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OTHERS OF MY KIND: Transatlantic Transgender Histories
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“I am so grateful to all you men of medicine”: Trans Circles of Knowledge and Intimacy

Annette F. Timm

“I am so grateful to all you men of medicine who have been so good to me.” These words of appreciation appear in a January 1954 letter from a 49-year-old trans woman, Carla Erskine (pseudonym),¹ to the German-born American endocrinologist Harry Benjamin, whom she had first met in California in 1953 and who had helped advise and treat her before and after her gender-affirming surgery at the University of California, San Francisco, in December 1953.² Between 1953 and 1956, Benjamin and Erskine exchanged close to 100 letters, discussing every detail of her physical transformation and her relationships with other “transvestites” (the term she generally used) in California. She was friends with Louise Lawrence, known to historians as a central figure in the network of trans individuals in 1950s America.³ The two of them were part of a close-knit group in San Francisco and surroundings, and they cooperated with Benjamin to find research subjects for Alfred Kinsey’s planned book about transsexuality – a project interrupted by his death from a heart ailment and pneumonia in 1956.⁴ Unlike Christine Jorgensen, the glamorous ex-GI

“The more medical people sympathetically interested in transvestism the better.”



FIGURE 3.1: Carla E. KILSC-HB 17. Copyright © 2017, The Trustees of Indiana University on behalf of the Kinsey Institute. All rights reserved.

who had become a media sensation in late 1952 after American newspapers began publishing sensationalized reports about her surgery in Copenhagen, Carla purposely and successfully preserved her anonymity. She was one of very few transgender Americans to have procured surgery – some in the U.S. but most abroad – in defiance of the rulings of state and district attorneys in Wisconsin and California,⁵ who had relied on an obscure British common-law statute meant to prevent the self-maiming of soldiers to describe genital surgery on healthy tissue as “mayhem.”⁶ Carla’s desperation led her to take matters into her own hands – with a sharp knife – an act that ultimately eased her path to receiving



FIGURE 3.2: One of Carla’s friends, KILSC-HB 17. Copyright © 2017, The Trustees of Indiana University on behalf of the Kinsey Institute. All rights reserved.

reconstructive surgery.⁷ Although she saw herself as a pioneer, she had no interest in fame. Having just visited Louise and another trans friend in October 1954, Carla wrote to Benjamin: “Couldn’t the news paper [sic] have made a sensation of the meeting of the three of us? If they’d have known. As near as we can figure we almost had a quorum. 3 out of 9 in the U.S. as near as we could think.”⁸ Carla later became a professional photographer, but she had no intention of sharing the stereoscopic slides that she took of her trans friends with the press.

Hoping to help Benjamin and Alfred Kinsey with their collaborative effort to better understand what they were most

Harry Benjamin's Use of Photographs of Carla Erskine

In Benjamin's files we have copies of the releases that all of his patients signed granting permission for their photographs to be used in *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, including a release from Carla. These releases give Benjamin total control over where and how to use these images, under the condition that the anonymity of the signer be protected:

I ___ do hereby give permission to Harry Benjamin, M. D., to use any photographs and any materials related to my case history in any publication he may see fit to present said material. It is understood that my identity will not be revealed and that proper procedures are followed to insure my anonymity. There is to be no financial compensation to me for this permission.

Yet Benjamin did not publish these photos in the main part of his book. Rather, they were printed in a separate supplement to the book that could be obtained only by writing to the publisher on medical stationery. It is hard to say why these photos of Carla (figures 3.3. and 3.4) were published in this supplement. Benjamin's book confines photographs of genital surgery to the supplement, but these photographs of Carla do not fall into that category. And

the photographs published in the main part of the book do include nudity. Given what we know about Carla's wishes to remain private, perhaps this was a decision to lessen the impact of their publication? In *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, Benjamin speaks of his "patient" with the pronoun "he," but we will use "she" since that is how she wanted to be known and that is how Benjamin in fact addressed her in their correspondence.

In the introduction to this book, we have reproduced the color, stereoscopic slide that was used to produce the photograph of Carla sitting on the couch (figure 1.2) we see here in the leftmost image of figure 3.3. Benjamin's use of this image here in his book, with his caption, tells a very different story than we might glean from the image itself. Benjamin's arrangement of four images subordinate the moment of private, even dignified self-presentation we find in the original slides to a clinical interpretation. One thing that is immediately striking is that in both of the clothed photographs, Carla's face has been blocked out - a common technique in medical photography meant to protect her privacy, but which also has the effect of depersonalizing her. Perhaps for similar reasons, the photograph of her naked body in the centre does not include her head, as it does in the original colour version. But the effect of depersonalization in Benjamin's book is more brutal. It reductively forces a focus on Carla's naked body - on the tattoos and male



45-year-old, masculine-looking male transsexual, before sex reassignment operation. Note hypogonadal state. Tattoos were acquired in futile attempt to masculinize himself. After failure to do so, he began to live and work as a woman. Conversion operation was in 1953 (at age 45). Since then, patient has led a reasonably contented life as a woman (see case history in Chapter 7, Part II).



FIGURE 3.3 and 3.4: Left and right pages from the special image supplement to *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, 1966. Caption: “45-year-old, masculine-looking male transsexual, before sex reassignment operation. Note hypogonadal state. Tattoos were acquired in futile attempt to masculinize himself. After failure to do so, he began to live and work as a woman. Conversion operation was in 1953 (at age 45). Since then, patient has led a reasonably contented life as a woman (see case history in Chapter 7, Part II).”

genitals – as though this were the true evidence revealing her gender, evidence that is ostensibly covered up or hidden in the photographs in which she presumably passes as a woman. What we see in this triptych, then, is a message reinforced by figure 3.4: a contrast between photos of Carla dressed as a woman and the hidden “truth” of her body – and her history – exposed when the clothing is removed.

The caption is a further lynchpin for both this clinical framing and the power it claims to expose the truth we are meant to see. Benjamin directs us to gaze at Carla’s genitals and tells us that the tattoos are signs of a history of suffering – suffering imposed by her male body and by her attempts to make her body more masculine by getting sailor’s tattoos. But here, too, the power claimed by the caption also goes beyond this revelation. In contrast

to these apparently doomed efforts of the patient, it also provides a narrative of successful treatment carried out by a doctor.

Following this narrative, the clinical framing for the larger image (figure 3.4) draws our attention to Carla's altered genitals (also offering a justification for showing them – another defense against charges of obscenity). But perhaps what stands out most in this photograph is that Carla is wearing a pearl necklace and earrings. These pieces of jewelry are unmistakable markers of femininity and beauty that push back against the clinical framing and demonstration of Benjamin's intentions. As objects that Carla quite intentionally chose to keep wearing despite being otherwise unclothed, they also prompt us to think more carefully about Carla's tattoos as forms of decoration.

Several similar photographs of these tattoos, also color slides, exist in Benjamin's papers.

As was just noted, in *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, Benjamin describes these tattoos as an unsuccessful attempt at masculinization. Yet one might also say that they have very feminine motifs: like the pearl necklace, they might also be read as aesthetic adornment. They are beautifully feminine and carry clear symbolic meaning – of transformation, with feminine motifs; even of feminine strength or empowerment. Acquired at a moment in Carla's life when there were no treatment options, not for her at least, we can read this decision to decorate her body in this way as

an expression of agency and a willful remaking of her body to be how she would like it. Unlike Benjamin, who reads them only as suffering and failure, we might read them as an assertive act by Carla to claim power over her own body.

Moreover, Benjamin gives no indication of why he reads them in this way – we are not told whether this is his own judgement, or that of his patient. Knowing that Carla was a sailor for a time is important information to put these tattoos in context. In one history of how tattoos entered into and became celebrated in American culture, for instance, Margo DeMello points to what she calls the “golden age of the tattoo” between the world wars, when it was primarily among sailors that tattooing became established as an almost exclusively working-class male practice, and to the period after the Second World War, when mainstream, middle-class prejudices against tattooing solidified.¹ DeMello notes these cultural boundaries meant that tattooing could also be appropriated by lesbians. That description does not apply to Carla, but this shared history is again reflective of how the same cultural practices and markers could be appropriated by very different groups that shared the fact of being stigmatized for not fitting into heterosexual binary gender models – and also of how carefully we as cultural scholars must be in reading these signs in the context of personal life histories, as best we can. Moreover, in the style of this period so clearly reflected here,

FIGURE 3.5: Carla Erskine showing her tattoos to the camera. Copyright © 2017, The Trustees of Indiana University on behalf of the Kinsey Institute. All rights reserved.



which consisted of stock characters or motifs that were easily readable and often had literal meaning in referring to events in a sailor's life or identity, the butterfly carries a particular significance. One recently published collection of photographs of sailor tattoos from this period describes the motif we also find on Carla's chest thus: "Butterfly. Aside from the aesthetic interest of this tattoo, it embodies transformation, the fulfilment of one's destiny and resurrection. It is also considered as embodying the soul of whoever wears it."² It depicts a metamorphosis.

With that intention in mind, consider another image of Carla, which Benjamin did not publish (figure 3.5). This image reflects a moment in which she is showing her tattoos to the camera.

One of the reasons this photograph is ambivalent is that we cannot see Carla's face. We can't say whether she is being playful and coy, or whether she is being asked to reveal herself in a way that is uncomfortable or painful. The intended audience of the photograph is also unclear. Was this image meant only for the photographer and Carla? For friends? For Benjamin? For his book? We cannot say.

commonly calling “transvestism,” Carla sent her slides to Benjamin. It was the discovery of these beautifully evocative slides in a box of vacation photos in the Benjamin Collection at the Kinsey Institute that provided part of the inspiration for the exhibition *TransTrans*, which I curated with Michael Thomas Taylor and Rainer Herrn at the Nickle Galleries at the University of Calgary in spring 2016. The images led us to Carla, and Carla, her friends, and their predecessors have much to tell us about the intimate and personal networks that provided the foundation for knowledge about trans identities and their medicalized definitions in the United States and Europe in the mid-twentieth century.

Carla was one of Benjamin’s first trans research subjects and a key source for his 1966 book *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, the book that would solidify his reputation as a foremost researcher of all aspects of what we would today call transgender or trans identity. The distanced, medicalized, and sometimes quite judgmental tone of this book belies the warmth and understanding exhibited in Benjamin’s correspondence with his trans patients. It is difficult to gaze upon the photos of genitals or read the harsh captions describing individual self-presentation in Benjamin’s book without feeling that his research subjects had been exploited or unwillingly placed in biological categories of someone else’s devising. The title of the book alone is probably enough to raise the suspicions of readers who are today much more sensitive about terminology and to the necessity of allowing trans individuals to speak for themselves.⁹ I will argue, however, that

despite the depersonalized tone typical of 1960s medical writing, Benjamin’s book and Kinsey’s research have to be understood as the culmination of a long history of trans people advocating for themselves and demanding help from medical science. Rather than focusing only on what these experts said about their subjects, in other words, we need to go behind the scenes of the texts themselves and ask what trans individuals *taught* medical researchers. What did Benjamin – and through him Kinsey – learn from Carla and her friends and how did strategies for gathering information about trans identities arise from relationships that were by no means as clinical as the word “transsexuality” or the era’s medicalized descriptions and taxonomies might suggest? In what follows, I will first provide some justification for the argument that intimate and personal networks have always been a key feature of trans history. Beginning in early twentieth-century Germany, I will describe such relationships and their cross-Atlantic dimensions over half a century before exploring the intimacy of the letters that Carla wrote to Benjamin in the early 1950s.

From Germany to the United States

As with many other realms of biological knowledge, the period immediately following the Enlightenment witnessed a dramatic expansion in medical interest in sexual behaviour and a growing conviction that what had previously been categorized only in religious terms – as various degrees of sin – should now be investigated using

scientific methods. With some interventions from Italy, France, and Great Britain, it was primarily German, Swiss, and Austrian doctors who began to categorize human sexual desire and behaviour and to formulate a discipline of sexual science in the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁰ Sexological findings arose out of the increasingly sexually tolerant atmosphere in cities such as Berlin, where thriving sexual subcultures became the incubators for sexual rights movements. This connection between sexological investigation and legal reform efforts was most evident in the work of Magnus Hirschfeld. Hirschfeld co-founded the Scientific Humanitarian Committee in 1897 – often considered the world’s first gay rights organization – and he authored numerous influential books and articles about the spectrum of human sexual diversity. Joanne Meyerowitz, Susan Stryker, and others have pointed out that Benjamin provided a link between Hirschfeld and Kinsey and that the openness to gender-affirming surgeries that he had acquired while still in Berlin inspired him to cooperate with Kinsey’s project of cataloguing all aspects of human sexual variation.¹¹ After emigrating to the United States during the First World War, Benjamin spent most of his postwar summers in Germany, and he often accompanied Hirschfeld on his research jaunts through Berlin’s famously gender-bending nightlife.¹² Benjamin notes that it was as “a young student at the Berlin University” that he first met Hirschfeld, in 1906 or 1907.¹³

These connections between scientists are an important feature of trans history.

And yet I will argue that the usual way of describing this transmission of knowledge has produced a de-emotionalized and therefore inaccurate narrative that has purposely underplayed the role of intimate relationships and the agency of those who have been most affected by this research. Although motivated by an understandable attempt to preserve the privacy of incredibly marginalized and persecuted individuals, later historians have sometimes unconsciously repeated the de-personalizing and quantifying tendencies of mid-twentieth-century medical researchers.

The fact that our research began with the intention of staging an exhibition rather than writing a book has had a significant impact on the shape of my argument. Knowing that one will have to tell compelling and concise stories – with few words and no footnotes – focuses one’s mind on finding the most significant threads of transmission and on tracking interpersonal connections that might be meaningfully presented to gallery visitors, who, like all humans, have a finite amount of tolerance for the physical exertions of standing and reading. But with this chapter I have the space to argue that zeroing in on personal connections is more than simply a strategy of engagement; it is critical to understanding how knowledge – perhaps particularly knowledge about sexuality – is created.

We began, as historians too often do, with the idea of following a thread of knowledge transmission from one prominent man to another.¹⁴ But the archival research that Michael and I conducted quickly revealed both the

impracticality and the inadvisability of this way of framing things. For one thing, Kinsey was not a collector of his own correspondence or notes, so retracing the steps he took to arrive at his new project was not entirely possible. More importantly, however, we uncovered an entirely new story in his correspondence with Harry Benjamin – a story that revealed the active involvement and influence of trans individuals. The deeper we looked the more obvious it became that a very few highly motivated individuals, some of whom had their own personal connections to Germany, were responsible for bringing Benjamin and Kinsey together and for transforming their views on the diagnosis and treatment of individuals who wished to change their gendered self-presentation and their legal sex.

Our initial instincts that Kinsey must have known about Hirschfeld's research on transvestites were correct. His library contained a growing collection of Hirschfeld's publications, and he relied upon a German-speaking staff member, Hedwig Gruen Leser, to translate relevant passages, which he cited in both of his two monumental, best-selling books *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953) – hereafter referred to as the *Male* and *Female* books.¹⁵ But Kinsey was actually fairly dismissive of this early German sexological work. It was only after he began his collaboration with Harry Benjamin that a significant German influence on Kinsey can be said to have taken hold – too late for Kinsey to have worked through the implications or to

include this perspective in any published work. Yet even though Kinsey did not live long enough to publish his research on transsexuality, how and why he embraced the subject at all has much to tell us about the scientific study of sex in the twentieth century. Investigating precisely how he arrived at this subject turns out to be as interesting as what he might have written about it had he lived. As we will see, Kinsey did not *find* “transsexuality” as a subject of scientific investigation; individuals who wanted to be investigated found him. As Carla's case exemplifies, they often found Kinsey by first finding Harry Benjamin, who had himself come to the topic because trans individuals sought him out for his endocrinological expertise. In other words, to accurately track the transmission of knowledge about transsexuality, we have to give up our tendency to view sexuality as something that can be “discovered” by medical experts and ask more focused questions about the life stories and desires of trans people themselves. Even though the structure of what follows will still partially track the flow of ideas from one male expert to the next, the true agency lies elsewhere within the narrative.

From Hirschfeld to Benjamin

Histories of how trans individuals sought to live authentic lives in the twentieth century have generally been told through the lens of the work, writing, and private musings of medical experts.¹⁶ There is a certain inevitability to this perspective, since, particularly in the first half of the century,

it was most often the scientists and doctors who categorized and quantified, who made pronouncements about the need for legal reform, and who were consequently the targets of those who decried any change to the dominant social and cultural paradigm of cisnormativity. But as Edward Dickinson and Richard Wetzell have argued of the history of sexuality more generally, a particular reading of Michel Foucault's description of the development of new scientific understandings of sexuality in the modern era has often placed too much emphasis on the "*Deutungsmacht* of bourgeois medical experts" – the power of self-appointed opinion leaders and specialists in human sexual behaviour to single-handedly produce sexual categories and identities.¹⁷

This *Deutungsmacht* still risks influencing us, as we remain tempted to conflate sex, sexuality, and gender and to ignore the subjective experiences of individuals within their social settings and intimate relationships. As Foucault implies in his introduction to the tragic story of the nineteenth-century "hermaphrodite" Herculine Barbin, the modern insistence that people only have one "true sex" (there being supposedly no such thing as a real mixture of the sexes) means that people we would now call intersex were only ever considered "pseudo-hermaphrodites" – not *real* hermaphrodites or a true mixture of the sexes but imperfect versions of one sex or the other. Meanwhile anatomical investigations that purported to determine which biological sex was predominant in the genitals were read as ipso facto evidence that the opposite sex of the "true sex"

should be the one that the individual in question desired.¹⁸ Under this biopolitical regime, which still governs many public discussions and popular opinions about intersex and trans people, sexuality (the sexual desire of the individual) is secondary to biology and to a biopolitical combination of heteronormative and cisnormative dictates. As will become concrete in my biographical discussion of Carla Erskine below, these socio-medico structures make it imperative to pay attention to two taxonomical dichotomies and how they intersect: sex/sexuality (the match or mismatch between anatomy and choice of love object) and sex/gender (the match or mismatch between one's anatomy and one's social presentation and comportment). Even as the categories are manifestly blurred in lived lives, medical and psychological authorities – not to mention social mores and legal systems – have sought to keep them intact. As Gill Frank and Lauren Gutterman have argued, well into the 1970s and to some degree up to the present, "the messier realities of trans peoples' lives, including queer desires or gender queer identities, needed to be smoothed out for them to be accepted by physicians and a wider public."¹⁹

All of this helps to explain the frequent erasure of intersex individuals in narratives of trans history, since the tendency to think about ourselves (and therefore also people of the past) as having one true sex is still common. Even researchers like Kinsey and Benjamin who accepted that there could be a mismatch between sex and sexuality (that same-sex love was natural) or between sex and gender (the "transsexual phenomenon"

in Benjamin's formulation) could not quite accept that there might not be one "true sex" to be found.

