction applies similarly to all of us (Bettcher 2014, 398). As Haraway states plainly, “[b]y the late twentieth century...we are all chimera, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism...we are cyborgs” (Haraway 2006, 104). Kirkman (2015) continues:

So what the fuck does a bite do?

Well... bites, and direct to blood contact with zombie gunk, like the Saviors

attacked with, causes death. It's a strong infection that leads to fever that kills someone. Then the "virus" or whatever is already in them... turns them into a zombie (Kirkman 2015, 26).

In other words, every woman is to some degree transsexual, augmented, and fabricated. It is only by rendering the zombie *outside* and *Other* that a zombie invasion can occur.

The fear of zombification/pollution/transexing is, in Kristevan terms, a kind of "excremental fear" of coming into contact with that which has been excreted, standing for a kind of "danger to identity that comes from without: the ego threatened by the non-ego, society threatened by its outside, life by death" (Kristeva and Roudiez 1982, 71). The transsexual as zombie, however, opens up a second fear, that of menstrual blood, or "the danger issuing from within the identity (social or sexual); it threatens the relationship between the sexes within a social aggregate and, through internalization, the identity of each sex in the face of sexual difference" (71). Sara Ahmed echoes this conception of fear, arguing that:

...hate is distributed across various figures (in this case, the mixed-racial couple, the child molester, the rapist, aliens, and foreigners). These figures come to embody the threat of loss: lost jobs, lost money, lost land. They signify the danger of impurity, or the mixing or taking of blood. They threaten to violate the pure bodies; such bodies can only be imagined as pure by the perpetual restaging of this fantasy of violation (Ahmed 2004, 118).

Daly makes no hesitation in making this fear explicit. Indeed, her concern is not just a personal sense of discomfort but the much larger threat of, in her own words, "female annihilation"(Daly 1978, 48).

For Daly, if womankind is to survive, polluting elements must be purged, though this extends well beyond transsexuals. For Daly (1978), "[t]he products of necrophillic Apolonian male mating are of course the technological "offspring" which pollute the heavens and the earth...are fatal for the future of this planet...nuclear reactors and the

poisons they produce, stockpiles of atomic bombs...these are the multiple fetuses/feces of stale male-mates in love with a dead world...[t]he excrement of Exxon is everywhere...[i]t is ominously omnipresent" (Daly 1978, 46). But this notion of dangers arises first and foremost by repositioning the source of the problem onto the discordant. As Mary Douglas (2013) points out "anomalous events may be labelled dangerous...[a]ttributing danger is one way of putting a subject above dispute...it also helps to enforce conformity" (Douglas 2013, 40-41). As Ahmed (2004) puts it:

This narrative is far from extraordinary. Indeed, what it shows us is the production of the ordinary. The ordinary is here fantastic. The ordinary white subject is a fantasy that comes into being through the mobilization of hate, as a passionate attachment tied closely to love. The emotion of hate works to animate the ordinary subject, to bring that fantasy to life, precisely by constituting the ordinary as in crisis, and the ordinary person as the real victim. The ordinary becomes that which is already under threat by imagined others whose proximity becomes a crime against person as well as place. The ordinary or normative subject is reproduced as the injured party: the one "hurt" or even damaged by the "invasion" of others. The bodies of others are hence transformed into "the hated" through a discourse of pain. They are assumed to "cause" injury to the ordinary white subject, such that their proximity is read as the origin of bad feeling: indeed, the implication here is that the white subject's good feelings (love, care, loyalty) are being "taken" away by the abuse of such feelings by others (Ahmed 2004, 118).

The solution? In an interview, Daly is clear: "If life is to survive on this planet, there must be a decontamination of the Earth. I think this will be accompanied by an evolutionary process that will result in a drastic reduction of the population of males" (Bridle 1999).

This notion of freedom was rearticulated somewhat in *The Danish Girl*. In that film, Lili Elbe succumbs to complications shortly after having sex reassignment surgery, but her wife, Gerda, who had long suffered the interesting and terrifying fate of having a

transgender wife, is plainly depicted as being liberated by Lili's death. Indeed, after Lili's death, Gerda departs to Lili's childhood residence—a vista she'd painted many times before—and releases her scarf, one of Lili's prized items, into the wind (and thus into freedom) (Hooper 2015). Do you recall in Part 3 when I argued that love could easily coexist with or be converted to hate? Ahmed (2004) notes well that “here a subject...is presented as endangered by imagined others whose proximity threatens not only to take something away from the subject...but to take the place of the subject...in other words, the presence of these objects is imagined as a threat to the object of love” (Ahmed 2004, 117). If, following Part 2, we might model the medicalist arrangement in heterosexual terms, the conflict between cis women and trans women is quite the love affair gone awry.