Foucault's insistence on debunking the "true sex" in his discussion of Barbin makes it clear that reductive readings of what he meant by sexuality have been unhelpful. As Franz Eder has argued, the "positive and productive building of the 'sexual subject' and his [sic] 'desire'" has helped to revise the top-down approach that a simplistic reading of Foucault produced.²⁰ In other words, we must pay attention to how the various experts who sought to scientifically categorize sexual identity in the twentieth century were both operating within very specific paradigms of scientific argument *and* being influenced by the subjects of their research.

Harry Oosterhuis's study of Richard von Krafft-Ebing is a model of this approach, since he reveals the "dialogical" process through which one of the first sexologists reached his conclusions. Oosterhuis argues that despite the fact that Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*, first published in 1886, began as a list of sexual pathologies and thus "enabled medical treatment and other forms of restraint ... it also opened up the possibility for the individuals involved to speak out, to find a voice, and to be acknowledged,"²¹ making "both patients and doctors ... agents of culture at large."²² That the patients influenced the doctors in this earliest era of the medicalization of sexuality is made clear in Krafft-Ebing's increasing tolerance towards homosexuality, which he first viewed as a pathology but later fought to decriminalize. He was one of the

first signatories to Magnus Hirschfeld's petition for the abolition of section 175 of the German penal code, which outlined punishments for "unnatural" indecency or fornication (*widernatürliche Unzucht*) and that applied primarily to sexual acts between men.²³

Sensitivity to the desires and needs of patients became a hallmark of sexological research, at least in Germany, where Magnus Hirschfeld's founding of the Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin in 1919 was motivated not only by the pursuit of medical knowledge but also by the larger effort to advocate for legal reform and social tolerance for sexual minorities. This activist role, however, meant that Hirschfeld and virtually all researchers in the field of human sexuality who followed him were acutely sensitive to the public furore that their work might produce, and they tended to rigorously conform to shifting norms of scientific argument. While the case-study approach dominated all forms of sexual science in the late nineteenth century – most famously in the work of Krafft-Ebing and Sigmund Freud – by the turn of the century, Hirschfeld became convinced that only statistical studies of the broad spectrum of human sexual presentation, self-understanding, and behaviour would convince the public to accept human sexual and gender diversity. In 1899, he began to publish the results of his Psycho-biological Questionnaire, an approach to gathering information about sexual behaviour that eventually gathered information from about 10,000 individuals and was later emulated (with little attribution) by Alfred Kinsey.²⁴ But Hirschfeld also cultivated close

relationships with anyone who conceived of themselves as sexually nonconforming, and he continued to rely on detailed case histories to formulate his arguments about sexual diversity. This is most apparent in his 1910 book *Die Transvestiten* (*The Transvestites*), which was based on the life stories of seventeen individuals who wrote to him about their desire to live in the clothing or the body of the other sex and who might never have made themselves known to medical authorities had they not been exposed to Hirschfeld's work and generally sympathetic attitudes through trusted personal networks.²⁵ In the opening pages of *Die Transvestiten*, Hirschfeld admits that the life stories of these individuals initially took him aback. Despite his openness to the idea of sexually mixed types (*Mischungsarten*, or what he also called *Zwischenstufen* – intermediary stages) he did not initially know what to make of these “strange people” (*seltsame Menschen*) who “despite totally normal sexual drives display strong physical tendencies of the other gender.” In all seventeen cases, the individuals had voluntarily contacted Hirschfeld, who then encouraged them to write autobiographies. He remained in contact with these people for up to twelve years. While he had at first been convinced that these individuals were living in a state of “self-delusion,” his personal connection to them eventually convinced him to supplement his “objective observation of large data sets” with more focused attention to a small group of individuals.²⁶

Without detailing precisely how he met each individual, Hirschfeld notes that all but two of his contacts (who were

referred from other doctors) came to him directly, either in writing or “orally” (*mündlich*). This vague description is likely an allusion to the fact that Hirschfeld spent considerable amounts of time visiting the various bars and cafés of Berlin's vibrant sexual subcultures.²⁷ This methodology for finding research subjects conflicted, of course, with the scrupulously scientific aura that he sought to project to the world in the interests of presenting himself as an objective scientific voice. In other words, behind the scientific atmosphere projected in public lectures and other outreach activities, the research of the Institute for Sexual Science depended upon the trust that sexually nonconforming individuals placed in Hirschfeld (who divulged his homosexuality only in intimate settings) and his colleagues.²⁸ The authors of this book and others have elsewhere detailed how this trust turned the institute into something more than a venue for scientific research.²⁹ The picture on the facing page (figure 3.6), about which we know very little, visually depicts how intimate contacts had become central to the collection of information and the advocacy for individuals who could not conform to the heteronormative culture of early twentieth-century Germany.

Hirschfeld's ability to use intimate personal connections for his research would have been virtually unimaginable in almost any other city in Europe or North America. The degree to which early twentieth-century Germany – and particularly Berlin – represented a new form of tolerance for sexual diversity is clear if we investigate Hirschfeld's close cooperation with the police. As Jens Dobler



FIGURE 3.6: The Institute of Sexual Science as refuge ca. 1919. Photographer unknown. Copyright: Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft.

has argued, there was an astounding degree of cooperation between Berlin police, the Scientific Humanitarian Committee, the publisher Friedrich Radszuweit's Bund für Menschenrechte (League for Human Rights, another organization campaigning for the repeal of §175), and Hirschfeld himself.³⁰ The Department for Pederasty (Päderastenabteilung) was founded within Berlin's police department in 1885, and its four successive directors – Leopold von Meerscheidt-Hüllessem (1885–1900), Hans von Tresckow (1900–1911), Heinrich Kopp (1911–1923), and Bernhard Strewe (1923–1933) – displayed what Robert Beachy has called an attitude of “qualified toleration” for sexual minorities and their specific social and legal problems right up to

the beginning of the Nazi era.³¹ Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the *Päderastenpatrouille* (pederast patrol) engaged from ten to twelve constables whose official duties included the investigation of male prostitution and infringements against §175. In this atmosphere, laws meant to undergird heteronormative understandings of acceptable self-presentation and sexual activity made individuals living a closeted sexual life of any kind vulnerable to a blackmailer's threat to turn them over to police. The relatively progressive impulses of the four successive directors of the Päderastenabteilung meant that police efforts tended to concentrate on prostitution and on protecting individuals



FIGURE 3.7: A 1928 *Transvestitenschein* (transvestite pass). Courtesy of the Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft. Following advice from Hirschfeld, Berlin police officials issued this *Transvestitenschein* (transvestite pass) to Eva Katter (who called himself Gert and was a carpenter) on 6 December 1928. The card reads: “The worker Eva Katter, born on 14 March 1910, and residing in Britz at Muthesisushof 8, is known here as someone who wears male clothing. Strewe, Police Commissioner.” Katter was a patient at the Institute for Sexual Science and was occasionally presented to visitors as a “demonstration case” (medical specimen). While living in the former German Democratic Republic, he was one of the few institute patients to establish contact with the Magnus Hirschfeld Society. In donating his records, Katter reclaimed his history and made it part of the institute’s archive. He died in 1995.

from being blackmailed for their self-presentation or consensual relationships, which in practice created a remarkably tolerant atmosphere in the city.³² This atmosphere fostered Hirschfeld’s research, since it allowed for the flourishing sexual subculture that provided the venue for his encounters with a diverse spectrum

of visitors to the restaurants and cafés frequented by “urnings” (a short-lived word for homosexuals) and other gender-questioning individuals in Berlin. He estimated that there were already twenty or so of these establishments in Berlin in 1904.³³ Hirschfeld often visited these places in the company of police constables.



FIGURE 3.8: The Eldorado

He later praised Meerscheidt-Hüllessem as a “champion of light and justice” who “with word and deed selflessly stood by hundreds and saved many of them from shame and death,” and he described Hans von Tresckow as having “saved hundreds of homosexual men from despair and suicide” by prosecuting their blackmailers.³⁴ The close cooperation between sexologists/activists and the police is best exemplified in Hirschfeld’s creation of what he called “transvestite passes” – certified pieces of identification that were recognized by the Berlin police department and that therefore protected cross-dressers from arrest under laws against “causing a public nuisance” or impersonation.

I have dwelled on the importance of Hirschfeld’s immersion in the nightlife of Berlin’s sexual subcultures because this turns out to have been a very important factor in transmitting knowledge about transsexuality from Germany to the

United States: it created the conditions for Harry Benjamin to learn from Magnus Hirschfeld. Benjamin was still a medical student in Germany when police inspector Heinrich Kopp, who was a mutual friend, introduced them. In his “Reminiscences,” written in 1970, Benjamin describes Kopp as a “sympathetic and serious student of the homosexual and other sexual problems.” “A couple of times,” Benjamin writes, “I was invited to accompany Hirschfeld and Kopp, who were good friends, on tours through a few gay bars in Berlin. The most famous was the Eldorado where mainly transvestites gathered, and female impersonators performed.”³⁵

Benjamin started going back to Berlin in 1921, visiting the Institute for Sexual Science and meeting with Hirschfeld and his colleagues on a yearly basis. Bemused that the “courageous” but famously grumpy and stingy Hirschfeld had earned the nickname Tante Magnesia (Aunt Magnesia)



FIGURE 3.9: Harry Benjamin with Magnus Hirschfeld in New York (KILSC photo collection KIDC60151).

from the adoring patrons of these clubs,³⁶ Benjamin took mental notes on how scientific knowledge about sexual diversity could be gathered through unconventional personal contacts with gender-questioning individuals. Although Benjamin never denied the influence of his German mentors, he would later obscure Hirschfeld's impact on his own thinking by claiming to have invented the term "transsexuality." (We will discuss the use of this term in the final chapter on "Historicizing Transgender Terminology.") Even Kinsey might have been exposed to Hirschfeld's terminology through his acquaintance with Benjamin, because the word "transsexuality" appears in the *Male* book in 1948, long after Kinsey and Benjamin had met.³⁷ But the point is that none of these men *discovered* sexual diversity. Sexually diverse individuals

instead sought out those who might help them, and the patients themselves taught these men what their personal experiences might mean for our larger understanding of the spectrum of human sexual and gender experience. After coining the word "transvestite," Hirschfeld was forced to realize that the term could not fully describe many of the individuals who sought him out in Berlin's bars and night clubs. (As we discuss in the closing chapter on terminology, there is no German equivalent for the term "cross-dresser.") It was these trans people, most of whom never became household names (but some of whom we have already met in Rainer's chapter in this book), who were also responsible for creating the networks of knowledge that began to span the Atlantic in the early twentieth century.

Otto Spengler

The likelihood that doctors would encounter trans people only through personal relationships also had a long history in the United States.³⁸ The earliest description we have found of the personal networks that began to form between self-described transvestites in the United States appears in a 1914 article by New York gynecologist Bernard S. Talmey, in the *New York Medical Journal*.³⁹ Talmey describes an exchange of letters between five transvestites (one German, three American, and one British) in the first decade of the twentieth century. He explicitly refers to Hirschfeld's recent book about "transvestism" – *Die Transvestiten* – then only published in German, and it

is therefore perhaps no accident that the “first patient” described in the article is, like Talmey himself, a German immigrant; we now know that this was Otto Spengler.⁴⁰ (See figures 1.6–1.12 and 3.10–11.)

Although the correspondence between the transvestites Talmey describes deploy the pseudonym “Miss S.,” he refers to this person only as “Mr. S.,” and he continues to use words like “masquerade” when describing the clothing practices of these individuals.⁴¹ Nevertheless, we can surmise that it is only personal sympathy that led Talmey to write about this subject at all, because he admits that he had known Mr. S. “in a social way” for years without having ever “detected any outward suggestion of femininity ... [or] discover[ing] any delusional state in his psyche.”⁴² The tone of both the article and the slightly revised version of the story that Talmey includes in his 1919 book about love is nonjudgmental. He simply reprints Spengler’s autobiography and provides excerpts from the very intimate and private correspondence between these individuals, including personal biographical detail and descriptions of their motivations for wearing female clothing. Mr. S, we learn, always dressed like a man in public and was “the proprietor of a big business and himself takes charge of it.” Noting that Mr. S expressed a wish for castration in order “to live as a woman absolutely,” Talmey does not diagnose the condition as pathological, describing this desire as “in no way a mere fancy” but rather as “an important anomaly.”⁴³ In its emphasis on Spengler’s emotional stability, business success, intellectual abilities, and

standing in the community, this implicitly sympathetic account strikingly diverges from the conservative tone of Talmey’s other writings, which include diatribes against masturbation and other forms of “degenerate” sexual expression. Although he does call transvestism a “psychoerotic pathology,” there is far less vitriol and judgement here than in his other books, some of which – such as *Woman: A Treatise on the Normal and Pathological Emotions of Feminine Love* – already reveal their prejudices in their titles.⁴⁴ Indeed, rather than exploring the relationship between transvestites’ clothing practice and their sexual desires, Talmey describes cross-dressing as arising from the “esthetic sensibility” of a man who “harbors exalted ideas and is striving to secure artistic enjoyment in the appreciation of the beautiful.”⁴⁵ This was, he argues, following Havelock Ellis, “a sexo-esthetic inversion of pure artistic imitation” – a kind of clothing fetish – that has nothing to do with homosexual attraction.⁴⁶

Talmey’s long-term personal relationship with Spengler seems to have motivated a surprisingly nonjudgmental description of the phenomenon of cross-dressing. Since we know that Spengler actively searched for connections and sympathetic reactions from the medical community (he carried on a long correspondence with the U.S. Army Surgeon Dr. Mary Walker, who had a large archive of images and letters from cross-dressing individuals),⁴⁷ we have to assume that Spengler had carefully cultivated the relationship that accounted for Talmey’s accepting reaction to the revelation that his

friend was a cross-dresser. In short, that Spengler and his correspondents became the first transvestites to be discussed in the medical literature in the United States had much to do with the personal relationships within New York's German immigrant community.

Of course, Talmey's sympathies only went so far, and he cannot be considered a true advocate for the acceptance of trans people. Although we cannot be sure what Spengler would have wanted, it is instructive that Talmey insistently used male pronouns for Mr. S. Spengler's story also forces us to acknowledge that the possibilities for socially transitioning were clearly more limited in early twentieth-century New York than they were in Hirschfeld's Berlin. American cities had begun imposing municipal ordinances restricting cross-dressing in the 1850s, and police often resorted to older laws against the use of public disguise.⁴⁸ Spengler hoped to influence these policies. Appearing under the pseudonym Rudolph von H. in psychiatrist George W. Henry's massive study *Sex Variants: A Study of Homosexual Patterns*, Spengler reported: "Several times I went to the police department to get permission to wear women's clothes but I didn't succeed. In Berlin I went out on the street dressed as a woman. I even did that here occasionally. If you don't make yourself obnoxious nobody noticed it."⁴⁹ As Talmey notes, Spengler lived out his desires primarily at home. Spengler's wife, Helene (née Wasbutzky), whom he married in 1898, was at first tolerant of the "masquerading"; she shared lingerie, sewed dresses, and bought gifts of clothing and perfume for

her husband.⁵⁰ Spengler's three children – Valerie (1900), Hildegard (1906), and Alfred (1908) – were accustomed to their father dressing in female attire. Hildegard apparently called her father "papa-lady."⁵¹ All of these details strongly indicate that we should view Spengler not as a "cross-dresser" but as trans.

Nonetheless, since we know that Spengler could not live a public life as a woman in a city where tolerance for trans identities was virtually nonexistent outside of marginalized subcultures, and because we do not know what female name might have been used in the home, I have avoided using any gendered pronouns in these passages. There is of course a case to be made that present-day understandings and ethical practices must be brought to bear on our analyses of trans history, and debates about ethically sensitive gendered language are unlikely to ever cease. But as historians we cannot erase their effects on lives as they were actually lived, and we must be careful not to use terminology that exaggerates the individual agency and life possibilities of our historical actors.

With that proviso aside, one might still profitably investigate precisely how this one individual used interpersonal connections to have far-reaching influence on the self-declared experts who were investigating the lives and desires of trans individuals in twentieth-century America. Spengler was extremely active in the German community in New York.