Across medical, feminist, and popular discourses, as well as visual representation, there's a certain notion that trans women are or are trying to become “replacements” for cisgender women, either by coping their bodies or fulfilling their social role. Without a doubt, early medicalists sought to create from trans women anatomically unambiguous (cissexual) females and suitable gendered replacements for male desire. Stone 1992 explains:

The Stanford clinic was in the business of helping people...[t]herefore the final decisions of eligibility for gender reassignment were made by the staff on the basis of an individual sense of the “appropriateness of the individual to their gender of choice”. The clinic took on the additional role of “grooming clinic” or “charm school” because, according to the judgment of the staff, the men who presented as wanting to be women didn't always “behave like” women...[t]heir involvement with the grooming clinics was an effort to produce not simply anatomically legible females, but women...i.e., gendered females. (Stone 1992, 10).

Blanchard's autogynephilia theory repeats some common aspects of the 'replacements' trope by positing trans women as desiring themselves as a woman due to an 'erotic target

location error' of heterosexual desire—thereby literally turning themselves into replacements for the women they love.

But autogynephilia is not so straightforward. Stephanie Hsu (2019), for example, provides a powerful critique of Blanchard's typology by reading Blanchard through Fanon's account of interracial relationships in *Black Skin, White Masks*, arguing that Blanchard ignores the material relations which make womanhood desirable for transgender women. Hsu (2019) explains:

In specific terms, Blanchard and his supporters ignore the psychoanalytic approaches to social and material loss that form the foundation of Fanon's anti-colonial and anti-racist thought. Lawrence has described paraphilic sexuality as a confusion between inside and outside, while Blanchard has made reference to "the fusion of the longing to have a woman and the longing to be a woman—the confounding of desire and envy—which is often apparent in clinical interviews with autogynephiles" (2005, 440). Yet Blanchard himself has confounded here the formula of "having" versus "being" which psychoanalytic theory has consistently posited as the interaction between desire and identification, not desire and envy (Hsu 2019).

Yet regardless of the veracity of this analysis, we need not look far to find invocations of appropriation, duplication, and replacement within Feminist discourse as well. Janice Raymond, herself a student of Mary Daly, restated Daly's "necrophillic invasion" in new terms, claiming that "[a]ll transsexuals rape women's bodies by reducing the female form to an artifact, appropriating this body for themselves... Rape, although it is usually done by force, can also be accomplished by deception" (Raymond 1979, 104). Here as in Daly's work, "feminine nonwomen" and other products of "male mating" pose a very real threat to women, humanity, and women's organizing space. By presenting themselves as women (read: as human, as living, etc.), transsexuals reduce femaleness to an artifact (a necroticized/roboticized image) and replace females with hollow shells that are, in Daly's words, completely "male-identified" (in the classical sense of political tilt,

not necessarily gender).

You also see this trend in *The Silence of the Lambs*, in which Buffalo Bill's entire project is to create realistic woman suits based on the necrotic skin of the women he's killed (Demme 1991). In this case, femaleness is literally reduced to an artifact of the Female Self—her skin—and refashioned with the “man” inside. As in autogynephillic medical literature, Bill's attraction to women is completely subsumed by his *attraction to himself as one*. There's the scene, where it's just his lips, fixed with lipstick, repeating “Would you fuck me? I'd fuck me” in various forms as he applies makeup, before he tucks his penis between his legs and gives us a dancing show (Demme 1991). It's the visual embodiment of the autogynephillia diagnosis.

While no one is going to be “fooled” by Buffalo Bill, his existence at least introduces the fear of such a travesty as a *possibility*. As Raymond (1979) points out, “[r]ape, although it is usually done by force, can also be accomplished by deception” (Raymond 1979, 104). This roughly comes down to a crisis of affiliations. In the first episode of the AMC adaptation of *The Walking Dead*, there's a scene where Rick finds a young white girl alone in the chaos. Like any good human would, he reaches out to protect her, only to be shocked and taken aback upon realizing she is, actually, a zombie (Nicotero 2010). Obviously, we've already established the danger of the zombie Other/Object to the human Self/Subject, but there is another kind of fear at play: the perversion and manipulation of his empathies toward the young girl, and the disgust upon his realization of her zombitude. This is, in its own way, a kind of *trans panic*: the object of love has been fucked with, necrotized, lost, and zombified. For trans women, the realization of their hidden zombie-ness creates division among women because of the seductive power of empathy and its visual elicitation, which inadvertently moves good feminists to identify and care for The Enemy. This is where trans women deceive—empathy has always been the love potion.

Unfortunately for Daly and others, the threat of replacement functions precisely because it is impossible to identify trans women from a cis woman based on visual in-

teraction alone, just as the fear of racial mixing sparks paranoia precisely because it is impossible to tell who is 'really' pure. In this way, the notion of trans women "passing" is considered especially dangerous, just as it is dangerous when any machine or robot "passes" as human. Blogger n1x (2018) explains:

As Nick Land says...in "Imitation Games", "They point out that Alan Turing, as a homosexual retrospectively diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, would have been thoroughly versed in the difficulties of 'passing' imitation games, long before the composition of his landmark 1950 essay on Computing Machinery and Intelligence."⁶ The essay Turing wrote famously introduced the Turing test for AI, setting the standard for a perfect AI being one that can trick a human into believing it is itself a human...For queer people, passing is a reality, much like it is a reality for AI... But for no one else, especially in the latter half of the 2010s, is passing a more pronounced facet of daily life than for the trans woman...There are many reasons to have this desire, but the biggest one, the one that AI and trans women both share to a very literal degree is this: "If an emerging AI lies to you, even just a little, it has to be terminated instantly." (n1x 2018).

In a world where gender roles are becoming increasingly malleable, at least in certain aesthetic dimensions, replacements threatens to accelerate the process of identity collapse and affinity grouping, blurring the lines of affinity until disintegration. This is what the true trans panic is about. As Daly suggests, "[t]o Dionysus was attributed the ability to shatter cognitive boundaries in women, that is, the capacity to drive women mad—which he did whenever possible" (Daly 1978, 48). But much like the zombie or the AI, it is often impossible to identify the threat until it's too late. As a terroristic assault, trans deception (or zombie deception, or any other deception of empathies) works just as much through its non-being as its being; it is the specter haunting the women's movement. It's a ghost.

5.2 Trans Hauntologies

In 2018's *Hereditary*, 16-year-old Peter rushes his 13-year-old sister, Charlie, to the hospital following her allergic reaction. When Peter swerves to avoid a dead deer, he inadvertently decapitates Charlie on a telephone pole. Later, we find out that Charlie had been inhabited by a male demon, *Paimon*, all along, who secretly plotted to find himself a male host. As it turns out, Peter and Charlie's entire family had long been haunted by the ghost of Paimon. Following a series of supernatural events resulting in his mother's possession and (possession-induced) suicide. Peter jumps out of the window, but just as he's on the ground, a light enters his body and he awakens, following his mother's levitating corpse to Charlie's treehouse. Upon arrival, various members of his family and community, in reanimated and/or decapitated form, greet him and begin to swear their loyalty. Finally free from his female host, Peter/Paimon is set to rule over all of them. Here's one of the final quotes of the film:

Joan: Oh, hey, hey, hey. It's alright. Charlie, you're alright, now. You...are Paimon. One of the eight kings of Hell. We have looked to the northwest and called you in. We've collected your first female body and give you now this healthy male host. We reject the trinity and pray devoutly to you, Great Paimon. Give us your knowledge of all secret things, bring us honor, wealth, and good familiars. Bind all men to our will as we have bound ourselves for now and ever to yours. Hail, Paimon! (Aster 2018)

On first look, one might read this as a cautionary tale of transmasculinity rather than transfemininity, but I think this would miss the mark completely. Is this not exactly the fear that trans women will "revert" to masculinity, and that the corporeally female form is just one step towards eventual male domination? As Raymond (1979) puts explicitly, when trans women transition they "revert to masculinity (but not male body appearance) by becoming the man within the woman" (Raymond 1979, 104). So what exactly reanimates the zombie? The ghost of Paimon (understood as masculinity), of course.

The spectral dimension of trans embodiment is not something Stryker was willing to pursue. But nonetheless, the fear of the transsexual is precisely a fear of the non-being, and specifically a fear that their “past” maleness will come back to act through their reanimated corpses. This is not an ontology, precisely, it is a *hauntology*. Colin Davis(2005) explains:

Hauntology supplants its near-homonym ontology, replacing the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive. Attending to the ghost is an ethical injunction insofar as it occupies the place of the Levinasian Other: a wholly irrecoverable intrusion in our world, which is not comprehensible within our available intellectual frame-works, but whose otherness we are responsible for preserving (Davis 2005, 373).

As I’ve explained before, the fear of the ghost (or of the trans woman) is totally dependent on this its non-present present: the spiritual possession of the female we see in Raymond’s “man within the woman”. This dirtying of the female body by the male (who is normatively rendered “out”), reveals the (un)abject horror of Daly’s fears. Indeed, Kristeva argues that “[t]aking a closer look at defilement, as Mary Douglas has done, one ascertains [that]...filth is not a quality in itself, but it applies only to what relates to a boundary and, more particularly, represents the object jettisoned out of that boundary...” (Kristeva and Roudiez 1982, 69). The object, now “jettisoned out”, works precisely on the subject in its exit/non-being, solidifying the boundary between male/female.