Having emigrated to the city in 1892 as a nineteen-year-old with two dollars in his pocket, he quickly established himself in the press clipping industry and opened his

own company, Argus Pressclipping Bureau, in 1902. Argus provided businesses with the service of finding press clippings on subjects of interest. Alongside his successful business, Spengler was the founder or active member of various German immigrant associations in New York. In 1913, as part of his “efforts to promote German culture and science,” he compiled a compendium of the achievements of German immigrants in New York, *Das deutsche Element der Stadt New York* (The German element of the city of New York).⁵² His interest in archaeology led him to take a trip to “the Orient” (it is unclear which countries he included in this term) and to museums in Europe in 1906, and he likely used the opportunity to visit Berlin, where he had lived since the age of seven. As noted above, this was the same year that Benjamin met Hirschfeld. Might the three men have met in one of the gender-bending bars that were already common in the city? We can only speculate, but it is certainly possible.⁵³ Benjamin later described having met Spengler “in the early 1920s.”⁵⁴

This was during a period when Benjamin was trying to establish himself as an expert in rejuvenation therapies – hormonal treatments, inspired by the research of the Austrian physiologist Eugen Steinach, that were meant to counter the effects of aging. Steinach had performed a series of famous experiments on guinea pigs, which involved the transplantation of gonads in order both to rejuvenate the animal and to transform its gender characteristics.⁵⁵ He then developed an alternative technique to achieve the same ends: vasoligation (sometimes called

vasoligature), a form of vasectomy that he promised would increase vitality and sexual potency. His procedure was all the rage in the 1920s and 1930s, attracting patients such as William Butler Yeats and Sigmund Freud.⁵⁶ These primitive forms of hormonal treatment struck Benjamin as a new panacea for aging, and he became the most well-known American exponent of the benefits of getting “Steinached,” eventually performing as many as 500 of these operations.⁵⁷ Benjamin first introduced the procedure to an American audience by giving a lecture to the New York Academy of Medicine in 1921, and in 1923 he arranged for a screening of the documentary film that popularized Steinach’s research.⁵⁸

Either of these public events could have attracted Spengler’s interest, particularly since Steinach’s fame could not have escaped someone with German language skills and such a personal interest in the subject.⁵⁹ Spengler visited Benjamin’s office to request a prescription for the estrogenic hormone known as “Progyon.” Benjamin overcame his initial hesitations, and “a mild gyneocomastia was produced to the infinite delight of the patient and with emotional improvement.”⁶⁰ In other words, it was Spengler who insisted upon treatment for the purposes of sexual transformation. Spengler’s autobiography in Henry’s book describes the procedures that Benjamin performed: “In trying to become feminine, I went through rejuvenation, the American Steinach operation. I had this when I was fifty-two. A doctor who specializes in it x-rayed my testicles to make me sterile. I wanted to get more feminine. I wanted to



FIGURE 3.10: Spengler in Otto Spengler, ed., *Das deutsche Element der Stadt New York: Biographisches Jahrbuch der Deutsch-Amerikaner New Yorks und Umgebung* (New York: Spengler, 1913).

develop female breasts and shoulders. I also took a great deal of progynon to develop my breasts and it succeeded quite well. I've got the hips of a regular woman."⁶¹ Since progynon was not on the market until 1928, it is likely that the hormonal treatment began only a few years after the operation and x-ray treatment. This was a period when Benjamin was regularly spending time in Berlin in order to remain up-to-date on both Steinach and Hirschfeld's research.⁶²

But there were even more direct and personal conduits for this transatlantic transmission of information. It is clear that



FIGURE 3.11: Spengler in *Das 3. Geschlecht*, 1932. The caption reads: "A well-known New York transvestite."

by the 1930s, Spengler had developed close contacts with the transvestite community in Berlin and was contributing private photos to the Berlin magazine *Das 3. Geschlecht*. A comparison of the figures in the Otto Spengler sidebar in the introduction (figures 1.6 to 1.12) and the two images of Spengler above makes it clear that the "New York transvestite" was Otto Spengler.

Henry does not appear to have been aware of these images, but they certainly would have provided fodder for his uncharitable assessment that Spengler should be categorized as a "narcissistic"

case. Without using a control group, Henry and his collaborator, the gynaecologist and artist Robert Latou Dickinson, had set out to discover the “constitutional deficiencies” (“structural, physiological, and psychological”) that distinguished “the sex variant [who] seems to be in part a by-product of civilization,” from the “normal” heterosexual.⁶³ Spengler, perhaps naively, was willing to provide both personal and physical data for the project. As Henry’s opening description notes: “Rudolph [Spengler] maintains his interest in promoting a more tolerant attitude toward the transvestite and he is ready at any time to present himself for study and demonstration.”⁶⁴ Henry’s commentary is considerably less sympathetic than Talmey’s, though this might have something to do with the fact that by the time Henry interviewed Spengler (likely in the early 1930s), there had been a significant social and economic decline. The once thriving news clipping business had fallen on hard times, and Spengler now lived alone. “He dwells,” Henry observed, “in a world of classical fantasy, indifferent to the dirt and poverty of his immediate surroundings.”⁶⁵ Summarily dismissing Spengler’s claims to have been an influential historian,⁶⁶ Henry attributes Rudolph’s identification with a bronze statue of Narcissus and his desire to wear women’s clothing as indicative of “exhibitionistic” tendencies and vanity; in short, he diagnoses Spengler as a narcissist.

It is intriguing that Spengler fails to mention visiting places that might have provided solace for his feelings of social isolation. The interview with Henry is silent about what George Chauncey describes

as the “massive drag (or transvestite) balls that attracted thousands of participants and spectators in the 1920s” and the beer gardens of the Bowery, where, as a visiting medical student put it in 1890, “male perverts, dressed in elaborate costumes, ‘sat for company’” and earned commissions on drinks.⁶⁷ It is likely that Spengler’s dreams of social mobility led him to look down his nose at such venues during the time of his life when he was still married and economically successful. It is also possible that the very visibility of gay men in New York,⁶⁸ who had adopted female dress and labels like “fairy” and “queen” primarily to signal their sexual interest in other men, would have scared Spengler away. The self-consciously middle-class German likely did not run in the same social circles as those who had formed the secret club Cercle Hermaphroditos and met in a room above the “fairy” bar Paresis Hall, where they stored their female clothing and hid from New York’s laws against cross-dressing in public.⁶⁹ In other words, Spengler’s own bourgeois self-understanding likely increased his social isolation.

Entirely ignoring these social dynamics, Henry also underplayed the importance of the educational efforts undertaken by “sexual variants” themselves. Digging even deeper, we find that another relationship Otto Spengler cultivated had a significant impact on the transmission of knowledge about sexual diversity. Along with his own business, Spengler also worked on the editorial staff of *Der Deutscher Vorkämpfer*, a magazine about German pioneers in the United States, which was founded by Louis Viereck, a former German member



FIGURE 3.12: George Sylvester Viereck. United States Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs Division. Public Domain.

of parliament for the Socialists Workers' Party, who had emigrated to the U.S. in 1896.⁷⁰ Louis's son, the poet and closeted homosexual George Sylvester, wrote propaganda for the German government during both world wars, and he authored popular science tracts such as the 1923 book (published under a pseudonym) *Rejuvenation: How Steinach Makes People Young*.⁷¹ Having become famous as a poet and journalist, Viereck took advantage of Hirschfeld's 1930 trip to the United States to publish widely syndicated newspaper articles about "the Einstein of Sex ... Dr. Hirschfeld," wisely capitalizing on the popularity of his previous interview with Albert Einstein.⁷² Viereck and Hirschfeld used the familiar "Du" form of address in

correspondence to each other. Just before leaving for New York, Hirschfeld wrote to Viereck as a fellow "cultural freedom fighter," asking that Viereck cooperate with Benjamin to plan a "worthy reception" for his arrival.⁷³ Viereck agreed to do advance publicity for Hirschfeld's trip, and he acted as Hirschfeld's travel agent, accompanying him on stops in Chicago, Detroit, and California after a six-week stay in New York.⁷⁴

What makes this relationship extremely strange is that by the time of this trip, Viereck was already involved in pro-German propaganda activities that one would have expected Hirschfeld to adamantly reject. After all, Hirschfeld had embarked on the world tour that began in the United States and continued to Asia and the Middle East in part to escape the anti-Semitic and homophobic vitriol that the Nazi party was fomenting against him.⁷⁵ Viereck, meanwhile, had sympathetically interviewed Adolf Hitler in 1923 and had been "dazzled" by someone he described as a "widely read, thoughtful, and self-made man."⁷⁶ By 1933, the *Jewish Daily Bulletin* was already calling Viereck the "Chief Nazi Propagandist in the U.S."⁷⁷ In 1942, Viereck was convicted of acting as a Nazi propagandist without having registered with the U.S. Department of State as a foreign agent. After serving five years in jail, he became a supporter of Senator Joe McCarthy and never entirely repented for his Nazi sympathies.⁷⁸ It may seem paradoxical that he combined his pro-Nazi activities with a keen interest in the work of German sexology and its Jewish practitioners (another of his famous

interviewees was Sigmund Freud).⁷⁹ His own homosexuality was clearly at play here, but it is particularly interesting that he later revealed, albeit anonymously, an interest in transsexuality. In a 1937 article that Viereck wrote under the pseudonym Donald Furthman Wickets, he describes how Mary Weston, shot-put record holder for Great Britain, later became Mark Weston.⁸⁰ Citing Steinach's research and other famous cases of gender transition (such as the life of the Chevalier d'Éon), Viereck/Wickets implicitly supported the notion of a spectrum of human sexual identity, writing that "My friend, the late Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, of the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft in Berlin (suppressed by the Nazis), calculated that the number of different sexual types equals 46,046,721, or three raised to the sixteenth power."⁸¹ In 1945, Benjamin shared Viereck's autobiography with Alfred Kinsey, who thought it was "interesting and definitely important in our own study [of sexual behaviour]."⁸²

So Viereck, a German nationalist and later Nazi sympathizer likely became sympathetic to the plight of trans individuals both through his connections to Hirschfeld and to Spengler, whom he certainly knew through his father and other contacts in the German community in New York. In 1930, both Viereck and Benjamin were instrumental in bringing Hirschfeld to New York, and we know from Henry's account that Spengler (who had by this time been treated by Benjamin) was a "prominent visitor" to Hirschfeld's New York lectures and even presented himself publicly as an example of a transvestite on

these occasions.⁸³ What we cannot know is how intense the relationship between Spengler and Viereck might have been. Spengler told Henry of two homosexual encounters. In both cases, Spengler had been "flattered" into accepting the passive role in the sexual act, partly out of curiosity, but with no significant sexual response.⁸⁴ The second encounter, when Spengler was forty-six, involved a man "ten years younger," who had long been attracted to Spengler but "hadn't dared mention it."⁸⁵ Could this have been Viereck? Quite possibly, I would submit, since Viereck was indeed ten years younger. But even if this is unjustified speculation, it is quite clear that the dense network of personal connections influenced all involved and likely produced considerably more tolerance towards trans identities than would otherwise have been the case. These threads of knowledge transmission reached to the most important sexological researcher of the post-Second World War period: Alfred Kinsey.

Viereck's release from prison in 1947 came just as Kinsey was finalizing publication of the *Male* book and beginning research for the *Female* book. It is thus perhaps instructive that Benjamin and Kinsey corresponded about both Viereck and Spengler in that year. In June 1947, Kinsey told Benjamin that he would be happy to meet Viereck, and in October Benjamin reminded Kinsey to return the file *and* the "many photos" of Otto Spengler that he had lent him.⁸⁶ By this time work on Kinsey's *Male* book, which contains very little reference to transvestism, would have been finalized, while research on the *Female* book had

just begun. Between the 1948 publication of the former and the 1953 publication of the latter Kinsey's view of the subject underwent a rather radical transformation. When, in 1950, Kinsey first interviewed the person for whom Meyerowitz provides the pseudonym Val Barry, he encouraged someone he still absolutely considered to be male "to undertake homosexual relations as a means of learning to value his genitals."⁸⁷ In contrast, the *Female* book prominently cites Talmey's *Love: A Treatise on the Science of Sex-Attraction*, where the description of Spengler and the four other "transvestites" published in the 1914 *New York Medical Journal* article is repeated.⁸⁸ Kinsey must therefore have been familiar with Talmey's arguments, and he must have relied on these five case studies to make his unsupported (and now very unconvincing) claim that transvestism resulted from clothing fetishism and was thirty or forty times more likely in males. Given the correspondence with Benjamin, it is also certain that he had made the link between Talmey's "first patient" and Otto Spengler. This one individual was thus enormously influential in starting a conversation about sexual transition in mid-twentieth-century America.

Although he left behind no definitive statements on the subject, the evidence I have presented strongly suggests that even Kinsey had begun to at least entertain the possibility that trans identities were within the spectrum of "normal." By 1949, he and his primary collaborators – Wardell Pomeroy, Clyde Martin, and Paul Gebhard – were explicitly trying to tear down preconceptions of "normal" human sexual

development. They argued, for instance, that the term "crimes against nature" had no scientific grounding:

[The law] proscribes [sexual acts which do no damage to property or to person] on the ground that they are crimes against nature – that is, abnormal or perverse behavior – and punishable because they are so rated. They are punishable without respect to the mutual desire of the parties involved to engage in such activities and irrespective of the fact that the persons immediately concerned may find satisfaction in their performance. In all the criminal law, there is practically no other behavior which is forbidden on the ground that nature may be offended, and that nature must be protected from such offense. This is the unique aspect of our sex codes.⁸⁹

Given this line of argument and Kinsey's sympathetic reaction to the trans women he was meeting through Harry Benjamin in the early 1950s, it seems unlikely that he could have continued to reject the validity of their desires. The transition in Kinsey's thought is visible in the few paragraphs he wrote about transvestism in the *Female* book. This second volume adds to the *Male* book by providing at least a brief definition of transvestism (he notably does *not* use the word "transsexuality"), and it coyly alludes to research underway "to secure a sample which will ultimately allow us to estimate the number of transvestites in the United States."⁹⁰ But the book was published in

1953, just before he and Harry Benjamin started corresponding about the circle of trans women around Louise Lawrence in San Francisco. It is not surprising, therefore, that Kinsey's understanding of the people he only called transvestites was dependent upon his understanding of the fundamental difference between males and females and his assumption that "males are more liable to be conditioned by psychologic stimuli."⁹¹ Kinsey's fundamentally binary understanding of gender roles made it difficult for him to understand trans identities, and we cannot know whether the collaboration with Benjamin and his contacts with trans women would have changed his mind. But there are at least hints that it might have.

The Benjamin-Kinsey Collaboration

Exploring the Benjamin-Kinsey collaboration helps us to understand the importance of personal networks in the history of sexology. After beginning to correspond with Alfred Kinsey in Spring 1944, Benjamin finally met the famous biologist "sometime around 1945,"⁹² and the two men began comparing notes about gathering sexual data through personal contacts and visits to bars and night clubs.⁹³ In 1949, Kinsey referred an effeminate boy who wanted to become a girl to Benjamin,⁹⁴ and they began sharing files of people they generally referred to as "transvestites." In September 1949, at precisely the same time that Benjamin started to address his letters to Prok (Kinsey's nickname) rather than to Dr. Kinsey, the correspondence between

the two men became much more intimate, with frequent descriptions of the personal lives, medical quests, and intertwined social networks of the small but growing number of Americans who were seeking hormone treatment and surgery. Throughout the early 1950s, Benjamin reported to Kinsey on his frequent visits with the circle of intimates around Louise Lawrence during his yearly summer residence in San Francisco (he ran a summer clinic on Sutter Street), and he forwarded information about his contacts to Kinsey. Kinsey then travelled to take these individuals' histories, and he became intimately acquainted with a group of primarily trans women, mostly in San Francisco, Chicago, and New York. Whenever Benjamin and Kinsey were in the same city, the two men went out to explore establishments they thought most likely to be "sexologically interesting." Benjamin led the way. Their common interest in this type of participant-observer research is apparent in their letters, such as the one dated September 1951, where Benjamin reported that he had taken a fascinating tour of the seedy bars of Mexico City and had seen "the lowest type of prostitution." Although his lack of Spanish skills and the extreme class divisions of the scene made it impossible for him to have a truly "sexiting" trip (as Albert Ellis, who was then working on his book *Sex without Guilt*, had wished him), he hoped that Kinsey would join him on a return trip. In other words, Benjamin was following in the Hirschfeld tradition, and he had found a kindred spirit in Kinsey, whose loitering in seedy areas of Chicago and other cities had already gotten him arrested (or nearly so) on several occasions.⁹⁵

Kinsey's writing does not provide any details about this methodology, which might be categorized as a type of anthropological fieldwork. He described his interview method in great detail in various interviews and publications, but he says nothing about how he found many of his most "sexologically interesting" interview partners. As Donna Drucker, Elizabeth Stephens, and Peter Cryle have argued, Kinsey's self-perception was as a taxonomist – a gatherer of masses of data that could then be categorized and analyzed.⁹⁶ But the fact that he could find so few trans individuals to investigate means that his planned volume on transsexuality could only have been written with a less stringent reliance on statistics. He simply did not have the numbers for a reasonable sample. He clearly knew this, but he was also eager to address the critique he had received for failing to investigate the significance of cross-dressing in past publications; he left it out of the *Male* book entirely and only added a few paragraphs on "transvestism" to the *Female* book.⁹⁷ Despite the small pool of subjects, Kinsey's collection of material about trans cases was meticulous: he took extremely detailed case histories and travelled long distances to meet with just one or two individuals. (For instance, he had a four-hour-long interview with Carla Erskine – double the usual length – who "found him to be a lovely and sympathetic man").⁹⁸ Despite his antipathy for psychoanalysis, his methods of investigating transsexuality were much more personal than statistical, and in his early speculations about categorizing these individuals, he tended to opine that "no two of them are

very much alike" – a judgement that would have complicated any neat taxonomy.⁹⁹ The subject of transsexuality might even have forced him to at least somewhat revise his views on what Hirschfeld would have called the "intermediaries" – the various shadings between male and female.

In other words, his encounter with trans people was a difficult learning process that contradicted his instinctual reaction to gender difference. In the *Male* book, Kinsey had rejected the idea of fixed sexual types. He particularly detested "unscientific" uses of the word "bi-sexuality," indignantly objecting that it was being "used to imply that these persons have both masculine qualities and feminine qualities *within* their single bodies."¹⁰⁰ He refused to ever speak in terms of fixed sexual identities, writing only about "homosexual acts," never about "homosexuals," and despite his own creation of a scale of human sexual difference, he placed far more emphasis than Hirschfeld on social conditioning. Kinsey insisted that terms like "intersex" and "bisexual" could only be used for humans in ways analogous to biological descriptions of animals who possessed both male and female anatomical structures. Those who engaged in homosexual behaviours, then, were not physical or sexual intermediates but rather examples of the limitless human capacity for variety in sexual comportment. This was a rejection of Hirschfeld's "theory of sexual transitions" (*Zwischenstufenlehre*), which posited that variations in sexual organs, physical build, sex drive, and emotional makeup produced a clearly categorizable – if also theoretically infinite – variety of sexual types.

Hirschfeld's insistence on this spectrum implied that the notion of solely male or female forms was illusory.¹⁰¹

Kinsey acknowledged Hirschfeld's pioneering efforts and was particularly respectful of the German sexologist's use of surveys (for instance Hirschfeld's 1904 distribution of forms to 3,000 technical college students and 5,721 metal workers), but he ultimately dismissed all early studies on sexual behaviour as failing to meet the sampling standards of scientific population analysis. Kinsey scoffed that much of Hirschfeld's information was "nothing more than gossip,"¹⁰² and he seems to have ignored Hirschfeld's theory of sexual transitions altogether. Given what we know about Kinsey's rather selective reading habits,¹⁰³ this might merely have been a matter of failing to ask his translator to read the relevant works. As Heike Bauer has argued, Kinsey's reactions to Hirschfeld's work were almost certainly also influenced by the fact that "for Kinsey Hirschfeld's own homosexuality disqualified the German from scientific authority."¹⁰⁴ It is nevertheless instructive that Kinsey cites but does not comment on Hirschfeld's 1910 book *Die Transvestiten*. Kinsey was clearly uncomfortable with any theories of sexual diversity that might threaten a gender order based on sexual dimorphism: the "natural" distinction between male and female. He acknowledged that men and women are "alike in their basic anatomy and physiology,"¹⁰⁵ but as Janice Irvine has argued, his insistence on the "biological imperative" has the ring of someone desperate to justify the double standard.¹⁰⁶ As Kinsey put it in

the *Female* book: "The human male's interest in maintaining his property rights in his female mate, his objections to his wife's extra-marital coitus, and her lesser objection to his extra-marital activity, are mammalian heritages."¹⁰⁷ Women, he insisted, had less sexual capacity and were less malleable to social conditioning; they had less "conditionability" than men and were therefore less likely to seek a variety of sexual experiences.¹⁰⁸ He had no problems finding ways of making the massive amount of data he collected fit these preconceptions. But as he and Benjamin began to collect information about "transvestites," and as they participated in long-term relationships with some of these individuals, Kinsey in particular was faced with dilemmas that would challenge both his insistence on mass data collection and his sexually dimorphic worldview.

By the time Kinsey died in 1956, there was only a handful of publicly acknowledged transsexuals in the United States. These individuals undoubtedly represented a tiny fraction of trans Americans. We can guess this because Christine Jorgensen and others who had undergone public transitions received hundreds of letters from desperate people. (Jorgensen alone received "some twenty thousand" letters.)¹⁰⁹ Benjamin and Kinsey were determined to find as many of these people as possible, and they believed that they knew of all of the medically registered cases in the United States. But by the time of his death in 1956, Kinsey had only one hundred histories of trans women and eleven trans men, and he knew of only ten cases where surgery had been performed

(only one more than Carla had reported six years earlier.)¹¹⁰ This was nothing like the data set that he had relied on to write his *Male* and *Female* books, which were collectively based on 18,200 case studies and for which Kinsey developed a punch-card system for data analysis.¹¹¹

Kinsey's extensive involvement with Benjamin and the long correspondence between the two men about every aspect of the lives of trans women they knew in the early 1950s makes it clear that this was a far more intimate and personal form of research than Kinsey had conducted in the past. Kinsey's interest in these individual cases and his rather undocumented reliance on them in the *Female* book indicate how important it is to understand the role of personal networks in the formulation of knowledge about sexuality. When it came to his research on transsexuality, Kinsey was forced to follow the theoretical, case-study approach more common to his German predecessors and their American followers rather than maintaining the taxonomical rigour he had pursued in his previous work. Given the much smaller sample size, and given his own sympathetic tendencies, he was forced to listen to the words of individuals and appreciate their self-representations in all of their complex and sometimes contradictory richness. He was dependent upon the social network between these people simply to *find* his research subjects, and both he and Benjamin inevitably became involved in the tensions, joys, and disappointments of people forced to live secretive and emotionally intense lives.

In 1951, Kinsey wrote to a person seeking surgery with the opinion that "A male cannot be transformed into a female through any known surgical means. In other words, it would be very hopeless to attempt to amputate your male organs and implant a vagina." This summed up his belief in the sexual binary and the fixity of sexual identity. "We humans," he wrote, "are either heterosexual or homosexual."¹¹² While it is impossible to predict where his new research would have led him had he lived, there are hints in the correspondence with Benjamin (whose belief in human bisexuality and whose support for the benefits of surgical intervention were already well established in the 1950s) that Kinsey could not have easily sustained his conviction that transsexuality was just one more example of male/female sexual dimorphism.¹¹³ At the very least he would have been forced to acknowledge that his initial assumptions about the predominance of male-to-female transsexuality had been wrong. We now know that trans people who had been assigned female at birth likely existed in equal numbers but were less likely to think that they could be helped by medical science and therefore less likely to make themselves known to researchers like Benjamin and Kinsey.¹¹⁴ But it is most important for my purposes in this chapter that this very personal involvement between scientists and an extremely marginalized sexual minority demonstrates the unique way that knowledge about transsexuality was assembled and transmitted in this era.

If we look a little deeper into the pages of the *Female* book, we can uncover the transformation that was in progress in

Trans Men

There are relatively few images or stories of trans men in the sources we used for *TransTrans*, and even these stories are often evidence of the comparative invisibility of trans men in history – both despite and because of the relative ease with which women could dress in men’s clothing and pass as men.¹ Hirschfeld’s case studies in *Die Transvestiten*, for instance, include sixteen “male transvestites” and only one “female transvestite” (to use Hirschfeld’s terms). In another section of the book, the “Differentialdiagnose” (differential diagnosis), Hirschfeld also gives the story of a female transvestite whom Hirschfeld speaks of with female pronouns: Katharina T. or “Miss T.,” as Hirschfeld calls him.² Born in 1885, Katharina T. considered himself “to be a man completely,” although Hirschfeld identifies Katharina as a homosexual, meaning a woman who is attracted to women. Hirschfeld and his psychoanalyst colleague Karl Abraham personally intervened as medical authorities to procure a certificate from the Berlin Police attesting that Katharina was known to the police as a cross-dresser and that Katharina had no improper or dishonest motives. In our exhibition in Calgary, we depicted Katharina T.’s story with a blank panel that read “no image” because we have none – a choice we also made to underscore the relative invisibility of trans men in this history.



Felix F.
Fall 4

Max Sch.
Fall 7

Ernst K.
Fall 6

FIGURE 3.13: Photograph from the dissertation by Hans Abraham, *Der weibliche Transvestitismus* (Female transvestitism), 1921. Reprinted in Hirschfeld, *Geschlechtskunde*, 1930). Caption: “Felix F. Case 4; Max Sch. Case 7; Ernst K. Case 6; (photographed by the author).”

Other extant photographs of trans men come from Hans Abraham’s 1921 dissertation *Der weibliche Transvestitismus* (Female transvestitism).³ These photographs are powerfully reminiscent of the social typographies produced in the 1920s by August Sander, and other images we find in Hirschfeld and Benjamin’s later



FIGURE 3.14: “Women from the working class who live as men,” Hirschfeld, *Geschlechtskunde*, 1930.



Female transsexual before any operative procedure or treatments.

FIGURE 3.15: Sole image of a “female transsexual” in Harry Benjamin’s, *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, 1966. University of Victoria Libraries, Transgender Archives collection. Harry Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon*. New York: Ace Publishing Corp, 1966. Special Collections call number RC560 C4B46 1966.

publications show how these styles traveled across cultures and time periods (figures 3.14 and 3.15).

Benjamin insisted in *The Transsexual Phenomenon* that “the frequency of female transsexualism is considerably less than that of the male”⁴ – a misjudgement, Annette argues, that he shared with Alfred Kinsey and others. Benjamin included several pictures of “male transsexuals” (male-to-female/transwomen) dressed as both men and as women, but he includes only this single photograph of a “female transsexual before any operative procedure or treatments,” and we see him dressed only as a man – continuing a photographic practice we find in Magnus Hirschfeld’s work, where “female transvestites” (trans men) are generally depicted only as men when they wear clothing. Yet



FIGURE 3.16: "Female transvestite" in *Das 3. Geschlecht*.



FIGURE 3.17: Cover of *Die Freundin* (March 19, 1930), captioned "The modern woman."

we also see, in these photographs, a continuity of visual representation and self-presentation that must have been visible and obvious to those who employed it.

Many masculine or cross-dressing women were also presented as lesbians; and as Rainer shows, the same image was often used in different contexts to depict different identities. Sailors was one prominent style, as we see in this single image (figures 3.16 and 3.17) reproduced in both *Das 3. Geschlecht* (aimed at transvestites) and *Die Freundin* (aimed at lesbians).

The social implications of this theme are explored in more detail in the image gallery on sensationalism.

Kinsey's approach to transsexuality and its implications for his understanding of the gender spectrum. In this book, as opposed to the first volume, Kinsey felt compelled to address – although skeptically – the science of endocrinology, which was Benjamin's medical specialty and also provided the original basis for gender-affirming surgery through the experiments of Eugen Steinach. While admitting that endocrinologists were among the "special consultants" for the project and that "hormones may have more effect on bodily functions than any other mechanism except the nervous system,"¹¹⁵ he warns that popularized knowledge about the impact of hormones was "quite incorrect":

Journalistic accounts of scientific research, over-enthusiastic advertising by some of the drug companies, over-optimistic reports from clinicians who have found a lucrative business in the administration of sex hormones, and some of the discussions among state legislators and public administrators who hope that hormone injections will provide one-package cure-alls for various social ills, have led the public to believe that endocrine organs are the glands of personality, and that there is such an exact knowledge of the way in which they control human behavior that properly qualified technicians should, at least in the near future, be able to control any and all aspects of human sexual behavior.¹¹⁶

He then goes on to minimize the effect of hormones in general and to decry the common usage of distinguishing "male" and "female" hormones.¹¹⁷ His purpose in fostering doubt in the science of endocrinology, however, becomes clear when he alludes to *another* of his ongoing research projects: "institutional sexual adjustment" – in other words, sex in prisons, mental institutions, boarding schools, and the like. For Kinsey, the conviction that hormones drove sexual behaviour had led to the "unwarranted opinion that anything associated with reproduction must, ipso facto, be associated with an animal's sexual behavior, and it had justified intolerable abuses, such as the castration of sex offenders."¹¹⁸ This skeptical approach to hormone treatment must have led to numerous debates with Benjamin. Given how central hormone preparations were to Benjamin's treatment of trans patients, it also means that two of the five major projects Kinsey was working on when he died were on a collision course. (The other three projects were sexuality in art, sexual factors in marital adjustment, and the influence of drugs on sexual behaviour.) It is of course difficult to say how this conflict would have played out. Would Kinsey have been persuaded by his intimate relationships with a relatively small number of trans people who were desperate for hormone treatment and who thrived once it was administered? Or would he have insisted on maintaining his taxonomic and statistically rigorous methods until the birth control pill came to shatter his preconceptions about female sexual capacity? Who knows. But it certainly

seems clear that we need to be more cognizant of these intimate relationships to understand how knowledge about sexuality has been constructed.

Carla Erskine

Perhaps no other relationship better exemplifies how trans individuals themselves accelerated the learning curve for medical experts than that between Carla Erskine and Harry Benjamin. In an active correspondence of at least four years in the early 1950s, the patient wrote to the doctor with increasing trust, but also with measured insistence that she be understood as a complete and rational human being. Benjamin wrote back somewhat more concisely, but also with a degree of personal concern and engagement that certainly exceeded the boundaries of most doctor-patient relationships. There are breaks in the correspondence during the summers, when Benjamin lived at the Hotel Sir Francis Drake in San Francisco and met with his Californian patients in person. For this reason, we do not have any letters discussing Carla's self-performed orchiectomy in August 1953, since Benjamin would have been in the city and would have seen her in person. When the threads of correspondence were picked up in the fall, it becomes clear that Benjamin was informed not only of medical issues but also about the complex relationships between Carla and a close circle of friends around Louise Lawrence.

Like Lawrence, Carla viewed herself as "doing missionary work for our cause." She described how happy she was to speak to

the "psychiatric interns [who] sometimes become well known and prominent psychiatrists" and who had flocked to her bedside after her 1953 surgery. "The more medical people sympathetically interested in transvestism the better," she wrote to Benjamin in 1954.¹¹⁹ She regularly offered (through Benjamin) to put Kinsey in touch with any "transvestites" she had met,¹²⁰ and she even considered the idea of compiling a scrapbook (like the one Louise Lawrence was working on for Kinsey) with which she hoped to be able to "furnish a small hit towards the understanding and acceptance of this problem."¹²¹ But Carla soon realized that fame was not for her. "I see nothing in publicity for me except trouble," she wrote.¹²²

As she was still recovering from the gender-affirming surgery that she received at the University of California Hospital on 30 December 1953, she wrote to Benjamin complaining that "the newspapers have somehow got hold of the fact that I have had this surgery."¹²³ The gossip columnist Herb Caen had tried to get information out of Carla's surgeon, Frank Hinman Jr., but Hinman had quickly quashed these efforts, drawing on his influence in the larger medical community to convince the muckrakers to back off. In Carla's words, Hinman argued that it "was not to the best interests of medicine, the public or myself to publish and that this case was not enough like Christine's to have sensational news value," by which she likely meant that unlike Christine Jorgensen, she had no intention of becoming a famous entertainer.¹²⁴ The resulting article was thus typically titillating but mercifully

brief, with incorrect initials (for which Carla thanked Hinman) and no promise of future information: “Medical Insider: A successful “Christine-type” operation has been performed on a man (initials L. C.) at U. C. Hospital by one of the town’s topmost surgeons, who wants anonymity. The transformed male is now living as a woman in Redwood City. ‘A much truer case than Christine’s’ is all the doctor will say.”¹²⁵ Since Carla’s story has remained so hidden, Hinman’s efforts to maintain confidentiality seem to have had a lasting effect. I suspect (but have been unable to verify) that her ability to keep her story a secret rested upon personal relationships with Herb Caen and other newspaper columnists.¹²⁶ I will return to this story below.

The decision about whether to seek publicity faced all trans people, and in the United States all trans people in this period lived under the cloud and the glow of Jorgensen’s fame. While some were eager to achieve something similar, they also knew that publicity would make it impossible to lead a normal life. Having first met Christine through Louise Lawrence in the spring of 1954, Carla had enormous respect for the famous woman’s success and influence on public opinion. “She’s changing public opinion greatly,”¹²⁷ Carla wrote to Benjamin, and she was impressed that despite some “false polish” gained from a career in show business, Christine was not being spoiled by fame and was generally having a salutary effect on their cause to garner public acceptance for sexual transition.¹²⁸ But Carla was not a performer, and she realized that any publicity would destroy her plans to work as a nurse.¹²⁹ She

was devastated when she lost a nursing job for no apparent reason, strongly (and realistically) suspecting that the secret of her past life had been exposed.¹³⁰

It is clear that Benjamin evaluated Carla as an entirely rational person, quite unlike some of the other trans people he and Kinsey had interviewed, who they often assessed as unstable. In the tables of all of his trans patients, Benjamin later categorized Carla’s “psychological health” as “very good,” which placed her just below a few others, whom he described as being in “excellent” psychological health, but above the majority of his patients, who were described as “poor,” “doubtful,” “fair,” or just “satisfactory.” Despite Benjamin’s general support for Carla’s view that seeking fame was not advisable, by the time he was compiling the data for his 1966 book, he accepted that even trans women who became entertainers, such as Christine Jorgensen and Aleshia Crenshaw (who later became a successful – passing – actress under the name Aleshia Brevard) could be described as being in “excellent” psychological health.¹³¹ But in the 1950s, both Benjamin and Kinsey seemed particularly suspicious of those seeking fame, and they were more likely to link psychological health with some kind of respectable employment. Although Carla’s difficulty in keeping a full-time job and the fact that she frequently complained to Benjamin about her money problems and her inability to budget likely contributed to his slight downgrading of her psychological health,¹³² her desire to remain a private person certainly met with his approval.

This desire for secrecy and privacy certainly gives the historian – in other words me, the person who just happens to be reading Carla’s private correspondence – pause. I can only hope that this enterprise is ethically justified as being part of precisely the kind of enlightenment that Carla sought to bring about. Her path was not the path of publicity, and yet I hope that detailing her story several decades after her 1976 death will inspire those still struggling with the obstacles to social and medical transition and reveal to cisgender readers that these stories also affect them. The history of how Carla came to receive treatment and how she was treated by medical science is both heartening and troubling. It is only by being precise about the details that we can understand both how far we have come and how far we still have to go in honouring individuals’ own sense of sexual and gender identity. With this stated, I will spend some time exploring the more intimate details of Carla’s life and her correspondence with Benjamin.

In the nine-page autobiography that Carla composed for Harry Benjamin, she outlines a troubled childhood and a difficult young adulthood.¹³³ In this document, she cites her birthdate as 13 January 1910, but census data (and subsequent pronouncements of her age) make it clear that she was actually born in 1905 in Casper, Wyoming.¹³⁴ Having been born with a genital anomaly (Benjamin later diagnosed this as hypospadias),¹³⁵ she was initially raised as a girl. Benjamin’s diagnosis conflicts with the decision of the doctor who attended her birth to tell Carla’s parents that she should be raised as

a girl. It also complicates our assessment of whether the baby would today be classified as intersex. We must therefore be very careful not to discount this possibility, since, as I noted earlier, the tendency to erase the history of intersex people remains strong.¹³⁶ As I will discuss in more detail below, there is conflicting evidence about what Carla herself thought. She consistently called herself a transvestite, but she also described the female physical characteristics that were present long before she received any hormonal treatment. Of her time serving in the navy during the Second World War, she said: “Heavens knows [sic] my breasts were larger then than now,” in 1953.¹³⁷ Carla grew up convinced she was a girl and by the time she had reached her fifties, she was calling herself a transvestite and was desperate to erase all signs of maleness from her body. In some sense her story provides us with emotional insight for both experiences: the experience of being an intersex child who was lied to about her body throughout her childhood and the experience of a trans person who was eager to receive medical help that would help her live an authentic life. That she could only use the words available to her at the time to express the various ruptures in her sexual/gender identity only underlines the importance of historically contextualizing all terminology related to the trans and intersex experience.¹³⁸

But back to the narrative of Carla’s autobiography. At some point in her childhood (the timing is unclear) an accident on a staircase prompted her parents to bring her to a doctor, who informed them that their little girl was in fact a boy

and performed (unspecified) surgery. This led to a traumatic deterioration of her relationship with her parents, particularly her mother, who seemed to think that she now had a “monster” in her home. Carla fled the family home and made her way to Galveston, Texas.¹³⁹ Working as a sailor for two years, she lived for a time in Tahiti and then made her way back to the United States “on an Australian cattle boat,” arriving in San Francisco in July 1925. After landing a temporary job playing the cornet with Ringling Brothers circus, she “decided to try to live as a girl” and fled to Mexico City, where she took the name Marie Ciel Campbell. Although she does not explicitly say so, it is likely that she chose Mexico for legal reasons. As Clare Sears has documented, San Francisco and many other American cities where she might have been accepted by other trans women had passed laws against cross-dressing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Fearing her ability to pass as a woman under the constant threat of police attention would have made Mexico a much more comfortable place for her to live.¹⁴⁰ She did successfully pass in Mexico City, even entertaining a proposal of marriage, until she was discovered by “a pawing drunk” and fled back to the United States to avoid humiliation.