This repetitive function of boundary solidification produces haunting. The late Mark Fisher (2018) explains that “Derrida defines hauntology as the stuff of that which repeats without ever being present...[t]o elaborate, we might say that the revenant repeats without being present in the first place—where “place” is equivalent in meaning to “time””. For Fisher(2018), “nothing occupies the point of origin, and that which haunts insists without ever existing” (Fisher and Reynolds 2018, 284). Two passages from Daly reveal the repetitive and possessive character of haunting/robotitude:

De Beauvoir writes that “life is occupied in both perpetuating itself and in surpassing itself; if all it does is maintain itself, then living is only not dying ...” (23). This maintenance level of “only not dying” is what I am calling robotitude (Daly 1978, 40).

The state of robotitude is marking time hopelessly, a pure repetition of mechanical gestures. Beginning living means that the victim sees and names the fact that the oppressor obliges her to consume her transcendence in vain, changing her into a thing (28). No kind of tokenism in a transcendence-sapping system will free our Selves from the spell of patriarchal myth. As long as that myth (system of myths) prevails, it is conceivable that there be a society comprised even of 50 percent female tokens: women with anatomically female bodies but totally male-identified, male-possessed brains/spirits. The myth/spell itself of phallocratism must be broken (41).

On some level, is the zombie not always a spectral (non)-being? I think again of the little girl Rick tries to help in *The Walking Dead*—is she not possessed in the repetition of zombie acts?

The common notion that one is “losing” their trans loved one speaks to this possession, albeit in reverse. And from their perspective, I suppose this makes sense. Littman notes how parents, on hearing their trans children narrate their experiences, described how “it didn’t sound like their child’s voice”, describing it as “sounding scripted,” “like a form letter,” and “practically copy and paste” from “online and other sources” (Littman 2018, 14). By transitioning, trans people “slip away”: their bodies become reconfigured (necrotic), their behaviors and expressions change (the pathway to robotitude/possession), etc. But at a certain point, this reverses directly back to Daly’s point. You’d think the “loss” of a son would be accompanied by the birth of a daughter, and that family members would easily be able to switch pronouns, names, etc. But that’s not the case at all, instead, the “loss” of the son is made un-mournable by the persistence of the body, albeit in reconfigured, necrotic form—the burial or funerary ritual never occurs, and the

spirit lives on.

For trans women, the non-presence of maleness continues to act on them and others around them; trans women thus become “haunted” by maleness. Likewise, zombies become “haunted” by the ghost of the person they once were. The little girl Rick attempts to help is terrifying precisely because of the (non)presence of her humanity: the ever-present non-presence of the adorable little girl we feel compelled to assist. The little girl calls out to us, but all that’s left is the zombie. Daly and Raymond may claim that this ability to confuse and blur our empathy and affiliation is to the benefit of the zombie, and would therefore naturally be to the benefit of the trans woman and her sinister goals. But it also seems painfully clear that most trans women do not *enjoy* the repetitive aspect of this haunting—it seems improbable to find trans women that enjoy being misgendered, misnamed, and subject to violence on account of that (non)present fact. But this malaise sparks a new question: What do trans women do about being haunted? To put in Daly’s terms, how do trans women “begin to live”, and how do they escape this life of mechanical repetitions?

6 READING/WRITING TRANS CONCLUSIONS

By now, I do not need to reiterate the tremendous antipathy and violence leveled against transgender women and others who similarly refuse or obscure normative gender. But here I would like to turn towards the more material aspects of this violence with regards to trans subjectivation through a series of case studies of transmisogynistic violence.

Crucially, and this bears repeating, trans women are subject to a number of cultural procedures which frame and justify their maltreatment, reinterpreting them as deceptive, deviant men who deserved and even provoked the violence they have faced. Talia Bettcher argues that transgender individuals are subject to “gender verification”, and far too often, the punishment for having a gender which is unverifiable or fraudulent is violence, erasure, death, and destruction (Bettcher 2007). The consequences are not altogether dissimilar in the clinic, where trans women face a variety of strategies to “weed out” those who cannot or do not desire to be normatively gendered. In these cases, death, exclusion from care, and other forms of violence serve a persuasive role in disincentivizing outward expressions of gender variance.

Consider Angie Zapata, an 18-year-old Latina trans girl from Colorado, who was killed by Allen Andrade, an older man (31-years-old) whom she met on a social media website, *MocoSpace*. Zapata and Andrade spent over three days from July 15th to July 17th 2008. Over these three days, Andrade claimed that he had slowly become “suspicious” about whether Zapata was a “man”, eventually demanding that Zapata provide proof of her gender. When she refused to provide Andrade with the proof he asked for, Andrade claimed that “he “snapped” when he learned the woman he had oral sex with the night before was biologically a man” (Whaley 2008). Upon seeing Zapata naked and feeling her genitals, Andrade began beating Zapata, first with fists and then with a fire extinguisher, until she was dead. When he heard “gurgling sounds”, he hit her with the fire extin-

guisher once more to make sure she was dead. He then fled the scene with the murder weapon and other evidence (Tilleman 2010).