She moved to Milwaukee, where a brief marriage to a woman named Ruth ended in frustration despite the birth of a son. “God knows I tried to be a man,” Carla writes, “but even my best tries ended in embarrassment. Still when Jack was born I thought that perhaps I had succeeded once at least.” (She later discovered that she had

always been sterile and could not have been Jack’s father.) Ruth’s alcoholism and serial adultery, but particularly her tendency to proclaim Carla’s sexual shortcomings loud enough for the neighbours to hear, led to divorce and a move to California. Carla then claims to have served in the U.S. Navy between 1941 and 1943, where her “physical abnormalities,” particularly her breasts, were overlooked, but where her pre-existing and ongoing morphine addiction was discovered, leading to her discharge for fraudulent enlistment. Two brief relationships (with a more sexually tolerant woman and an apparently asexual man) were followed by suicide attempts and the eventual decision to medically confirm what she had always known: her feminine identity. “Due to the facts of my birth and the upbringing and due to the development of my breasts and due to the lack of body hair and the female pattern of its distribution and due to my narrow shoulders and small bones, I have always thought that there was more wrong with me than just sexual impotence and I made up my mind that if this were the case and in the same category, I would find out and if possible I would have this done. It seemed that if it were a possibility it would open up life itself again to me.” But Carla’s search for medical help was frustrated by doctors’ reticence to undertake such a transition so late in life.

In 1953 she decided to take matters into her own hands. On 19 August 1953, the *San Francisco Examiner* reported on Carla’s desperate act under the headline “Sex Operation on Self Fails”:

The case of a Half Moon Bay man who masqueraded [sic] for six weeks as a female nursing home attendant and performed a crude operation to change his sex was disclosed yesterday by Sheriff Earl Whitmore. The man, who gave his name as [Carla Erskine], 43, attempted vainly to emasculate himself last Saturday. He explained to Palo Alto hospital attendants that "I wanted to be like Christine." He was treated for shock and loss of blood, and was released Monday, Whitmore said. [Erskine], a former fisherman who declined to give his male forename, had worked for the past six weeks as a domestic in a Menlo Park home for elderly persons. An official of the home commented last night that "[Erskine is] no longer is with us."¹⁴¹

Luckily for Carla, the article did not ignite the flurry of press attention that she so feared. But her self-surgery was certainly known in the trans circles of the day.¹⁴² She later tried to dissuade others from following her example, and she refused requests that she help them do so, on the grounds that she had herself almost bled to death.¹⁴³ Carla met Benjamin very soon after this episode. Benjamin would have been in California for his summer sojourn and, given that he kept a close watch on any newspaper articles about trans people, it is possible that the *San Francisco Examiner* article motivated the contact and that it was Benjamin who introduced Carla to Louise Lawrence. Carla's correspondence with Benjamin begins on 1 July 1953 with

a mention of their meeting at Lawrence's house, and it includes exact physical measurements, demonstrating Carla's desire to be both Benjamin's patient and his research subject.¹⁴⁴ Carla's case clearly influenced Benjamin, who later prided himself on being able to prevent "attempts at suicide or self-mutilation" through hormonal treatment and sympathy. He must have been referring to Carla when he noted in the introduction to Richard Green and John Money's book *Transsexualism and Sex Reassignment* that the "few instances of attempted self-castration by definitely nonpsychotic individuals impressed me greatly. Their desperation as well as the entire clinical history with their vain search for help, often from childhood on, made me realize that the medical profession truly treated these patients as 'stepchildren.'"¹⁴⁵

But Benjamin also repeatedly told Carla that her case was quite different. "Yours is as unsimilar as can be" from the Jorgensen case, he told Carla when they were discussing the Caen article about her surgery.¹⁴⁶ It is difficult to tell exactly what he meant by this. He clearly did not believe that Carla was intersex, because he refused her request to describe her as a "pseudo-hermaphrodite" in order to patch up relations with her son, who could not accept her transition. Benjamin demurred, noting that one would have to add the term "psychic" to the term "pseudo-hermaphrodite" and that this "would be a very controversial diagnosis. You have had undescended testicles for which you were operated. [Benjamin is presumably describing the operation performed on Carla as a child.] They

were then in a normal position, but not capable of forming sperm cells.”¹⁴⁷ Carla pushed back: “I think this [using the word “pseudo-hermaphrodite”] would be no falsehood, and it would settle questions in an uninformed and somewhat immature mind that he couldn’t possibly understand otherwise – I realize my own condition perfectly but to quite some few people who have to know of this change, the idea of hermaphroditeism [sic] is easier to explain and understand than is transvestism.”¹⁴⁸ By this time, the diagnosis of “intersexuality” that was listed on Carla’s hospital entrance form in December 1953 and that she found “interesting terminology” had disappeared from the discussion.¹⁴⁹ Since the relationship with her son was permanently broken (there is no evidence that he ever wrote to Benjamin) we cannot know what Carla decided to tell him.

There is also great uncertainty about how Carla represented herself to nonmedical professionals. Even before her surgery, she volunteered to speak to the San Francisco branch of the Mattachine Society, a gay rights organization that had been founded in 1950 in Los Angeles. This was yet another indication of her desire to educate at least the more tolerant portions of the public. Her talk was promoted with the following flyer, distributed only to members:

We have made special arrangements to have a true transvestite give a prepared lecture on this most interesting topic entitled:
WHAT IS TRANSVESTISM?

Our speaker has a fascinating story to tell, and we want you all to be there to enjoy this delightful personality. This talk will go into detail and be most revealing, not only from a physical but also from a historical standpoint, citing famous cases from history. The meeting is under direction of Mac and will be held at: 516–55th Street, Oakland, Apt. B. on Thursday evening, December 10, at 8 PM.¹⁵⁰

Carla reported to Benjamin that the talk was well received and that she repeated it at least one other time, but she sadly did not take him up on his offer to have it transcribed and published in *The International Journal of Sexology*, the journal in which Benjamin was to publish what he claimed was the “very first medical article on transsexualism,” and which folded in 1955.¹⁵¹ Given the usage of the day, however, the language (“true transvestite”) suggests that Carla was representing herself as someone who had been male but was transitioning to female. Leaving aside the genital malformation and even her own physical self-description as having “more wrong with me than just sexual impotence,” I believe that this is the way that we should describe and understand her. Carla’s friends also very clearly understood her to be a male-to-female transsexual (though they did not use this terminology until later).

As I have mentioned, Carla and her friends thought of themselves as a very small group of pioneers. They openly compared surgeries,¹⁵² and they communicated with other trans individuals



FIGURE 3.18: Carla sent this portrait to Harry Benjamin for his “transvestite” files in the fall of 1954. From back row: Angela D., Louise Lawrence, Judy S., Carla Erskine. Photo by Alvin Harris. KILSC-HB-25, folder 10. Copyright © 2017, The Trustees of Indiana University on behalf of the Kinsey Institute. All rights reserved.



FIGURE 3.19: Stereoscopic slide (likely taken by Carla Erskine) of Christine Jorgensen, KILSC-HB 18. Copyright © 2017, The Trustees of Indiana University on behalf of the Kinsey Institute. All rights reserved.

across the world to discuss their social, medical, and cultural struggles.¹⁵³

Some of these relationships ended in heartache. Carla told Benjamin of her bafflement that two of her trans friends, Angela D. and Judy S. (pseudonyms, see figure 3.18) had stopped speaking to her, and she was suspicious that they might have broken off the relationship in order to profit from their collaboratively developed idea to invent a new epilator.¹⁵⁴ Despite these disappointments, both Carla and Louise Lawrence were constantly on the lookout for other trans women to refer to Benjamin and Kinsey. In some cases, this led them to individuals who were clearly trying to emulate Jorgensen’s path to fame. Carla told Benjamin that she and her friends quickly rethought the idea of contacting Bunny Breckenridge. Breckenridge was a troubled actor and millionaire; his 1954

announcement that he planned to undergo a sex-change operation in Denmark appears to have been nothing but a publicity stunt, and he later served time in prison for committing “perverse acts” with two young boys.¹⁵⁵ Carla quickly sensed Breckenridge’s deception, calling him a “publicity seeking dilettante.”¹⁵⁶ She had a much longer relationship with another troubled soul, Dixie MacLane, whom Susan Stryker describes as “a burlesque performer [who] tried to ride the wave of publicity about her surgery” (succeeding to some small degree in the 1950s) and about whom Alex will say more.¹⁵⁷ Carla’s letters to Benjamin detail her growing frustration with Dixie’s emotionally demanding personality and desire for publicity. Benjamin described Dixie as “emotionally deeply unbalanced” and therefore unlikely to be able to obtain surgery.¹⁵⁸ Carla complained that Dixie

was “blowing her cork all over the place,” threatening suicide, and displaying too much faith in the ability of surgery to transform personality. “She expects to be a woman and when she finds that the only thing gained will be the dubious legal right to dress in female attire, I am afraid for her.”¹⁵⁹ Carla broke off the friendship when Dixie forwarded her letters and those of Louise Lawrence to Dr. Frederik Hartsuiker in the Netherlands.¹⁶⁰

Another incident that contributed to the breakup with Dixie involved the police and makes it clear just how important passing was for trans women in 1950s California. Having travelled to Los Angeles in the spring of 1955 for psychiatric testing with Frederic G. Wordon at the University of California Medical Center in Los Angeles, Carla was apprehended by officers from the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), an experience for which she blamed Dixie:

As usual when I come in direct contact with Dixie, I got mad at her and, as usual about her ideas on publicity she expects and hopes to get when she gets home. I think it was because of the company I kept in Los Angeles (Dixie and [Karen] sure look “queen” letting their hair grow out etc.), but when they met me at the station a plain clothesman cornered me and told me he thought I was masquerading. I told him lets go to police Doctor and settle question [sic], which we did. Took only one minute and I was appologized [sic] to an politely

excorted [sic] to my hotel in style. The policeman wanted to be sure that I had no hard feelings as he said he was only doing his job – and that the two people (Dixie and [Karen]) who met me at the station were known homosexuals and because of my heighth [sic] and rather deep voice the “mistake” was an easy one to make. So everything ended nicely and this little episode has probably done a great deal to reassure me. I wonder if Dr. Kinsey might like a report of this incident? And I wonder if a written statement from you or Dr. Hinman might not save trouble and a bit of embarrassment if such an occasion should arise again. What do you think?¹⁶¹

In post-Second World War Los Angeles, moral authorities viewed cross-dressing as a provocation that threatened the city’s reputation and contributed to a cosmopolitanism they viewed as threatening. As the collectively authored book *Lavender Los Angeles* explains, the LAPD therefore “relentlessly cracked down on LGBT expression ... [They] raided gay bars, entrapped gay men, and arrested LGBT people who cross-dressed.”¹⁶² As Carla’s description of this episode demonstrates, trans people craved medical protection from this harassment (they would have been thrilled to have access to the kind of medical authorization that Magnus Hirschfeld’s “transvestite passes” provided), and they quickly recognized that genital surgery could offer some security. The tone of Carla’s letter to Benjamin and

her concern about how Dixie and her other trans friend Karen might be endangering her cause by appearing disreputable in public make it clear that she was desperately trying to appear deserving of medical treatment in Benjamin's eyes.

Another area of concern for trans patients was how their sex lives might be assessed. Carla told Benjamin that she thought Dixie was unsuitable for surgery because her friend "has and enjoys some kind of sex life and ... would be very unhappy to give this up even tho [sic] she thinks it doesn't mean much to her now."¹⁶³ This one sentence hints at an extremely sensitive subject that is very rarely explicitly mentioned in the correspondence, perhaps for fear that it might fall into the wrong hands, but likely also because of an awareness that stress on erotic desire could only harm the cause of increasing tolerance for transitioning individuals. Well into the 1990s, it was common for trans advocates to try to silence any discussion of erotic desire to avoid awakening a moral backlash.¹⁶⁴ During the 1950s, Benjamin was still describing trans women – people he was then calling "transsexualists" – as "the most disturbed group of male transvestites."¹⁶⁵ He thought that their sexuality was largely "nongenital" and that the creation of an artificial vagina could aid the sexual satisfaction only of their male partners.¹⁶⁶ But he was also beginning to create a distinction between transvestites and "transsexualists" – the former, he insisted, derived sexual pleasure from their genitals while the latter viewed these body parts with disgust.¹⁶⁷ This background, and the likelihood that Carla and Benjamin

discussed these theories, provides an additional twist to Benjamin's argument that Carla was unlike Jorgensen and MacLane. But there were clearly tensions surrounding this subject even at the time.

Richard Ekins has meticulously detailed how Benjamin's advocacy – his understanding of the "art of the possible" – led him to transform an early acceptance of human sexual variety (with Hirschfeldian undertones) into a more heteronormative categorization of surgery as a path to "normal" gender relations.¹⁶⁸ But this analysis crucially leaves out the influence of Alfred Kinsey and (more understandably) the sexual inclinations of those investigating trans lives. It is instructive that during a brief marriage to a heterosexual man, Carla wrote to Benjamin about her surprise that she was achieving sexual satisfaction and that she was proud to be satisfying her husband, despite the fact that she did not have a vagina. She asked Benjamin to report on this experience to Kinsey.¹⁶⁹ Kinsey, she must have known, had been initially disapproving of surgical intervention to remove the penis, because he simply could not imagine why anyone would want to remove an organ of such massive orgasmic potential. This obsession with counting orgasms has not escaped the notice of those who have analyzed his *Male* and *Female* books.¹⁷⁰ Kinsey defined sexuality as the potentially unlimited capacity for sexual release or "outlet" – a potential upon whose fulfillment culture and society only acted as negative forces in the form of moral prescription and repression. But his own repressed childhood (his father railed against masturbation) and troubled early

marriage (he and his wife needed medical advice to consummate their marriage) probably contributed to his valorization of the male orgasm as the most obvious (not to mention countable) manifestation of human sexual capacity.¹⁷¹ These preconceptions were likely the origin of his initial reluctance to accept the existence of transgender individuals, especially because he (and initially Benjamin) assumed that the desire to change one's sex was an almost exclusively "male" (i.e., male-to-female) phenomenon.

Kinsey's own sex life has been the subject of much fascination and was a key theme of the 2005 film about his life directed by Bill Condon. Benjamin has yet to receive the same biographical treatment, and we have only hints about how his own sexual practice might have influenced his views of the sexual lives of his trans patients. Aside from the discussions of nightlife that I have already mentioned, I have found only one cryptic yet revealing note from Benjamin to Kinsey that seems to be a description of sexual activity: "Did I tell you I have trouble with my girl?" Benjamin wrote in September 1951. "She has just reached the age of consent, and now she starts refusing. Any advice?"¹⁷² We cannot know what Benjamin might have meant, and what appears to be an allusion to sex with an underage partner is certainly disturbing. There is also a hint in one of the interviews that Susan Stryker conducted with Aleshia Brevard Crenshaw that Benjamin might have had extramarital sexual relationships. Crenshaw, who began her transition as a female impersonator at Finoccio's bar in San Francisco,¹⁷³

describes herself as becoming one of Harry Benjamin's "girls." Crenshaw met with Benjamin soon after receiving a diagnosis that would later allow her to have surgery. (From her biography, we can glean that she met Benjamin in 1958 and had surgery in 1962.) Crenshaw told Stryker that Benjamin "added me to his little list. You know how there are RGs – real girls? Well he always said there were RGs, and His – his girls."¹⁷⁴ Benjamin, Crenshaw noted to Stryker's nonsurprise, "had his own quirks ... He had a fetish for very thin girls with very long hair. He had a hair fetish. So that was his quirk." Stryker admitted to having heard this before, and Crenshaw responded with the reflection that "these are the sorts of things we don't want out. We try to build a mystique about transsexuals. I guess it's time to let the truth be out there though."¹⁷⁵ Given the incredible service he provided for so many desperate individuals, it is understandable that Benjamin's mystique has lasted this long. But in our era of increasing understanding of the incredible plasticity and variability of human sexual identity, it strikes me as illogical to continue to try to cleanly separate scientific understandings of sexuality from the researcher's own emotional responses.

Everything I have said so far about the close personal relationship that Carla and Benjamin cultivated after 1953 helps us to read the images that we displayed in the two iterations of the exhibition *TransTrans* in 2016 and 2019–20. Between 1953 and 1955, Carla sent Benjamin stereoscopic slides of her friends, most of whom were sitting on a couch in Louise Lawrence's living room. This aspect of her "missionary work" was



FIGURE 3.20: One of Carla's friends on Louise Lawrence's couch, KILSC-HB 17. Copyright © 2017, The Trustees of Indiana University on behalf of the Kinsey Institute. All rights reserved.

so important to her that she prioritized developing and mailing the slides despite a near-constant state of poverty.¹⁷⁶

She and her friends clearly hoped that these photographs would portray their successful integration into everyday life. They wanted to convince Benjamin and Kinsey that their desires were valid and that medical intervention could be successful. Carla's devotion to the cause of scientific inquiry is evident in her willingness to have nude pictures of herself published in Benjamin's 1966 book. This is the context for the middle image in the triptych in Benjamin's book (figures 3.3 and 3.4). Carla gave Benjamin permission to use

her images in order to foster knowledge about transsexuality.¹⁷⁷ I would argue that the intrusion into Carla's private life that republishing these pictures represents is justified by the fact that it helps us to understand how adamantly Carla and her friends tried to convince Benjamin of their own "normality." The slides from Louise's couch call out for us to accept the "normality" of those photographed.