Although Andrade was eventually convicted of first degree murder with a hate crime elevation, not all cases are this clear cut. Weld County District Judge Marcelo Kopcow, for example, decided not to drop the charge from first degree murder to second degree murder because he “considered several statements Andrade allegedly made while in custody that showed his anger toward Zapata and gays in general, including Andrade referring to Zapata as “it”” (Whaley 2008). For Andrade, Zapata had moved from “she” to “it”, effectively robbed of and precluded from humanity. In the moment she died, so did the contestation of normative gender arrangements that her presence posed.

Similarly, 17-year-old Gwen Araujo was murdered by several men significantly older than her. Although the men had been suspicious for days about whether or not she was transgender, and in fact several had had penetrative sex with her. On 3 October, 2002, Araujo was “subjected to forced genital exposure in the bathroom, after which it was announced that “he was really a man”” (Bettcher 2007, 44). The men then murdered her and dumped her body over 150 miles away in the Sierra mountains (44).

Gwen Araujo and Angie Zapata, after death, were framed as “deceptive boys”, “men dressed as women”, and “men who live as women”. As C. Riley Snorton & Haritaworn point out, there is a “project of reincorporating transgender bodies of color under a more legible sign” (Snorton and Haritaworn 2006, 27). But this need not be explicitly hostile, and Talia Bettcher argues that the nature of trans language is fundamentally read in misgendering terms by broader society, always hinting a “true” sex beneath clothing or appearances. In this sense, even the most politically correct phrases are all read as “actually a man”. Bettcher (2007) explains:

For example, an MTF who is taken to misalign gender presentation with the sexed body can be regarded as “really a boy,” appearances notwithstanding. Here, we see identity enforcement embedded within a context of possible deception, revelation, and disclosure. In this framework, gender presentation

(attire, in particular) constitutes a gendered appearance, whereas the sexed body constitutes the hidden, sexual reality. Expressions such as “a man who dresses like a woman,” “a man who lives as a woman,” and even “a woman who is biologically male” all effectively inscribe this distinction.

Building off this reading, both Angie Zapata and Gwen Araujo’s murderers attempted to employ a “trans panic” defense to get off or to at least reduce the charges. The attorneys for Araujo’s murderers, for example, argued that the murder “was committed in the “heat of passion” upon discovery of Araujo’s “biological sex”” (Bettcher 2007, 44). Bettcher (2007) explains that “[her murderers] had earlier entered into sexual relations with Araujo and had also already been discussing Araujo’s identity several days prior to the slaying” (44). Nevertheless, their attorney “spoke of the “extreme shock, amazement and bewilderment” at the public disclosure of Araujo’s identity”, and used “allegations of “sexual deception” as a main tactic in his defense” (44). Writing for the Iowa State Daily, Zach Calef wrote, despite that the only known sexual assault was the men forcefully disrobing Araujo, that “[t]he men did what they did because Araujo violated them. He used lies and deception to trick them into having sex. He was not honest with them and had he been, none of this would have happened. A hate crime should not even be considered. No one killed him because he was a cross-dresser. These men were truly violated. They were raped” (44).

This project of reincorporation applies similarly to non-violent death. In 2014, 32-year-old Jennifer Gable was diagnosed with a brain aneurism. Several weeks later, she passed away suddenly at work on 9 October 2014. Her obituary, which used a picture of a young Jennifer, presented as a man, made no indication that she lived as a woman and that her name was Jennifer:

[Redacted] Gable, 32, Boise, passed away suddenly on October 9, 2014 while at his job at Wells Fargo Bank. He was born in Twin Falls on January 27, 1982 to Anthony Clark Gable and Lori Ann Walton. [Redacted] and his brother, Steven, were raised from toddlers by their maternal grandparents, George

and Joan Walton. He attended Morningside Elementary School, O'Leary Junior High and graduated from Twin Falls High School in the year 2000. He was married to Ann Arthurs in 2005 in Hawaii. They were later divorced. [Redacted] grew up as a member of the Twin Falls First Christian Church, where he was baptized in 1996 (Rothaus 2014).

Although Gable had been long transitioned, had her name legally changed, and lived as a woman in daily life, Jennifer's surviving family buried her as her deadname (i.e. the name given to her at birth), with her "hair cut short, dressed in a suit and presented as a man" (Rothaus 2014).

Clearly, it was not new news that Jennifer Gable was a transgender woman, and while Calef's narrative may imply a certain ignorance and deception in the case of Gwen Araujo, what is altogether more striking is that, in the case of both Araujo and Zapata, it seems that the murderers already suspected that they were transgender, and, as the case of Jennifer Gable shows all too well, the perpetrators and broader communities make deliberate attempts to erase this fact, reframing all three as men, with at most a nod to their gender identity in the language of "cross-dressing", presentation, and sexual preference. In so doing, they also justified the violence against them and upheld the overarching project of reincorporation.

These examples, coupled with Bettcher's arguments, suggest that trans women's identity claims may always be fraught or fragile insofar as they are easily and readily subjected to reincorporation as male. In Bettcher's terms, "insofar as transpeople are open to constructions as "really an x," (appearances notwithstanding) we will immediately find ourselves represented in ways that are contrary to our own identifications...[t]his construction literally reinscribes the position that genitalia are the essential determinants of sex by identifying that essential status as the "hidden reality or truth of sex"" (Bettcher 2007, 51). Yet in the meantime, when transgender identity is configured as such, I wonder: what motivates trans claims to identity in the first place? Why put so much effort into something so easily overturned or reincorporated?

6.1 Material Gains

There are certainly a variety of material reasons why trans women seek to prove the legitimacy of their identity claims. I have already reviewed the requirements of the medical structure in compelling trans women to present themselves in certain ways. Transfeminist Emi Koyama describes how trans women “in particular are encouraged and sometimes required to adopt the traditional definition of femininity in order to be accepted and legitimized by the medical community...[t]rans women often find themselves having to “prove” their womanhood by internalizing gender stereotypes in order to be acknowledged as women or to receive hormonal and surgical interventions” (Koyama 2006, 2). Medical gatekeeping not only determines who receives medical treatment, but also who receives legal recognition of their sex on major identity documents and vital records, including driver’s licenses and birth certificates. Policies vary state-by-state, and are often arbitrary, vague, and/or inconsistent, but typically require some type of medical “approval” prior to legal recognition (many require vaginoplasty or phalloplasty, others are non-specific), compelling trans people to submit to the rules of medical practice whether they desire genital surgery or not (“Changing Birth Certificate Sex Designations: State-By-State Guidelines” n.d.). Apparently as punishment, mismatched identity documents opens trans people up to violence and discrimination. Having a name and sex incongruent with one’s appearance allows trans people who have not ‘completed’ transition to be singled out, and many institutions now rely on ID sex designation. In allowing access to gender-segregated services, including bathrooms, sports teams, and so on. And given the requirements for legal reassignment of sex, those with non-normatively gendered bodies are erased entirely. The message is clear: non-conformity is not to be rewarded if a more normative option can be pursued.

Perhaps because of these material constraints, language changes rapidly within queer and trans communities, and each new set of terms is hotly contested. For example, 10-15 years ago the word “cisgender” or “cissexual” was uncommon in local trans

communities, instead terms such as 'biological female' or 'genetic male' were used in reference to cisgender individuals. Additionally, language such as "born female" was preferred, while "assigned female at birth" was virtually unheard of. In no small part thanks to the internet, terminology has proliferated and changed (however unevenly) faster than ever before, and to use these phrases openly—"born male" or "biological male"—would certainly draw condemnation and skepticism in many queer and trans communities in the late 2010s. As recently as 2007, Salah (2007) notes the ambiguity of the phrase "transgendered womyn" in lesbian spaces insofar as it was occasionally used to reference transmasculine and FTM spectrum individuals assigned female at birth, but could also be read as referring to trans women assigned male at birth (Salah 2007). Bettcher argued that because of differing gender ideologies, trans and cisgender communities could be considered different "worlds of sense", where different rules of gender apply in each (Bettcher 2007). The "trans world", however, is clearly anything but monolithic. In pointing out these discrepancies and shifts, I do not mean to repeat a conservative condemnation of political correctness, but it is worth noting that these shifts have left many queer and trans people on the 'wrong side' of a cultural shift within our communities, as the nascent trans communities attempts to meet the 'cisgender world' on its own terms, all while actively negotiating exactly what those terms of engagement will be.

Visibility remains at the forefront of this debate: How are trans people to be visible? Is visibility good? Writing for online magazine *The Body Is Not An Apology*, Joli St. Patrick argues that "[for] many trans women, visibility is exactly the problem: It is involuntary, and it leaves us vulnerable to both physical and social violence. We get mocked, harassed, talked down to—and trans women of color get murdered on a regular basis (St. Patrick 2018). Speaking on Transgender Day of Remembrance, St. Patrick continues:

...asking us to be "visible" on a particular day sounds, from a certain angle, like asking us to be more vulnerable, to open ourselves up to more degradation and violence...And for those who don't dare expose themselves this way—due to concern for their safety and well-being—there's an implicit mantle of shame

for remaining closeted (St. Patrick 2018).

Indeed, this mechanism of visibility functions similar on social and individual levels. Talia Bettcher argues that “the movement from invisible to visible generates the effect of revelation, disclosure, or exposure of hidden truth”, and in this revelation are four possible consequences:

(1) living in constant fear of exposure, extreme violence, and death; (2) disclosure as a deceiver or liar (possibly through forced genital exposure); (3) being the subject [of] violence and even murder; and (4) being held responsible for this violence (Bettcher 2007, 5).