The images are personal, playful, intimate, and they express the joy of transformation and personal fulfilment. But it must also be said that the images are not particularly good photographic portraits. Carla's attempt to make a living

with a portrait studio lasted a little over a year, collapsing in December 1955.¹⁷⁸ She had already been complaining to Benjamin about her renewed financial difficulties and about how she had been thinking of making

a large selection of photomicrographs of biological specimens [from the oceanside near her home] and purvey them to the educational system as aids to teaching ... I have given up trying to conduct business for myself as I know from past experience that I'm [sic] not able to manage the sales and business management end of it ... It always comes back to this basic problem, that I do not understand financial affairs and am not capable in realizing on my work. So here I am sitting with a brand new and beautiful life and don't [sic] know what to do about it. I am in a rut and life is passing me by. How does one break out of a rut?¹⁷⁹

I have made several efforts to discover precisely the details of Carla's "beautiful life," but I have only been able to find a few very tantalizing hints about how about how she turned this interest in microphotography into a successful career. In November 1972, Herb Caen, the San Francisco gossip columnist who had first encountered Carla when he wrote about her self-surgery in 1953, asked his readers: "You know the Avenue Theatre on San Bruno Avenue, which plays silent movies? Well, [Carla Erskine], who made her fortune in



FIGURE 3.21: One of Carla's friend with child on Louise Lawrence's couch, KILSC-HB 17. Copyright © 2017, The Trustees of Indiana University on behalf of the Kinsey Institute. All rights reserved.

electronics, bought it because she's mad for that big organ. Quite a woman is [Carla]; not only does she own a gullwing Mercedes and a white Rolls, she just qualified – at age 68! – to fly solo in her Skyhawk plane."¹⁸⁰ From this, we can gather that Carla became wealthy in the decade after she stopped writing to Harry Benjamin. "She came to the rescue," Vernon Gregory, the owner of Avenue Theatre told *Oakland Tribune* reporter Elinor Hayes in July 1969. "She is a living genius who has made a fortune in her own electronic business and has installed an organ in her home."¹⁸¹

How did she achieve this dramatic reversal in her economic fortunes? The details have been difficult to determine. The



FIGURE 3.22: A couple on Louise Lawrence's couch, KILSC-HB 17. Copyright © 2017, The Trustees of Indiana University on behalf of the Kinsey Institute. All rights reserved.

only extended description of her life that I have been able to uncover is in a blog post written by the plastic surgeon Donald R. Laub. In “Many People, Many Passports,” Laub provides entertaining stories about his illustrious career as a plastic surgeon in

California. He served as the chief of plastic surgery at Stanford University School of medicine between 1968 and 1980, and he was the founder of Interplast (now called ReSurge International), an international charity providing life-changing operations

for people in countries too poor to offer such services. The entry about Carla makes it very clear that despite a differently spelled first name and a few vaguely recalled details of personal history, Laub did indeed meet Carla in 1963. She required surgery for a hernia, and she asked Laub, the still aspiring plastic surgeon, to “get that tattoo aligned exactly right when you do the suturing.”¹⁸² Laub later performed transgender surgeries himself,¹⁸³ and in his blog he describes how this early encounter began a long-term friendship and collaboration with Carla. Sadly, by the time I tracked down this story, I was told by a former secretary of Dr. Laub’s that he was suffering from brain cancer, so I was unable to interview him.¹⁸⁴

Carla had eventually found a new career. As Laub puts it “during the birth of Silicon Valley she was able to make microphotography negatives of the plans for a computer chip; the manufacturing process utilized silver salts in the negatives of her microphotos to etch silicon into chips.” Having received shares in “one of the more prominent laser and computer companies in Silicon Valley,” she had been able to build a beautiful Japanese-style home in the hills of Los Altos.¹⁸⁵ Laub later encouraged her to invent three-dimensional television (which she apparently did), and when her personal nurse, a man with whom she lived in an apparently platonic relationship, told him that she was becoming depressed in retirement, Laub employed Carla as a photographer for Interplast. By the 1970s, she was “worth several million” and had donated a large sum to Laub’s research. Sadly, in 1976, Carla was diagnosed with metastatic cancer of the rib – a recurrence

of a previous bout with lung cancer. Upon hearing that she likely only had six weeks to live, Carla asked the young medical student who had delivered the news to hand over her purse. She then swallowed the cyanide capsules that she had brought with her to the hospital and died twenty-four hours later.

I tell this story, despite being unable to confirm the details, because the letters to Benjamin trail off in 1955, leaving the impression that Carla might not have been achieving a successful personal and professional life. (In his book, Benjamin misleadingly reproduces a picture of her working in a short-lived nursing job, although he certainly knew that she had become a “chemical” photographer by 1965.)¹⁸⁶ Laub’s obvious affection for Carla, and his sadness-filled respect for her decision to end her life, makes it clear that she had found peace. She had, writes Laub, “display[ed] more wisdom than any of us, perhaps abandoning her beautifully ornamented body. She may have elected not to try another life. [Carla] was a friend. Not in the sense of a friend I considered ‘close’ or a friend I would ask to dinner or a friend I would introduce at a party, but as a friend who was a co-worker, a valuable and essential member of the team, and therefore, an extension of myself.”¹⁸⁷ It was only when he wrote this blog entry thirty years later that Laub forgave the medical student for being so rashly honest in providing Carla with her cancer prognosis. In other words, she had continued to establish intimate networks of knowledge to the end of her life and beyond.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that three aspects of trans history require more concentrated reflection than they have previously been accorded: international connections, personal (and even intimate) networks, and the sexual self-understandings and practices of the researchers and popularizers themselves. Everything that I have said here adds weight to the work of historians who have begun to insist that historians pay more attention to emotions and intimacy as having causal effects on trajectories of knowledge, political developments, and patterns of both tolerance and prejudice.¹⁸⁸ Without the space to delve into this historiography, I would simply underline that productive discomfort in revealing intimate histories is not the same thing as voyeurism or sensationalism. I have alluded several times to the uncomfortable feelings I experienced while analyzing the intimate correspondence between doctors and patients and the erotic and otherwise extremely private images that trans women in the 1950s shared with men like Harry Benjamin and Alfred Kinsey – men in whom these individuals placed enormous faith and trust. In the next chapter, Alex will demonstrate that similar forms of compassionate care characterized the relationship between doctors and trans patients in Europe after the Second World War.¹⁸⁹ It is important to note that the social intolerance prevalent in many societies

can still mean that revealing such intimate relationships or questioning the god-like objectivity of scientific research can create unjustifiable risks. Yet there has never been a time when secrets about sex improved the lives of those being persecuted for their desires and self-understandings. There has never been a time when it has truly helped anyone to act as if human sexual desire or subjective interpersonal relationships can be ignored in either politics or law without intensifying the mechanisms of repression. In revealing some of the most intimate desires of people like Otto Spengler and Carla Erskine, I have tried to demonstrate that the respect these people were accorded by scientists and medical practitioners like Harry Benjamin and Alfred Kinsey, as well as the varying degrees of happiness that these relationships produced, definitively overrules any objections that scientific objectivity was compromised when researchers took their trans patients' feelings seriously. The history of trans experience in Germany and the United States teaches us that intimate relationships are thus not necessarily inimical to scientific knowledge – that is, provided that these relationships are built on mutual respect and structured in ways that protect individual bodily integrity. Indeed without the interpersonal trust that developed across the Atlantic and over the course of several decades, the lives of trans people today would be immeasurably more difficult.

GALLERY NOTES: Harry Benjamin's Use of Photographs of Carla Erskine

- 1 Margo DeMello, *Bodies of Inscription: A Cultural History of the Modern Tattoo Community* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 59–70.
- 2 See, for instance, the tattoos presented in Jérôme Pierrat and Éric Guillon, *Marins tatoués : portraits de marins 1890–1940; Portraits of Sailors 1890–1940* (Paris : La manufacture de livres, 2018), 112.

GALLERY NOTES: Trans Men

- 1 In reference to trans men in America around the turn of the twentieth century, Emily Skidmore has recently argued that they “often sought to pass as conventional men, aligning themselves with the normative values of their communities.” See *True Sex: The Lives of Trans Men at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 3. This was a desire they shared with many trans women, who nevertheless found it more difficult to pass and, as Alex elaborates in his essay, were often relegated to spaces of theatre and prostitution.
- 2 Magnus Hirschfeld, *Die Transvestiten: Eine Untersuchung über den erotischen Verkleidungstrieb*, 192–8. Volker Weiß identifies him as “Katharina Kohnheim.” See also Volker Weiß, ‘mit ärztlicher Hilfe zum richtigen Geschlecht?: Zur Kritik der medizinischen Konstruktion der Transsexualität’ (Hamburg: Männerschwarm Verlag, 2009), 164, cited from Geertje Mak, “Passing Women’ in the Consulting Room of Magnus Hirschfeld: On Why the Term ‘Transvestite’ Was Not Employed for Cross-Dressing Women,” *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 9, no. 3 (1998): 388.
- 3 Hans Abraham, *Der weibliche Transvestitismus* (Berlin: Ebering, 1921).
- 4 Harry Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (New York: Ace Publishing Corp, 1966).

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

- 1 Joanne Meyerowitz’s pseudonym for this woman is Caren Ecker. See Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 155 and elsewhere in this book. Carla died in 1976, and I have made several unsuccessful attempts to find descendants (or even good friends) to obtain permission to use her full name. As I will discuss in more detail below, Carla seems to have been entirely estranged from all family members when she died, and she actively attempted to avoid any publicity about her transition. Although, as is noted in the sidebar “Harry Benjamin’s Use of Photographs of Carla Erskine,” she gave permission to Benjamin to use her image and tell her story, revealing her identity clearly presents ethical quandaries. I am torn between my respect for her desire for privacy and my desire to also convey respect for her indomitable spirit and her contribution to the advancement of knowledge. While privacy is often critical to the safety and well-being of trans individuals, anonymization – particularly long after death – can also be a form of forgetting and belittling their contributions and life stories. In the end, I must follow the policies of the Kinsey Institute Library & Special Collections by maintaining her anonymity, but I have chosen to use first names in this chapter, because it better suits the atmosphere of intimacy I am addressing.
- 2 Letter from Carla Erskine to Harry Benjamin, 22 Jan 1954, Kinsey Institute Library & Special Collections, Harry Benjamin Collection (hereafter KILSC-HB), Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 3 Lawrence’s role as a pioneer and her “instrumental [work] in developing the trans community’s connection to pioneering sex researchers such as Alfred Kinsey and Harry Benjamin” were recently honoured by the creation of an archive that carries her name. See Louise Lawrence Transgender Archive, <https://ltransarchive.org/>.
- 4 Carla describes her various friendships with Californian trans women in her letters to Benjamin. A letter dated July 1953 makes it clear that they originally met at Louise Lawrence’s apartment in the early summer

- of 1953, likely at the beginning of his yearly sojourn in San Francisco. Erskine to Benjamin, 1 July 1953, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 5 Erskine to Benjamin, 5 Oct 1954, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
 - 6 For a somewhat more detailed account of these rulings, see Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*, 47–8.
 - 7 Carla alludes to the fact that self-surgery had almost caused her to bleed to death in a letter to Benjamin on 5 Oct 1953, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C. I will return to this episode below.
 - 8 Carla was not including Louise Lawrence, who never underwent surgery. Erskine to Benjamin, 5 Oct 1954, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
 - 9 Julia Serano provides a concise and sensitive discussion of debates over terminology that has influenced my wording in this chapter: Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity* (Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2007), 23–34.
 - 10 This is certainly not the place to rehearse the various stages of this history. For accessible summaries, see: Veronique Mottier, *Sexuality: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Robert A. Nye, ed., *Sexuality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Anna Clark, *Desire: A History of European Sexuality* (New York: Routledge, 2008).
 - 11 See Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*, 45; and Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2008), 38–40. The link between the two men has now become well enough known to be recorded in textbook narratives such as Ardel Haefele-Thomas’s *Introduction to Transgender Studies* (New York: Harrington Park Press, LLC, 2019), 102–3. While it is not quite correct to call Benjamin Hirschfeld’s student, as Haefele-Thomas does (Benjamin was a fully qualified endocrinologist by the time he met Hirschfeld in Berlin), they are very right to note that Benjamin’s success in being named the first person to study transgender or transsexual people has much to do with the accessibility of his work, in contrast to that of Hirschfeld or particularly Richard von Krafft-Ebing, who purposely obscured his most sensitive writings from the public by writing passages in Latin (103).
 - 12 For a description of this nightlife, see: Katie Sutton, “‘We Too Deserve a Place in the Sun’: The Politics of Transvestite Identity in Weimar Germany,” *German Studies Review* 35, no. 2 (2012): 335–54; Robert Beachy, *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* (New York: Knopf, 2014); and Jill Suzanne Smith, *Berlin Coquette: Prostitution and the New German Woman, 1890–1933* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014). On Benjamin’s connections to researchers in Europe, see Friedemann Pfaefflin, “Sex Reassignment, Harry Benjamin, and Some European Roots,” *International Journal of Transgenderism* 1, no. 2 (1997), <https://cdn.atrria.nl/ezines/web/IJT/97-03/numbers/symposium/ijtc0202.htm>. Pfaefflin notes that Benjamin was “fully informed about Hirschfeld’s work” and “eagerly soaked up every new finding of sexual endocrinology and sexual psychology years before he met the first transsexual patient.”
 - 13 Harry Benjamin, “Reminiscences,” *Journal of Sex Research* 6, no. 1 (1970): 3–4.
 - 14 We expected that Kinsey must have somehow drawn on the research of Hirschfeld, and we expected to base our exhibition on a small archival treasure – the “Hirschfeld Scrapbook” – which we knew was housed in the archives of the Kinsey Institute in Bloomington. We were disappointed to discover that the scrapbook (a scattered collection of letters, reports, and published documents from Hirschfeld’s years as a researcher and gay-rights activist) had arrived at the Institute after Kinsey’s death. (Someone had found it in Nice in 1959, long after Hirschfeld’s death in 1935.)
 - 15 Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell R. Pomeroy, and Clyde E. Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia and London: W. B. Saunders Company, 1948); Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell R. Pomeroy, Paul H. Gebhard, Clyde E. Martin, and John Bancroft, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (Philadelphia and London: W. B. Saunders Company, 1953). His two books were an immediate sensation – the *Male* book had gone into its six printings ten days after it was released. See: Wardell Baxter Pomeroy, *Dr. Kinsey and the Institute for Sex Research* (New York: Harper, 1972), 265. Although tracking down sales numbers is a daunting task, it is clear that the two books together sold hundreds

- of thousands of copies and were translated into many languages. See Ron Jackson Suresha, “‘Properly Placed before the Public’: Publication and Translation of the Kinsey Reports,” *Journal of Bisexuality* 8, nos 3-4 (2008): 203–28.
- 16 Even the most well-known and influential trans and intersex memoirs of this period tend to emphasize the role of doctors or are narrated by others. The most obvious example is the biography of Lili Elbe, which is almost always called a memoir or an autobiography despite having been written by someone else. Niels Hoyer, ed., *Man into Woman: An Authentic Record of a Change of Sex*, trans. H. J. Stenning (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1933). See also the sidebar “Photomontage of Lili Elbe” in Michael’s chapter. Another example of medical intervention in the authorship of trans/intersex memoirs is Hirschfeld’s influence in the publication of N. O. Body, *Memoirs of a Man’s Maiden Years*, trans. Deborah Simon (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).
 - 17 See Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1: An Introduction (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); and Edward Ross Dickinson and Richard F. Wetzell, “The Historiography of Sexuality in Modern Germany,” *German History* 23, no. 3 (2005): 291–305, esp. 298–9.
 - 18 Having lived her entire life as a female, Barbin was “discovered” to be male when she was twenty-two and was forced to change her gender presentation to male. This prevented her from continuing a relationship with her female lover. She committed suicide in 1868. Michel Foucault, *Herculine Barbin*, trans. Richard McDougall (New York: Vintage, 1980), esp. vii–xvii.
 - 19 Gillian Frank and Lauren Gutterman, “Canary,” *Sexing History*, accessed 1 July 2019, <https://www.sexinghistory.com/episode-24>.
 - 20 Franz X. Eder, *Kultur der Begierde: eine Geschichte der Sexualität* (Verlag C. H. Beck, 2002), 17.
 - 21 Harry Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature: Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry and the Making of Sexual Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 185.
 - 22 *Ibid.*, 12.
 - 23 Harry Oosterhuis, “Sexual Modernity in the Works of Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Albert Moll,” *Medical History* 56, no. 2 (April 2012): 133–55, 137. See also Richard von Krafft-Ebing, “Neue Studien auf dem Gebiete der Homosexualität,” *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* 3 (1901): 1–36. Krafft-Ebing argued that homosexuality should not be thought of as an indication of degeneration (2) and that it was more akin to a small physical deformity than to a depravity or sickness (5).
 - 24 An analysis of some of the questionnaires can be found in Hirschfeld’s medical journal, the *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen*, but the originals were mostly destroyed when the institute was plundered by Nazi students on 9 May 1933. See Rainer Herrn, Michael Thomas Taylor, and Annette F. Timm, eds, “Magnus Hirschfeld’s Institute for Sexual Science: A Visual Sourcebook,” in *Not Straight from Germany: Sexual Publics and Sexual Citizenship since Magnus Hirschfeld* (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press, 2017), 64. The estimate of 10,000 questionnaires is from Vern L. Bullough, “Introduction,” in Magnus Hirschfeld, *The Transvestites: The Erotic Drive to Cross-Dress* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1991), 11. In 1904, Hirschfeld conducted a survey of students and metal workers in Berlin, seeking to establish the proportion of homosexual and bisexual individuals in the population in order to campaign against anti-homosexual laws. His work experienced a setback when he was fined 200 Marks for sending survey postcards asking about sexual identification through the mail. See Magnus Hirschfeld, “Das Ergebnis der statistischen Untersuchungen über den Prozentsatz der Homosexuellen,” *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* 6 (1904): 109–78. This is the only Hirschfeld questionnaire to which Kinsey refers. See Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, 691.
 - 25 Magnus Hirschfeld, *Die Transvestiten: Eine Untersuchung über den erotischen Verkleidungstrieb* (Berlin: Alfred Pulvermacher & Co., 1910). This book was not translated into English until 1991.
 - 26 Hirschfeld, *Die Transvestiten*, 4–5.
 - 27 He describes some of these visits in detail in Magnus Hirschfeld, *Berlins drittes Geschlecht*:

- Mit einem Anhang: Paul Näcke, Ein Besuch bei den Homosexuellen in Berlin*, ed. Manfred Herzer (1904; repr. Berlin: Verlag Rosa Winkel, 1991). Even in this book, which was clearly meant for a popular audience, Hirschfeld maintains the voice of the objective (in other words nonparticipant) observer, yet the inclusion of information about intimate relationships and festive rituals are indications that these visits were neither fleeting nor impersonal.
- 28 Trust is central to political organization of all kinds. See Ute Frevert, "Does Trust Have a History?," in Max Weber Programme: Lectures Series (San Domenico di Fiesole: European University Institute, 2009), <http://cadmus.eui.eu//handle/1814/11258>. (I thank Katie Sutton for pointing me to this citation.) This is just one example of Frevert's work on the history of emotions, a subject that has recently gained more scholarly attention. For overviews see: Frank Biess, "History of Emotions," *German History* 28, no. 1 (1 Mar 2010): 67–80; and Monique Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion," *History and Theory* 51, no. 2 (2012): 193–220.
- 29 See the various contributions in Taylor, Timm, and Herrn, eds, *Not Straight from Germany*.
- 30 Jens Dobler, *Zwischen Duldungspolitik und Verbrechenbekämpfung: Homosexuellenverfolgung durch die Berliner Polizei von 1848 bis 1933* (Frankfurt a.M.: Verlag für Polizeiwissenschaft, 2008).
- 31 Beachy, *Gay Berlin*, 55.
- 32 Dobler, *Zwischen Duldungspolitik*, 399–406.
- 33 The estimate is from Hirschfeld, *Berlins drittes Geschlecht*, 74. Hirschfeld notes that it is difficult to give an exact number, because of the underground nature of these establishments.
- 34 Magnus Hirschfeld, *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes* (Berlin: Louis Marcus Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1914), 1001–2.
- 35 Benjamin, "Reminiscences," 4.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, 612. Kinsey conflates various terms in a way that Benjamin would most likely have objected to: "The terms sexual inversion, intersexuality, transsexuality, the third sex, psychosexual hermaphroditism, and others have been applied not merely to designate the nature of the partner involved in sexual relation, but to emphasize the general opinion that individuals engaging in homosexual activity are neither male nor female, but persons of mixed sex."
- 38 For a history of the gay balls and drags in New York, see George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).
- 39 B. S. Talmey, "Transvestism: A Contribution to the Study of the Psychology of Sex," *New York Medical Journal* 99 (Jan–June 1914): 362–8. The account is reprinted, with some edits and exclusions in: Bernard S. Talmey, *Love: A Treatise on the Science of Sex-Attraction. For the Use of Physicians and Students of Medical Jurisprudence*, 4th rev. ed. (New York: Eugenics Publishing Company, 1919), 297–309.
- 40 This was first established, likely through personal communication with Benjamin, in: Leah Cahan Schaefer and Connie Christine Wheeler, "Harry Benjamin's First Ten Cases (1938–1953): A Clinical Historical Note," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 24, no. 1 (1995): 73–93, 77. Benjamin alludes to Spengler very vaguely in Harry Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon: A Scientific Report on Transsexualism and Sex Conversion in the Human Male and Female* (New York: The Julian Press, 1966), 34. We can only make the identification through the footnote to Talmey.
- 41 Talmey, *Love*, 305–6.
- 42 Talmey, "Transvestism," 362.
- 43 Ibid., 363–5.
- 44 For example: Bernard S. Talmey, *Woman: A Treatise on the Normal and Pathological Emotions of Feminine Love* (New York: Practitioners' Publishing Company, 1908).
- 45 Talmey, "Transvestism," 368.
- 46 Talmey, *Love*, 297. Havelock Ellis first used the term "sexo-aesthetic inversion" in "Sexo-Aesthetic Inversion," *Alienist and Neurologist* 34, no. 2 (1 May 1913): 156–67. It

- is likely that Talmey read the German version: Havelock Ellis, "Sexo-Ästhetische Inversion," *Zeitschrift für Psychotherapie und Medizinische Psychologie* 5, nos 134–162 (1914).
- 47 Schaefer and Wheeler, "Harry Benjamin's First Ten Cases," 78.
- 48 For a list of the imposition of such ordinances and a nuanced explanation of the sociological conditions that allowed them to gain popularity between 1848 and 1974, see Stryker, *Transgender History*, 32–6.
- 49 George W. Henry, *Sex Variants: A Study of Homosexual Patterns*, One-Volume (New York and London: P. B. Hoeber, 1948), 493. This book was first published in two volumes in 1941. Exactly when or how many times Spengler visited Berlin is unclear. As mentioned below, it is likely that one of these trips took place in 1906, but neither the Talmey nor the Henry biographies provide any additional detail.
- 50 Talmey, "Transvestism," 365.
- 51 Henry, *Sex Variants*, 493.
- 52 Otto Spengler, ed., *Das deutsche Element der Stadt New York: Biographisches Jahrbuch der Deutsch-Amerikaner New Yorks und Umgebung* (New York: Spengler, 1913), 250. The biographical details provided here are from his own, presumably self-authored, entry in this compendium.
- 53 Further circumstantial evidence of this meeting is provided by Benjamin's colleagues, who later wrote that Hirschfeld claimed Spengler to have been the inspiration for *Die Transvestiten*. Schaefer and Wheeler, "Harry Benjamin's First Ten Cases (1938–1953)," 77. Schaefer and Wheeler cite the English translation of the book, without providing a page number, and they do not provide any other convincing evidence for this assertion. Spengler's biography does not match any of the seventeen cases in *Die Transvestiten*. This all leads one to believe that this information was passed on orally from Benjamin (or perhaps even Spengler) and all authors were purposely obscuring the fact that the meetings had actually taken place in bars rather than in a respectable medical setting.
- 54 Harry Benjamin, "Introduction," in *Transsexualism and Sex Reassignment*, ed. Richard Green and John Money (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969), 1. I have not been able to determine a more precise date for this meeting, and this appears to be the only place that Benjamin wrote about it. It is clear that this was Spengler; we are introduced to "an elderly transvestite who owned a press-clipping bureau," and Benjamin's colleagues Leah Cahan Schaefer and Connie Christine Wheeler confirm this in "Harry Benjamin's First Ten Cases," 77.
- 55 Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*, 45. Benjamin's respect for Steinach's work is evident in his obituary: Harry Benjamin, "Eugen Steinach, 1861–1944: A Life of Research," *Scientific Monthly* 61, no. 6 (1945): 427–42.
- 56 Angus McLaren, *Reproduction by Design: Sex, Robots, Trees, and Test-Tube Babies in Interwar Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 85–104.
- 57 Anonymous, "Harry Benjamin: Part 2 Rejuvenation," A Gender Variance Who's Who (blog) 5 Oct 2012, accessed 26 June 2019, https://zagria.blogspot.com/2012/10/harry-benjamin-part-2-rejuvenation_5.html. Even though the author of this blog remains anonymous, I have found the information it provides extremely helpful and impeccably researched. This is one of the few pieces of information I was not able to find elsewhere.
- 58 For a detailed description of the popularization of Steinach's research, see Rainer Herrn and Christine N. Brinckmann, "Of Rats and Men: The Steinach Film," in Thomas, Timm, and Herrn, eds, *Not Straight from Germany*, 212–34.
- 59 For more on how the popularization of Steinach's research encouraged those seeking sex affirming surgery to seek out information and request medical services, see Joanne Meyerowitz, "Sex Change and the Popular Press: Historical Notes on Transsexuality in the United States, 1930–1955," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 4, no. 2 (1 Apr 1998): 159–87, esp. 166.
- 60 Benjamin, "Introduction," 2. Benjamin initially prescribed sterilization through x-ray treatments on Spengler's testicles. See Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*, 46.
- 61 Henry, *Sex Variants*, 495.

- 62 This does contradict however, the assertion of Benjamin's colleagues, Shaefer and Wheeler, that Spengler only became a patient in 1938. Schaefer and Wheeler, "Harry Benjamin's First Ten Cases," 77. It is also slightly at odds with the otherwise scrupulously researched blog "A Gender Variance Who's Who." The author does not cite Spengler's biography in *Das deutsche Element*, and has therefore not discovered the birth date of 1873. "Otto Spengler (1876? – 194?) Businessperson," A Gender Variance Who's Who (blog), 18 Nov 2016, accessed 26 June 2019, <https://zagria.blogspot.com/2016/11/otto-spengler-1876-194-businessperson.html>.
- 63 Henry, *Sex Variants*, 1023. For an overview of the project, see Jennifer Terry, "Anxious Slippages Between 'Us' and 'Them': A Brief History of the Scientific Search for Homosexual Bodies," in *Deviant Bodies: Critical Perspectives on Difference in Science and Popular Culture*, ed. Jennifer Terry and Jacqueline L. Urla (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 129–69, esp. 143.
- 64 Henry, *Sex Variants*, 489.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 Despite being poorly expressed, Spengler's claim had some merit. A 400-volume, 80,000-page clipping collection on the First World War is currently housed at the Library of Congress. Erin Allen, "World War I: A Wartime Clipping Service," webpage, Library of Congress Blog, 27 July 2016, accessed June 29, 2019, <https://blogs.loc.gov/loc/2016/07/world-war-i-a-wartime-clipping-service/>.
- 67 George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 2, 40.
- 68 Chauncey counters the "myth of invisibility" in *Gay New York*, 3.
- 69 On the Cercle, see Jonathan Ned Katz, "Earl Lind: The Cercle Hermaphroditos, c. 1895," OutHistory.org, accessed 4 July 2019, <http://outhistory.org/exhibits/show/earl-lind/related/cercle-hermaphroditos>.
- 70 The senior Viereck's story is intriguing on its own. In 1886, he had served a nine-month prison term, along with August Bebel and other socialist leaders, for conspiracy to infringe against the law banning socialist organizing. His son later cultivated the rumour that his father had been the illegitimate child of Kaiser Wilhelm I. See Niel M. Johnson, "George Sylvester Viereck: Poet and Propagandist," *Books at Iowa* 9 (Nov 1968): 22–4, 28–36.
- 71 George F. Corners and A. S. Blumgarten, *Rejuvenation: How Steinach Makes People Young* (New York: Seltzer, 1923). A copy of the letter that Sigmund Freud wrote to Viereck, asking if he would write something similar about psychoanalysis, is in Harry Benjamin's files in the Kinsey Archive. See Johnson, "George Sylvester Viereck."
- 72 Tom Reiss, *The Orientalist: Solving the Mystery of a Strange and Dangerous Life* (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2005), 285–7. Viereck later included a profile of Hirschfeld under this same title in George Sylvester Viereck, *Glimpses of the Great* (London: Duckworth, 1930).
- 73 Hirschfeld to Viereck, 22 Oct 1930, Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft, "Magnus Hirschfeld – Brief an Sylvester Viereck," Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft, accessed 5 Aug 2018, http://www.hirschfeld.in-berlin.de/frame.html?http://www.hirschfeld.in-berlin.de/hirschfeld/brief_an_viereck.html.
- 74 For an account of Hirschfeld's time in the United States and the reception of his public lectures, see Ralf Dose, *Magnus Hirschfeld: The Origins of the Gay Liberation Movement*, trans. Edward H. Willis (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2014), 88–93.
- 75 In fact, Hirschfeld never returned to Germany. Soon after the Nazis came to power in January 1933, Hirschfeld's institute was ransacked, and his friends strongly advised him not to return. He died of natural causes in 1935 in Nice.
- 76 Quoted in Phyllis Keller, "George Sylvester Viereck: The Psychology of a German-American Militant," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2, no. 1 (1971): 59–108, 97 from a 22 September 1934 letter to Upton Sinclair. George Sylvester Viereck, "Hitler the German Explosive," *American Monthly*, Oct 1923. An edited version of the interview appeared in the *Guardian's* "Great Interviews of the 20th Century" series: George Sylvester Viereck, "No Room for the Alien, No Use for the

- Wastrel.” *Guardian*, 17 Sept 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2007/sep/17/greatinterviews1>.
- 77 “Viereck Called Chief Nazi Propagandist in the U.S. Helmut von Gerlach Asserts Pro-German Agent of War Days Is Enacting Same Role for Hitler,” *Jewish Daily Bulletin*, 17 Dec 1933.
- 78 His son, Peter Viereck, who became a successful poet, historian, and political philosopher, was in graduate school at Harvard during the war years, and he was so furious about his father’s activities that the two did not speak for sixteen years. Elaine Woo, “Peter R. Viereck, 89; Pulitzer-Winning Poet Spurned by Fellow Conservatives,” *Los Angeles Times*, 20 May 2006, <http://articles.latimes.com/2006/may/20/local/me-viereck20>.
- 79 On Viereck’s support for McCarthy and his continued cultivation of Nazi contacts, see Ralph Melnick, *The Life and Work of Ludwig Lewisohn: A Touch of Wildness* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 513.
- 80 Donald Furthman Wickets, “Can Sex in Humans Be Changed?,” *Physical Culture*, January 1937, 16–17, 83–5. For a general biography of Viereck, see Martin J. Manning, “Viereck, George Sylvester,” in *Encyclopedia of Media and Propaganda in Wartime America*, ed. Martin J. Manning and Clarence R. Wyatt, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara, Denver, and Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 483.
- 81 Viereck also apparently became the exiled Kaiser Wilhelm II’s ghostwriter, a fact that takes on particularly significance given the rumours about homosexuals in the Kaiser’s social circle. See Norman Domeier, *Der Eulenbug-Skandal: Eine politische Kulturgeschichte des Kaiserreichs* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2010). Melnick, *The Life and Work of Ludwig Lewisohn*, 189. Melnick describes the 1904 love affair between Viereck and the poet Ludwig Lewisohn. See esp. 95–105.
- 82 Kinsey to Benjamin, 18 June 1945, KA-Corr., Benjamin, Folder 1 (May 1944–December 1950).
- 83 Henry, *Sex Variants*, 497.
- 84 *Ibid.*, 497 and 494.
- 85 It is thus extremely unlikely that this Otto Spengler is the same person who Jonathan Ned Katz has claimed was a director of the Berlin-based *Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee* and who supposedly gave a talk on homosexuality to the German Scientific Society of New York in May 1906. This confusion has been repeated multiple times (including in Jennifer Terry, *An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999], 111), but the chances that Spengler, who had lived in New York since he was nineteen in 1892, had become a director of a Berlin-based organization are very slim indeed.
- 86 Benjamin to Kinsey, 19 June 1947 and Benjamin to Kinsey, 8 Oct 1947, in KA-Corr., Benjamin, Folder 1.
- 87 Quoted in Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*, 171.
- 88 See Talmey, *Love*, 297–309. The first edition was published in 1915 and now seems very difficult to find. Talmey does not mention Hirschfeld in the third edition. The sixth (or possibly seventh) edition was published in 1938.
- 89 Alfred C. Kinsey et al., “Concepts of Normality and Abnormality in Sexual Behavior,” in *Psychosexual Development in Health and Disease*, ed. Paul H. Hoch and Joseph Zubin (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1949), esp. 12. Later: “Wherever one finds contradictory interpretations of what is sexually normal and abnormal, one should consider whether philosophic, moral, or social evaluations, or scientific records of material fact are involved,” 12.
- 90 Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, 681.
- 91 *Ibid.*
- 92 Benjamin notes that it was Robert Latou Dickinson who brought the two together. Benjamin, “Reminiscences,” 9.
- 93 In a letter of 24 August 1946, Kinsey thanks Benjamin for “the splendid help you gave us while we were in the city. Your leads were valuable and it becomes very apparent that we must get San Francisco started before you give up spending your summers there. You could do worlds for us in helping us to know people.” KA-Corr., Benjamin, Folder 1.
- 94 Benjamin, “Introduction,” 3.

- 95 Quoted in Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, Linda Wolfe, and Bill Condon, *Kinsey: Public and Private* (New York: Newmarket Press, 2004), 98–9, from Albert Deutsch, “What Dr. Kinsey Is up to Now!,” *Look*, 8 May 1951.
- 96 Donna J. Drucker, *The Classification of Sex: Alfred Kinsey and the Organization of Knowledge* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014), 1 and 9; and Peter Cryle and Elizabeth Stephens, *Normality: A Critical Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 336. On quantification in the life sciences and its influence on sexology more generally, see Howard H. Chiang, “Liberating Sex, Knowing Desire: Scientia Sexualis and Epistemic Turning Points in the History of Sexuality,” *History of the Human Sciences* 23, no. 5 (2010): 42–69, esp. 50–2.
- 97 Meyerowitz, “Sex Research at the Borders of Gender,” 77; and Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, 679–81. Of course, this critique was by no means the loudest that Kinsey’s books elicited. He immediately became and remains a favoured subject of contempt for the Christian right. I am thinking particularly of the writings of Judith A. Reisman and Edward W. Eichel, which William Simon has accurately described as nothing but a paranoid assembly of “innuendo, distortion, and selective representation of decontextualized ‘facts’” and which now only exists as a self-published ebook. See William Simon, “Review of Judith A. Reisman and Edward W. Eichel’s *Kinsey, Sex and Fraud: The Indoctrination of a People. An Investigation into the Human Sexuality Research of Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, Clyde E. Martin, and Paul H. Gebhard*,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 21, no. 1 (1992): 91–3.
- 98 Erskine to Benjamin, 14 Oct 1953, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C. On the usual length of Kinsey’s interviews, see Paul A. Robinson, *The Modernization of Sex: Havelock Ellis, Alfred Kinsey, William Masters and Virginia Johnson* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 44.
- 99 Cited in Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*, 85 from Kinsey to Lawrence, 10 Oct 1949, KI, folder: Alfred C. Kinsey, Lawrence Collection.
- 100 Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, 656–7.
- 101 Hirschfeld, *Geschlechtskunde*, 599, cited in Rainer Herrn, “Magnus Hirschfelds Geschlechterkosmogonie: Die Zwischenstufentheorie im Kontext hegemonialer,” in *Männlichkeiten und Moderne: Geschlecht in den Wissenskulturen um 1900*, ed. Ulrike Brunotte and Rainer Herrn (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2007), 173–96, 185. As Herrn points out, this notion of a spectrum did not protect Hirschfeld from privileging homosexuality over other intermediary variations. See also Darryl B. Hill, “Sexuality and Gender in Hirschfeld’s *Die Transvestiten: A Case of the ‘Elusive Evidence of the Ordinary’*,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14, no. 3 (2005): 316–32, esp. 320.
- 102 Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, 691. Kinsey et al. were referring to Magnus Hirschfeld, “Das Ergebnis der statistischen Untersuchungen über den Prozentsatz der Homosexuellen,” *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* 6 (1904): 109–78.
- 103 As Donna Drucker notes, he privileged works that relied on scientific rather than religiously inspired argument, on face-to-face interviews or survey data, and on large sample sizes. While Hirschfeld’s work would have satisfied the first three criteria and certainly had the advantage of also exploring nonmarital sex, Kinsey would certainly have considered it insufficiently quantitative. Drucker, *The Classification of Sex*, 74.
- 104 Bauer provides a fascinating and instructive textual analysis of Kinsey to further excavate the links between the two men. See Heike Bauer, “Sexology Backward: Hirschfeld, Kinsey and the Reshaping of Sex Research in the 1950s,” in *Queer 1950s: Rethinking Sexuality in the Postwar Years*, ed. Heike Bauer and Matt Cook (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 133–49.
- 105 Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, 641.
- 106 Janice M. Irvine, *Disorders of Desire: Sexuality and Gender in Modern American Sexology* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005), 47–8.
- 107 Quoted from Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, 412, in Irvine, *Disorders of Desire*, 28.