Trans women are therefore in a bind: there are no “good” options that protect them from harm or the fear thereof. Mainstream discourses have falsely individualized the problem: they say that if trans women were just *honest*, that this would never happen, or if trans women didn’t “lead men on,” that they would never be murdered.

6.2 Lies and Omissions

Clearly, given the material benefits, trans subjects are under immense pressure to establish credible, cohesive, and normatively gendered narratives. Many scholars (including Garfinkel and Littman) across disciplines have noted how trans people “manage” or negotiate access to medical and legal services—but not all of these descriptions are sympathetic, and trans people have been accused of lying or fabricating narratives for material gain. This fact alone has served to deny trans people access to medical treatment, because, most notably, in the DSM-IV gender identity disorder carried with it a prohibition against transitioning for social or material gain, effectively ignoring “trans people’s social and material needs altogether” (Hsu 2019, 63-64).

Lisa Littman’s (2018) article, *Rapid-onset gender dysphoria in adolescents and young adults* is a prime example. Littman (2018) describes a number of situations where parents of trans-identified teenagers felt that their children were lying about their past, their

experiences of gender, or otherwise fabricating a past that supported the idea that they are, in fact, transgender. Littman goes on:

In addition to the previously mentioned case where the child literally rewrote her history by editing her diary, there were seven respondents who conveyed a process where their child was constantly rewriting their personal history to make it consistent with the idea that they always were transgender and/or had created a childhood history that was not what others had observed. It is unclear whether this process was deliberate or if the individuals were unaware of their actions. The following are quotes describing this phenomenon. One parent said, "...she is actively rewriting her personal history to support the idea that she was always trans." Another respondent added, "...my daughter denies events I recollect from her childhood and puberty that contradicts her narrative of 'always knowing she was a boy.'" Another respondent offered, "He is rewriting his personal history to suit his new narrative." And a fourth respondent described, "[Our] son has completely made up his childhood to include only girl friends and dressing up in girls clothes and playing with dolls, etc. This is not the same childhood we have seen as parents." (Littman 2018, 25-26).

Moreover, and as I mentioned in the last chapter, Littman's parental respondents described how "it didn't sound like their child's voice", describing it as "sounding scripted," "like a form letter," and "practically copy and paste" from "online and other sources" (14).

The notion that trans people lie or that they try to "invent" gender-affirming backstories for themselves is not particularly new. In the 1960s, Harold Garfinkel (2006) met a young woman, Agnes, who reported to a clinic at UCLA claiming to have spontaneously feminized at puberty. For years, she convinced physicians and other professionals at UCLA that she was intersex, and accordingly received sex reassignment surgery to "correct" her mismatched genitals. It was only later, however, after many years that she admitted to Garfinkel that she had lied, and had actually begun taking her mother's HRT

medication as a pre-teen, and was otherwise anatomically “normal” (Garfinkel 2006).

While even Garfinkel’s account is somewhat more sympathetic than Littman’s, it is certainly the case that many trans narratives do sound eerily the same. But Littman’s observation is neither a new nor novel observation when it comes to trans medicine (and trans identity more broadly). Stone (1992) already described how “the only textbook on the subject of transsexualism was Harry Benjamin’s definitive work *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (1966)”, and that “when the first transsexuals were evaluated for their suitability for surgery, their behavior matched up gratifyingly with Benjamin’s criteria” (Stone 1992, 10). Of course, Stone (1992) also points out that “the reason the candidates’ behavioral profiles matched Benjamin’s so well was that the candidates, too, had read Benjamin’s book” (10). Stone continues:

By textual authority, physical men who lived as women and who identified themselves as transsexuals, as opposed to male transvestites for whom erotic penile sensation was permissible, could not experience penile pleasure. Into the 1980s there was not a single preoperative male-to-female transsexual for whom data was available who experienced genital sexual pleasure while living in the “gender of choice”. [37] The prohibition continued postoperatively in interestingly transmuted form, and remained so absolute that no postoperative transsexual would admit to experiencing sexual pleasure through masturbation either. Full membership in the assigned gender was conferred by orgasm, real or faked, accomplished through heterosexual penetration. [38] “Wringing the turkey’s neck”, the ritual of penile masturbation just before surgery, was the most secret of secret traditions. To acknowledge so natural a desire would be to risk “crash landing”; that is, “role inappropriateness” leading to disqualification. [39] (10-11)

My question is this: are trans people lying, and if so, to what extent are they lying? What are they lying about? Paradoxically, trans women are now being told to be visible and “honest” (or else face violence), when not too long ago they were expected to remain

invisible. I suppose the question is thus: Which truth should trans people tell, and when? Indeed, Stone (1992) argues that “the highest purpose of the transsexual is to erase h/er-self, to fade into the “normal” population as soon as possible. Part of this process is known as constructing a plausible history—learning to lie effectively about one’s past”. At times, this was encouraged by clinicians, who sought to minimize the risk transsexuals could pose to the overarching two-gender system, as part of the “charm school” function of the gender identity clinic. This work is clearly not without reason or material gain for trans people—Stone (1992) claims that “[w]hat is gained is acceptability in society. What is lost is the ability to authentically represent the complexities and ambiguities of lived experience...authentic experience is replaced by a particular kind of story, one that supports the old constructed positions” (Stone 1992, 13).

6.3 Making History

Stone’s argument seems compelling at first, and the material conditions of transphobia, and especially transmisogyny, certainly support her thesis. But her assumption that trans people have “lost the ability to authentically represent” their lives is somewhat troubling. Is it not premature to yet again re-inscribe cisgender narratives as “authentic”, and transgender narratives as fabricated or forced?

I am not suggesting that trans people never tell lies or that these narratives are not filled with certain occlusions, both accidental and willful. Littman (2018) and Garfinkel (2006) certainly provide evidence to this point. Rather, is this not how all gender narratives function, on some level? The construction of trans subjects is always more apparent than that of cisgender subjects, but this does not make the cisgender subject no less constructed, derivative, and most of all, performative. Rather, “trans people are constructed as constructions” (Bettcher 2014, 398). Rather than searching for the “truth”, perhaps we should rethink this issue in terms of narrative—how gender is narrated, who has control over this narrative, and how these narratives function as control.

After all, cisgender narratives of gender are also eerily similar—the notion that “I

was always a woman, I never doubted it because I had a vagina and that's what people told me I was"—and do they not also occlude any evidence of confusion, ambiguity, or apprehension? We are all victims of the consistency bias, and seem to give life histories deeply affected by the present and normative behavior. As Lyotard suggests, "[N]arratives...define what has the right to be said and done in the culture in question" (Lyotard 1984, 25). In this sense, narrative, whether transgender or cisgender, carries a conservative or normative bias. The construction of a narrative—the process of making memories, of framing bodies, and inscribing history—presents us with an idealized version of events—how things *should* have been—according to dominant ideologies. Mary Douglas (2013) notes:

In a chaos of shifting impressions, each of us constructs a stable world in which objects have recognisable shapes, are located in depth, and have permanence. In perceiving we are building, taking some cues and rejecting others. The most acceptable cues are those which fit most easily into the pattern that is being built up. Ambiguous ones tend to be treated as if they harmonised with the rest of the pattern. Discordant ones tend to be rejected (Douglas 2013, 37).

Nevertheless, trans women often seem, for many, to be more committed to their identity claims than cisgender people. But language here is rather peculiar. For example, a sentence such as "*The woman was murdered by her date*" evokes a considerably different empathetic response than a simple alteration: "*The trans woman was murdered by her date*". In the first, we immediately empathize with the woman—it would be rare and extreme to, with the given information, immediately begin reframing the narrative of events with her as the true assailant or the cause of her own murder. But in the case of trans women, one might immediately begin to think of various scenarios that would have led to her death, many of which are attributed to the "deception" of her actions or her body itself.

Indeed, this is what is meant with the ubiquitous claim that "misgendering is violence" and that it "gets trans women killed". What distinguishes these two utterances is the position of the trans subject within the narrative. Is she the protagonist, or the an-

tagonist? Is she to be protected, is she assumed to be the victim? Or is she immediately assumed to be the assailant? The same actions—the same stories—are read differently based on the directions of our empathy and identification, which often lead to massive shifts in how we understand narratives. Narrative therefore tends to the weaponization of empathy.

When trans women insist that they are women and reject being written in the narrative as men, not only are they realizing their own identity, but they are also assuming the narrative function, becoming the protagonist, literally rejecting maleness which, in these cases, chains them to a position less worthy of concern and protection. Rather than a set of lies, narration thus becomes a set of performative acts (myth-making) that produce one's gender as such, and realize one's status as subject—broken apart from the medical establishment, and operating around its requirements. Daly (1978) defined robotitude "...marking time hopelessly, a pure repetition of mechanical gestures" (Daly 1978, 41). But this is where Daly gets trans women wrong, because in terms of hauntology, this narration/myth-making suggests a reversion to the present—a spiritual assimilation of the 'ghosts' of maleness/the past, integrating the "clinical father" in an agentive process of self-creation. In other words, the past becomes the past. The transfeminine becomes not just a robotic slave to techno-patriarchy but a proper AI in her own right. Is this process of self-creation not how trans subjects "begin living" as subjects in their own right, freed from the mechanical repetitions of robotitude? I do not mean to imply a kind of radical freedom in these acts, but nonetheless this agency moves the transfeminine from object/abject to a subject in her own right: this is how the trans woman situates herself not in terms of necrophilia, but in terms of new biophillic production and potentiality.

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