- 108 Ibid., 35.
- 109 Cited in Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*, 92–3, from Christine Jorgensen, *Christine Jorgensen: Personal Autobiography*, with an introduction by Harry Benjamin (New York: P. S. Eriksson, 1967), 189.
- 110 Meyerowitz, “Sex Research at the Borders of Gender,” 80.
- 111 The figure of 18,300 case studies comes from Suzanne G. Frayser and Thomas J. Whitby, *Studies in Human Sexuality: A Selected Guide*, 2nd ed. (Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1995), 103. On Kinsey’s punch-card system, see Drucker, *The Classification of Sex*, esp. 107–15. Drucker cites the number of 18,000 case studies for both the *Male* and *Female* volumes. Ibid., 112.
- 112 Quoted in James H. Jones, *Alfred C. Kinsey: A Public/Private Life* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 622.
- 113 Meyerowitz argues that Kinsey’s sustained contact and Lawrence’s long campaign to change his mind about transvestism had “planted [the] seed of doubt” by the early 1950s. Meyerowitz, “Sex Research at the Borders of Gender,” 75.
- 114 Genny Beemyn, “Transgender History in the United States: A Special Unabridged Version of a Book Chapter from *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves*, edited by Laura Erickson-Schroth,” accessed 24 June 2019, https://www.umass.edu/stonewall/sites/default/files/Infoforandabout/transpeople/genny_beemyn_transgender_history_in_the_united_states.pdf. Beemyn also notes that the first female-assigned, nonintersexed person to have received hormonal treatment (in 1939) and genital surgery (in 1946) was the British physician Michael Dillon (11). (Alex discusses Dillon’s story in this book.) Meyerowitz points out that while the ratios of reported cases have been very skewed towards trans women in the past, “today some doctors in the United States find roughly equivalent numbers of male-to-females (MTFs) and female-to-males (FTMs).” Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*, 9. See also the chapter “Have Female-to-Male Transsexuals Always Existed?” in Aaron Devor, *FTM: Female-to-Male Transsexuals in Society* (1997; repr., Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016); Emily Skidmore, *True Sex: The Lives of Trans Men at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2017); and Geertje Mak, “‘Passing Women’ in the Consulting Room of Magnus Hirschfeld: On Why the Term ‘Transvestite’ Was Not Employed for Cross-Dressing Women,” *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 9, no. 3 (1998): 384–99.
- 115 Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, 90 and 716.
- 116 Ibid., 721.
- 117 Ibid., 729.
- 118 Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, 727–8.
- 119 Erskine to Benjamin, 4 Jan 1953, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 120 Erskine to Benjamin, 18 Nov 1953, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 121 Erskine to Benjamin, 9 May 1954, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 122 Erskine to Benjamin, 19 Jan 1954, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 123 Ibid.
- 124 Erskine to Benjamin, 10 Feb 1954, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 125 Herb Caen, “Baghdad-by-the-Bay,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, n.d.
- 126 It seems otherwise inexplicable that Carla’s name would appear in San Francisco gossip columns years later, with no reference to her gender. See: Herb Caen, “San Francisco: Herb Caen,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 18 Nov 1972 (a syndicated column) and Jack Rosenbaum’s “Our Man on the Town” column in the *San Francisco Examiner*, 21 Mar 1970 and 30 Mar 1972.
- 127 Erskine to Benjamin, 18 Nov 1953, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 128 Erskine to Benjamin, 3 Apr 1954, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 129 Erskine to Benjamin, 22 Jan 1954, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 130 Erskine to Benjamin, 15 May 1954, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.

- 131 Benjamin's notes in preparation for writing *The Transsexual Phenomenon*. See various copies of this table in KILSC-HB, Box 28 Series VI E. To Series VI. G.
- 132 See for example Erskine to Benjamin, 3 Dec 1953, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 133 Typewritten document, titled only with "[Erskine], 1953," KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 134 Carla apparently told Donald R. Laub (a former doctor and later friend) that she was born in "Arabia," but, as noted above, this is contradicted by census records stating her birthplace as Casper, Wyoming. See Donald Laub, "The [Carla Erskine] Story," Many People, Many Passports, 11 Apr 2011, <https://dlaub.wordpress.com/2011/04/11/>.
- 135 Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, 52. Based on both his medical and personal relationship with Carla, Donald R. Laub diagnoses her as having had "grade 3 hypospadias, a birth defect in which the urine comes out just above the scrotum." Laub, "The [Carla Erskine] Story."
- 136 On the history of intersex and the ethics of speaking about it today, see: Alice Domurat Dreger, ed., *Intersex in the Age of Ethics* (Hagerstown, MD: University Publishing Group, 1999); Alice Domurat Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Elizabeth Reis, "Divergence or Disorder?: The Politics of Naming Intersex," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 50, no. 4 (2007): 535–43; Elizabeth Reis, *Bodies in Doubt: An American History of Intersex* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); Sandra Eder, "The Volatility of Sex: Intersexuality, Gender and Clinical Practice in the 1950s," in *Historicising Gender and Sexuality*, ed. Kevin P. Murphy and Jennifer M. Spear (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 166–81; and Georgiann Davis, *Contesting Intersex: The Dubious Diagnosis* (New York: New York University Press, 2015).
- 137 "[Carla Erskine], 1953," KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 138 It also adds some fuel to current arguments that our obsession with gender classification in daily life has caused nothing but pain. See Heath Fogg Davis, *Beyond Trans: Does Gender Matter?* (New York: New York University Press, 2017).
- 139 She claims that this occurred in 1923, which would have made her only thirteen had the birthdate of 1910 been correct. Given that she was really born in 1905, it seems unlikely that she would have run away at the age of eighteen. We can only surmise that the date that she fled was earlier than 1923.
- 140 Clare Sears, *Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law, and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014). In a newspaper interview, Sears notes that these laws were primarily passed in frontier towns keen to attract newcomers by projecting a respectable image. This motivated a crackdown on prostitution that affected cross-dressers, since "For a woman to dress as a man in some way communicated to other people that she was more adventurous, more sexually available." Tagawa, "When Cross-Dressing Was Criminal: Book Documents History of Longtime San Francisco Law," SF State News. San Francisco State University, Feb 2015, <https://news.sfsu.edu/when-cross-dressing-was-criminal-book-documents-history-longtime-san-francisco-law>.
- 141 "Sex Operation on Self Fails," *San Francisco Examiner*, 19 Aug 1953. Census data tells me that she was actually 48 at the time of this article, but she had begun lying about her age, perhaps in order to improve her chances of acquiring surgery.
- 142 In an interview with Susan Stryker, Don Lucas (a founding member of the San Francisco chapter of the Mattachine Society), names Carla as one of at least two individuals who had performed self-surgery. "Don Lucas Interview: Recorded at Lucas's Home in San Francisco," 13 June 1997, <http://www.glbthistory.org>.
- 143 Erskine to Benjamin, 5 Oct 1953, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 144 Erskine to Benjamin, 1 July 1953, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C. The letter sends along her precise physical measurements.
- 145 Benjamin, "Introduction," 3. It is possible but not clear whether Benjamin was consciously alluding to Richard von Krafft-Ebing's use of the term "stepchildren of nature" to describe

- his patients. See Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature*.
- 146 Benjamin to Carla, 25 Jan 1954, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 147 Benjamin to Carla, 25 Nov 1953, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 148 Erskine to Benjamin, 30 Nov 1953, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 149 Erskine to Benjamin, 7 Dec 1953, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 150 Carla forwarded this announcement to Benjamin. KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 151 Benjamin, "Introduction," 4. The article is: Harry Benjamin, "Transvestism and Transsexualism," *International Journal of Sexology* 7, no. 1 (1953): 12–14. In claiming this originality, Benjamin was certainly obscuring the inspiration he had received from the work of Magnus Hirschfeld.
- 152 Carla thought that Hinman's technique created a "far more natural" effect than that used for two of her friends. Erskine to Benjamin, 5 Oct 1954, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C. However, according to Benjamin's table of surgeries, compiled for *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, this appears to be the only such surgery that Hinman performed. See KILSC-HB 28.
- 153 In October 1954, Carla attempted to make contact with the English trans woman Roberta Cowell, a former racing driver and Second World War fighter pilot whose autobiography proclaiming her the first British woman to have undergone reassignment surgery had by this time made her relatively famous. See *Roberta Cowell's Story* (New York: British Book Centre, 1954).
- 154 Erskine to Benjamin, 10 Nov 1954 and 24 Nov 1954, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C. By the time the photo in figure 3.18 was taken in the studio of Alvin Harris (a friend of Louise Lawrence) in 1954, Angela had followed Carla's example by self-castrating. There is a small collection of photos of Carla (labelled under her real name) in the Harris-Wheeler Collection, part of the Vern and Bonnie Bullough Collection on Sex and Gender at Special Collections, California State University, Northridge. See Series III: Scrapbooks and Binders, 1949–54, Box 18, Folder 7. Richard F. Docter describes Harris as a "lingerie fetishist." See *Becoming a Woman: A Biography of Christine Jorgensen* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 280.
- 155 "Obituary: John 'Bunny' Breckinridge," *SFGate*, 9 Nov 1996, <https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/OBITUARY-John-Bunny-Breckinridge-2959951.php>.
- 156 Erskine to Benjamin, 9 May 1954, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 157 Aleshia Brevard Crenshaw Interviews, 2 Aug 1997, <http://www.glbthistory.org>. Dixie's public performances and her search for publicity justify providing her full name.
- 158 Dixie was the friend who begged Carla to perform surgery on her. Carla refused and called on Benjamin for support, demonstrating the triangular relationships at play (Benjamin to Carla, 15 Oct 1953, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.).
- 159 Erskine to Benjamin, 28 Feb 1954, 10 Feb 1954, and 8 Mar 1953, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C. Benjamin, rather unethically, tells Carla that Dixie's case was being handled by Dr. Worden, a psychiatrist also treating Carla (Benjamin to Carla, 4 Mar 1954). Carla's enormous faith that Worden would handle these cases sensitively seems to have been unjustified, since his co-authored publication makes virtually no distinction between psychologically troubled individuals like Dixie and quite rational and stable trans women like Carla. Frederic G. Worden and James T. Marsh, "Psychological Factors in Men Seeking Sex Transformation: A Preliminary Report," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 157, no. 15 (9 Apr 1955): 1292–8. Benjamin later wrote to Kinsey: "The transvestites who have met him or have read his article are either disappointed, indignant, or very unhappy about it. I understand, of course, that Dr. Worden is not interested in these people except as material for some research. He has made valuable observations, but as a physician he has undoubtedly done more harm than good." Benjamin to Kinsey, 23 May 1955, KA-Corr., Benjamin, Folder 1.
- 160 Erskine to Benjamin, 3 May 1954, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 161 Erskine to Benjamin, 7 Mar 1955, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.

- 162 Roots of Equality et al., *Lavender Los Angeles* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2011). For more general histories of prohibitions against cross-dressing in the U.S., see: Peter Boag, *Re-Dressing America's Frontier Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); and Vern L. Bullough and Bonnie Bullough, *Cross Dressing, Sex, and Gender* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993). Like these two books, Carla Sears focuses on the nineteenth century in *Arresting Dress*.
- 163 Erskine to Benjamin, 8 Mar 1954, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 164 For a fascinating discussion of the difficulties of discussing trans erotic desire in this period, see Aleshia Brevard Crenshaw Interviews. For an example of the tensions that raising the subject of erotic desire could produce even within circles of medical professionals who viewed themselves as experts on transsexuality and transgender identities in the 1990s, see the descriptions of two conferences provided in Richard Ekins, "Science, Politics and Clinical Intervention: Harry Benjamin, Transsexualism and the Problem of Heteronormativity," *Sexualities* 8, no. 3 (2005): 306–28, esp. 308–9.
- 165 Benjamin later described his use of the word "transsexualist" as unfortunate. Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, 16.
- 166 Benjamin, "Transvestism and Transsexualism," 13–14.
- 167 Harry Benjamin et al., "Transsexualism and Transvestism – A Symposium," *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 8, no. 2 (1954): 219–44, 220.
- 168 Ekins, "Science, Politics and Clinical Intervention," esp. 310.
- 169 Carla did not explicitly discuss the absence of a vagina in the letters, but Benjamin was certainly aware of this fact and would have passed the information on to Kinsey. Benjamin to Carla, 14 Apr 1955; 6 May 1955; and 19 May 1955, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 170 On the "reification of orgasm" and Kinsey's role in it, see Annamarie Jagose, *Orgasmology* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), 29. Jagose notes that "Kinsey uses [orgasm's] alleged stability in order to quantify sexual practice: unless it ends in orgasm, sexual activity does not count, in the literal statistical sense, as an event." As Kinsey himself put it, there "is no better unit for measuring the incidences and frequencies of sexual activity." See Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, 46. See also Jennifer E. Germon, "Kinsey and the Politics of Bisexual Authenticity," *Journal of Bisexuality* 8, nos 3–4 (2008): 243–58, 252. For more on how Kinsey counted and classified orgasms, see Drucker, *The Classification of Sex*, 96–8 and 120.
- 171 As R. Marie Griffith has argued, "accounts of his stringently religious father ... [are] habitually embellished well beyond documentary evidence." "The Religious Encounters of Alfred C. Kinsey," *Journal of American History* 95, no. 2 (2008): 349–77. She includes the most widely read biographies in this critique: Jones, *Alfred C. Kinsey* and Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, *Sex the Measure of All Things: A Life of Alfred C. Kinsey* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998). The fact that the Kinseys had trouble consummating their marriage is less controversial, though Jones's explanation that this was due to an "adherent clitoris" (Jones, *Alfred C. Kinsey*, 236) has also been challenged. See Sarah B. Rodriguez, *Female Circumcision and Clitoridectomy in the United States* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2014), 214n91.
- 172 Benjamin to Kinsey, 5 Sept 1951, KA-Corr., Benjamin, Folder 1.
- 173 Her memories of Finocchio's are quite depressing: "It was great for someone in her late tweens and early 20s, and my God it was a far cry from Tennessee, but I saw enough of it to say, 'What a terrible – doomed, that's how you were in society back then, the drugs, sitting and praying in front of the mirror, crying about getting old – and they were every bit of thirty. You know. God.'" Aleshia Brevard Crenshaw Interviews, 30.
- 174 Aleshia Brevard Crenshaw Interviews, 31.
- 175 *Ibid.*, 72–3. We speculate that Benjamin contributed to the very large collection of hair fetish photos in the Kinsey Institute's image collection.
- 176 There are numerous references to her financial situation in her letters to Benjamin. See for

- example Erskine to Benjamin, 5 Oct 1954, 25 Dec 1954, and 27 Oct 1955, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 177 KILSC-HB, Box 25-1, Permissions (1964).
- 178 Erskine to Benjamin, 27 Dec 1955, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 179 Erskine to Benjamin, 10 Nov 1955, KILSC-HB, Box 4, Ser. II C.
- 180 Caen, "San Francisco: Herb Caen."
- 181 Elinor Hayes, "Old Films, Organ Revived," *Oakland Tribune*, 6 July 1969. For the story of the theatre, see Dewey Cagle, "What's New... on the Avenue?," *Theatre Organ Bombarde: Journal of the American Theatre Organ Enthusiasts*, April 1968. Carla is mentioned on page 16.
- 182 The words are as written/remembered by Laub in "The [Carla Erskine] Story."
- 183 A search of the rich documentary evidence housed at The Digital Transgender Archive pulls up at least twenty-nine hits on Laub's name, all glowing descriptions of his contributions to surgical techniques while he was at Stanford and his numerous presentations to the yearly symposium of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association (now called the World Professional Association for Transgender Health). He is praised in trans publications such as *AEGIS News*, *Chrysalis Quarterly*, *Female Mimics International*, *Gender Review* (Canada), *Metamorphosis Magazine* (Canada), *Renaissance News*, *The Transsexual Voice*, *The TV-TS Tapestry*, and *TransSisters: The Journal of Transsexual Feminism*.
- 184 Just as this book was in copyediting, I did receive a brief email from Dr. Laub, who appreciating reading a draft of this chapter.
- 185 Laub seems to have slightly misunderstood Carla's business career. An obituary in the *San Francisco Examiner* describes her as the founder, in 1962, of Micro Science Associates, which I have tracked down as having been headquartered in Mountain View, California. (See "Deaths," *San Francisco Examiner*, 1 Dec 1976. She died in Santa Clara, California, on 19 Nov 1976.) An image of some of the chips the company produced is included in the "Integrated Circuit Engineering Collection" at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. See "The Chip Collection – Artwork Series 11-100400 – Smithsonian Institution," National Museum of American History, accessed 12 May 2020, <http://smithsonianchips.si.edu/ice/s11-100400.htm>.
- 186 Handwritten list of "Occupations of Operated Male Transsexuals," 11 Jan 1965, KILSC-HB, Box 28 Series VI E. To Series VI. G.
- 187 Laub, "The [Carla Erskine] Story."
- 188 The literature on this subject is now vast and growing. I will simply repeat the citation to two useful overviews: Biess, "History of Emotions," and Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice." I have developed this perspective in other places, including the unpublished conference paper: Annette F. Timm, "Queering Friendship: What Hirschfeld Could Teach Hegel and Arendt," *Rethinking Amity: Workshop in Honour of Michael Geyer*, University of Chicago, 20 April 2013.
- 189 Alex cites Copenhagen physician Christian Hamburger's description of his involvement with patients like Christine Jorgensen in "The Desire for Change of Sex as Shown by Personal Letters from 465 Men and Women," *Acta Endrologica* 14 (1953): 361–72.